

Starting Off-Track Races



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Starting Off-Track Races



There are quite a range of event discipline starts to consider.
(Definitions are provided in UKA Rules for Competition Appendix 4)
With associated skills to learn.

HERE ARE JUST A FEW



Starting Off-Track Races



CROSS-COUNTRY



Assembly lines are commonly used to reduce Health & Safety risks of barging / tripping and False Starts.



BELIEVE, BELONG, ACHIEVE TOGETHER



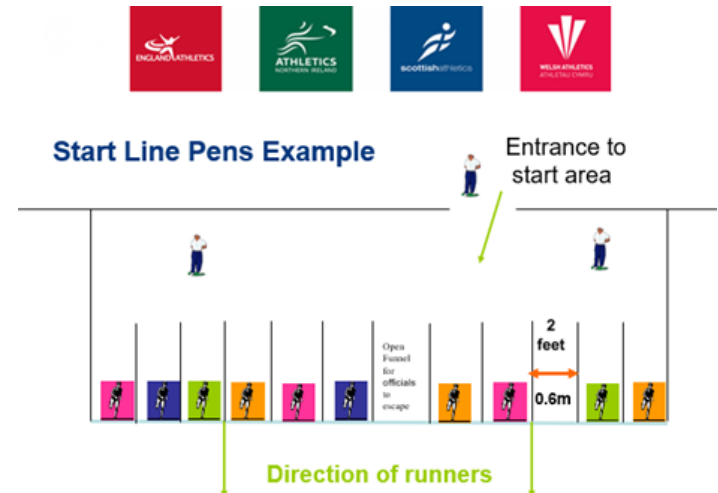
Starting Off-Track Races



PEN STARTS



Pen Starts are generally used for larger team races or Internationals, primarily to provide teams with equal opportunity on the start line.



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ROAD RACES

Road Races vary significantly in size and Start set up.



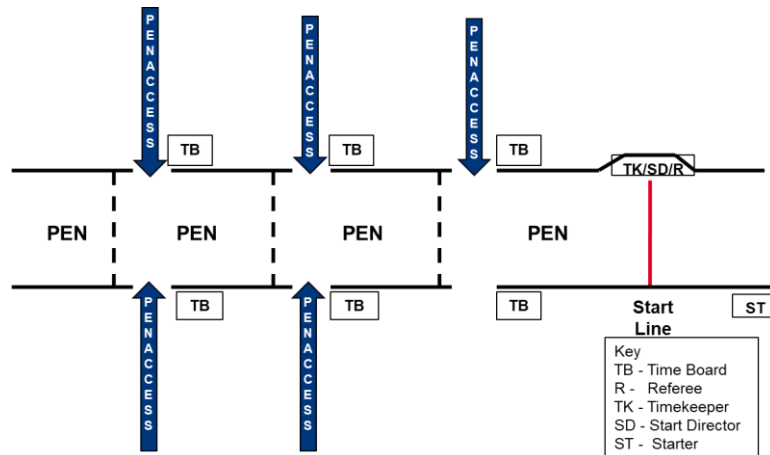
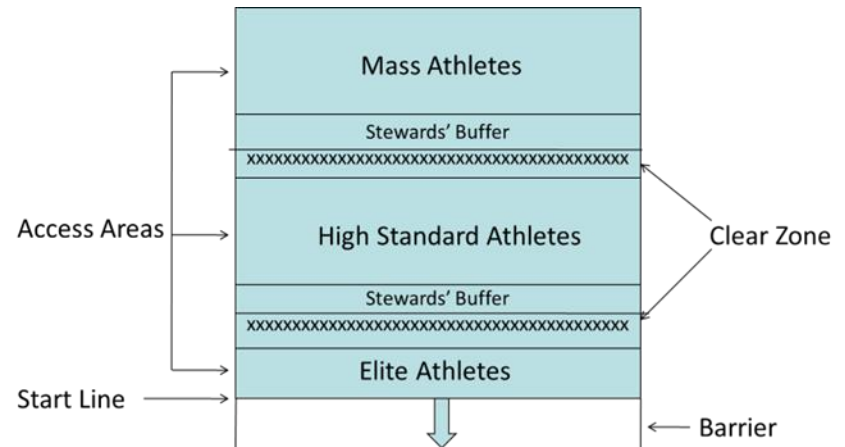
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Starting Off-Track Races

MASS PARTION ROAD RACE ZONE STARTS

In mass participation Road Races Health & Safety is a critical consideration, to ensure that everyone has a fair and SAFE start.



