

Athletics

Athletics, also called track-and-field, is a variety of competitions in running, walking, jumping and throwing events.

As many as 24 distinct events make up an **athletics meet**, which is usually held outdoors. The outdoor running events are held on a 400m oval track, and field events (jumping and throwing) are held either inside the track's perimeter or in adjacent areas. **Marathons** are run on roads, and the long-distance **race walks** are contested on measured road courses.

Qualifying – the road to Rio

Qualification to secure spots at the Olympic Games is based around qualifying standards that athletes need to meet; i.e. a qualifying time for a race, a qualifying distance for a throwing event. These standards are set by the IAAF, the NZOC and Athletics NZ.

“Rio 2016 is getting very close. A number of our athletes have already achieved nomination standards and we have more who are focused on reaching the standards in the coming months. We’re looking forward to having a good sized team in Rio.”

- Scott Goodman, Athletics New Zealand High Performance Director

Rio 2016 Athletics

There are 47 athletics events; 23 for women and 24 for men. The differences in the events are the heptathlon event for women and the decathlon and 50km walk for men. See a full list here: www.olympic.org/athletics

Where: Track-and-field events will be held at the Rio Olympic Stadium, with the marathon events and walking events taking place through the city of Rio de Janeiro.

When: Athletics events start on Friday 12 August with the final event, the men's marathon, on the closing day of the Olympics – Sunday 21 August.



The Stars of Athletics

Seven New Zealanders have won a total of 10 Olympic gold medals in athletics. Valerie Adams is our most recent gold medallist, winning the shot put in Beijing 2008 and London 2012.

The first gold medallist was Jack Lovelock in the 1500m at Berlin in 1936. Yvette Williams became our first female gold medallist winning the long jump in Helsinki in 1952. Norm Read was victorious in the 50km walk at the following 1956 Melbourne Olympics.

Peter Snell (800m) and Murray Halberg (5000m) both won gold medals, within an hour of each other, at the 1960 Rome Olympics. Snell repeated the gold in the 800m 4 years later in Tokyo and added the 1500m as well.

John Walker was New Zealand's third 1500m Olympic Champion in Montreal in 1976.

Looking to Rio:

New Zealanders expected to do well at Rio include four-time world shot put champion Valerie Adams, hoping to make history and win a third consecutive Olympic gold medal, and Tom Walsh who won gold in shot put at the 2016 World Indoor Championships and silver at the Glasgow Commonwealth Games.

Nick Willis, the Beijing 2008 Olympic silver medallist and three-time Commonwealth Games medallist, will be aiming to be the fourth New Zealander to win the Olympic 1500m gold medal.

Did you know?

- Athletics, as it is practiced today, was born and grew to maturity in England. The first mention of the sport in England was recorded in 1154, when practice fields were first established in London. The sport was banned by King Edward III in the 1300s, but revived a century later by Henry VIII, reputed to be an accomplished hammer thrower.
- Timing was once done in fifths of a second and then in tenths, and is now done in hundredths of a second.
- An aiding wind of more than 2m per second nullifies a record time in distances up to 200m.
- The runner whose torso reaches the finish line first is the winner of a race (the torso excludes head, neck, arms, legs, hands and feet).
- The marathon distance (42.2km) is a result of the 1908 Olympic Games in London where the marathon distance was changed to 26 miles to cover the ground from Windsor Castle to White



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Olympic Sport Information



City Stadium, with 385 yards added on so the race could finish in front of the royal family's viewing box.

- Athletics has become the most truly international of sports, with nearly every country in the world engaging in some form of competition. Over 200 countries contest the world athletics championships held every 2 years.

Olympic Medals

New Zealand has won 10 gold, 2 silver and 9 bronze medals.

GOLD

1936 Berlin	1500m – Men	Jack Lovelock
1952 Helsinki	Long Jump – Women	Yvette Williams
1956 Melbourne	50km Walk – Men	Norman Read
1960 Rome	5000m – Men	Murray Halberg
1960 Rome	800m – Men	Peter Snell
1964 Tokyo	1500m – Men	Peter Snell
1964 Tokyo	800m – Men	Peter Snell
1976 Montreal	1500m – Men	John Walker
2008 Beijing	Shot Put – Women	Valerie Adams
2012 London	Shot Put – Women	Valerie Adams

SILVER

1976 Montreal	5000m – Men	Dick Quax
2008 Beijing	1500m – Men	Nick Willis

BRONZE

1908 London	3500m Walk – Men	Harry Kerr
1924 Paris	100m – Men	Arthur Porritt
1952 Helsinki	400m Hurdles – Men	John Holland
1960 Rome	Marathon – Men	Barry Magee
1964 Tokyo	1500m – Men	John Davies
1964 Tokyo	800m – Women	Marise Chamberlain
1968 Mexico City	Marathon – Men	Mike Ryan
1972 Munich	1500m – Men	Rod Dixon
1992 Barcelona	Marathon – Women	Lorraine Moller

Athletics terminology

- Breakline** An arc across the track denoting the point where runners may leave their original lane and use any part of the track, which is normally the inside lane.
- Countback** A process used to determine the winner if two high jumpers or pole vaulters reach equal heights, based upon reviewing which athlete failed least in their jumps at that height or in the whole competition.
- Field event** An athletic event that involves jumping or throwing.
- Foul** A violation where, most commonly, an athlete jumping or throwing for distance steps across the line (or circle) that defines the limit of the athlete's approach to an attempt. It can also refer to where the thrown implement lands outside a marked sector.
- Fosbury flop** A style of high-jumping, named after former high-jumper Dick Fosbury, in which the athlete clears the jump facing upwards, with the back to the bar, and lands with the back on the mat.

Timeline

- 776 BC** Athletics was contested in the first ancient Olympic Games, and champions have been recorded from as far back as 776BC.
- Late 19th century** The modern format of athletics, in which a variety of running, jumping, throwing, walking and combined events are competed at a single 'meeting' or 'meet' evolved originally in England and then across Europe and the USA.
- 1896** Athletics was part of the first Olympiad and has remained part of the Olympic programme at every Games.
- 1928** Women's events appeared for the first time at the Olympic Games in Amsterdam. Initially, women's participation was limited to certain events, but today their programme is almost identical to that of the men.
- 1960s** Saw a boom in athletics in developing countries, with the success of African runners and sprinters of Caribbean origin. More recently, high-level Asian athletes have risen up the ranks.