**With chip-timing its easier.
Mass participants are allocated
start 'Time Banded Assembly
Zones', allowing runners to line
up within their ability ranges.**

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RACES MAY ALSO INCORPORATE PARA-ATHLETES

In Road Races, elite wheelchair athletes generally travel at greater speed and are therefore, primarily for H&S reasons, set off ahead of the main field.



Races might also include ambulant athletes (athletes who are able to compete whilst standing), those with sight impairment may be accompanied by their guide runner. Again, primarily for H&S reasons, special consideration should be given to these athletes at the start (check procedures with the race organiser).

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PARA-ATHLETES RACES

In Para Athletic road races:

- Handcycle, wheelchair and ambulant athletes may start together but will be ranked by their finishing time from a seeded / grid start.
- The start of each Sports Class should be separated by intervals of a minimum 30 seconds.



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HILL, MOUNTAIN and TRAIL RACES

Although maybe not strictly within the rules
It could even be as simple as this!



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THE RULES

- [UKA Rules of Competition 2024-2026](#)
 - CR22 Start Coordinator, Starter and Recalls
 - CR23 Starter's Assistants
 - TR55.6 Start (Road Races)
 - TR56.6 Start + TR56(S2)(Cross Country Races)
 - TR57.2 + TR57.7 Start (Mountain & Trail Races)
- **scottishathletics** works closely with partner organisation [Scottish Hill Runners](#) for hill running, Safety rules are on their website.
- [World Para Athletics Rules and regulations 2024](#)
 - Section I, 2.17 Start Coordinator, Starter and Recalls
 - Section I, 2.18 Starter's Assistant
 - Section VI Road Races, 49.5 Starts

Starting Off-Track Races

GUIDANCE

Starters' Guidance is provided on **scottishathletics** website

> Officials

> Officials Toolkit

> Starter & Starters' Assistant

[The Scottish Starter/Starter Assistant Handbook 2024 – July](#)

Starting Off-Track Races

Section II – Endurance Guidance

Starter & Starter Assistant Handbook

What does the Starter need?

Here's what the Starters' Handbook says

- Red top, black or navy trousers and black shoes or trainers.
- Outdoors; a red waterproof jacket, black or navy waterproof over trousers (gloves & a red baseball cap optional).
- Officials' ID & lanyard.
- A clipboard (preferably weatherproof), blank paper, pens or pencils.
- Starting pistol (Blocked Barrel) or Electronic System.
- Appropriate blank ammunition.
- Ear defenders or foam ear inserts.
- A loud whistle on a lanyard.
- Hi-Viz sleeve.
- A wristwatch, preferably digital.
- The latest UK Athletics Rules of Competition.

Starter & Starter Assistant Handbook



Starter (Pre-Race)

- 1) Comply with UKA Generic Risk Assessments for Starting.
Link to [Risk Assessments – Starting](#)
- 2) Check Starting Location prior to the start of the meeting to ensure that it is in a safe position within a sectioned off sterile Starters zone, and that the starter will have full visual control of the start area and timekeepers.
- 3) Liaise with Referee / Timekeeper / Chip Timing Team / TV crew. Synchronise watch with Referee or Time signal.
- 4) Issue 5min / 3min / 1min warnings or as agreed with the referee.

Starter & Starter Assistant Handbook



Starter (Pre-Start)

- 5) Assemble athletes 2-3 meters behind the start line or in pens if appropriate.
- 6) Allow Referee to address the assembled competitors prior to start if requested.
- 7) In televised events Starter will synchronise with the Television Team.
- 8) Ensure that the timekeepers are alerted.

Starter & Starter Assistant Handbook



Starter (The Start)

- 9) Call athletes forward to the start.
- 10) Issue 'on your marks' command and start race as quickly as possible.
- 11) It is strongly advised that the "gun" is not raised early so that the athletes are not alerted to the imminent start of the race.

Note: Starters and Referees should avoid being over-zealous in the application of Rule TR16.8.

Starter & Starter Assistant Handbook



Starter (False Start)

- 12) In the event of a False Start, the Starter shall have the prerogative to recall the field.
- 13) It may be necessary to deploy recall officials some distance in front of the start line to stop a race in the event of a False Start.

But try Stopping that lot!



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Starter & Starter Assistant Handbook



Starters Assistant

- 1) Support the Starter.
- 2) Assemble the competitors on the start line or pens, checking that athletes are in the correct order and “toes” are behind the line.
- 3) In smaller events the Referee may ask for a “head count” to provide an indication of likely finishing numbers, to aid the officials at the finish.
- 4) In the event of a False Start, re-assemble the athletes on the “assembly” line so the process can be repeated.

Starter & Starter Assistant Handbook



Alternatives to Gun Starts for Off-Track Endurance – 1

- 1) Competition Providers and Event Organisers may choose to have off track endurance races started with an alternative to the starting pistol. This could be an Electronic Start System (for example: “TESS” The Electronic Start System), a Hooter or a Warning Horn.
- 2) These alternatives are fully compliant with UKA Rules for Competition (Rule T56) and should still be carried out by a qualified starter, as they have the required experience regarding starting and recalling races under the UKA Rules of Competition.

Starter & Starter Assistant Handbook



Alternatives to Gun Starts for Off-Track Endurance – 2

- 3) The agreed starting method should be noted in the pre-race athlete paperwork, so they are aware of the starting process and not caught unaware.
- 4) The following protocol is a guide for those looking to use this method to provide a fair and clear start signal for all athletes, officials and spectators.

Starter & Starter Assistant Handbook



Alternatives to Gun Starts for Off-Track Endurance – 3

Start Protocol for “TESS” Starts

- 1) The start process for TESS starts follows the same sequence as for gun starts, albeit the start signal is an electronic gun sound and LED flash emitted from the start actuator. A recall is sounded by a second actuator, which emits a multiple bleep sound clearly identifiable as a recall warning.
- 2) The TESS system also uses a multiple speaker system to enable start instructions and sounds to be clearly heard by the athletes, other officials and spectators.

Starter & Starter Assistant Handbook



Start Protocol for Hooter / Horn Starts (Pre-Race)

- 1) In races which include large numbers of athletes, 5-minute, 3-minute and 1-minute warnings should be given, either by loudspeaker announcement or whistle.
- 2) The Starter's Assistant(s) assembles the athletes 2 -3 meters behind the start line.
- 3) The Starter is in complete control of the race start, wearing a Hi-Viz armband and in possession of a plastic "warning horn" as used for athletics field events or hooter.
- 4) At the appointed time, the Starter checks that the timekeepers are ready for the race to start.

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Start Protocol for Hooter / Horn Starts (The Start)

- 5) The Starter calls the athletes to the start line by saying “On your marks”.
- 6) At the same time the Starter’s Assistant raises a white flag aloft, in clear view of the timekeepers.
- 7) When the starter is satisfied the athletes are steady, but without delay to avoid a false start, the starter blows the horn/hooter.
- 8) At the same moment, the Starter’s Assistant drops the white flag to provide a visual indication of the race start.

Starter & Starter Assistant Handbook



Start Protocol for Hooter/Horn Starts (False Start)

- 9) In the event of a false start, a second Starters Assistant should be stationed **25yds** from the start, in clear sight of the starter.
- 10) If the starter notes a false start, they will signal to the 2nd Starters Assistant either by raising a red flag and blowing their horn / hooter repeatedly, or by radio message to the 2nd Starters Assistant.
- 11) The 2nd Starters Assistant will stand in front of the lead athletes waving their red flag to stop the race.

Starting Off-Track Events

But what does the Starter need for smaller Local / Club races?

The minimum essentials you need:

- A clipboard (preferably weatherproof), blank paper, pens or pencils, race timetable and timekeeper's name.
- As an alternative to Starting pistol (Blocked Barrel) or Electronic System, a hooter or whistle might be used, together with a visual signal e.g. dropping a flag.
- A loud whistle on a lanyard.
- Hi-Viz sleeve.
- A wristwatch, preferably digital, set to current UK time.
- The latest UK Athletics Rules of Competition, familiarise yourself with the starting rules.

Starting Off-Track Races



For smaller Local / Club road races the starter should check:

- **Lead vehicle:** Liaise with driver / Referee (might be in the vehicle) to confirm start procedures. Check that Lead Vehicle is in position and ready for the start.
- **Road / Temporary Road Closures:** Check with the race organiser that appropriate actions have been implemented and if appropriate, Police have given the all-clear to start the race.
- **Timekeeper:** Coordinate watches and check Timekeeper (manual and / or chip timing) is ready for the start.
- **Start Safety:** Check that the course beyond the start is clear of traffic and pedestrians, warn runners of any immediate trip hazards, speed bumps, potholes, etc.

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Any Questions?

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