



## OVERVIEW: RELAYS

Relay passing/Baton exchange is one of the most difficult concepts to teach.

Coaches must include relay passing into regular training sessions. Place athletes in order according to their strengths. Some athletes are better at handing off than receiving a baton. Each position in the order requires its own skills (see table below). Official Special Olympics Athletics rules list all the relay events offered in competition.

### Relays Key Skills Checklist

| <b>YOUR ATHLETE CAN</b>  |
|--|
| <p><b>FIRST LEG</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perform a block or stand-up start</li> <li>• Hold baton in hand while running</li> <li>• Sprint under control with hips tall, erect posture, slight forward body lean from ground</li> <li>• Run the curve and stay in lane</li> <li>• Pass baton in exchange zone with designated technique</li> </ul>                                 |
| <p><b>SECOND LEG</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Receive baton in exchange zone with designated technique</li> <li>• Hold baton in hand while running</li> <li>• Sprint under control with hips tall, erect posture, slight forward body lean from ground</li> <li>• Run the straight away</li> <li>• Pass baton in exchange zone with designated technique</li> </ul>                  |
| <p><b>THIRD LEG</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Receive baton in exchange zone with designated technique</li> <li>• Hold baton in hand while running</li> <li>• Sprint under control with hips tall, erect posture, slight forward body lean from ground</li> <li>• Run the curve and stay in lane if 4x100</li> <li>• Pass baton in exchange zone with designated technique</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>FOURTH "ANCHOR" LEG</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Receive baton in exchange zone with designated technique</li> <li>• Hold baton in hand while running</li> <li>• Sprint under control with hips tall, erect posture, slight forward body lean from ground</li> <li>• Run the curve and stay in lane</li> <li>• Lunge forward and lean through finish line</li> </ul>           |



## BEGINNING AND ADVANCED EXCHANGES

**BEGINNING EXCHANGES:** The baton carrier has baton in the right hand. The baton receiver accepts the baton in the left hand. He/She immediately moves it to the right hand. There is a risk that athletes could drop the baton when changing hands or that this switch could impact their running action.

**ADVANCED EXCHANGES:** The baton receiver does not switch the baton from one hand to the other. The runners exchange as follows:

| Leg                               | Athlete Role  |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| <b>Lead-off Leg</b>               | carries baton in right hand   |
| <b>Second Leg</b>                 | receives in left hand, carries in left hand and passes with left hand, stands closer to right in lane   |
| <b>Third Leg</b>                  | receives in right hand, carries in right hand and passes with right hand, stands closer to left in lane |
| <b>Fourth Leg or "Anchor" Leg</b> | receives in left hand, carries in left hand, stands closer to right in lane                             |

When possible, it is recommended to teach athletes the advanced exchange.

The baton must be placed firmly into the waiting runner's palm. There are two common ways to teach this exchange.

Up-sweep exchange

Down-sweep exchange

Coaches should choose the method best suited for their athletes. The Down-Sweep exchange is more popular and easier for athletes to learn. It allows the runner to see where they are placing the baton.

## COACHING POINTS UP-SWEEP BATON EXCHANGE

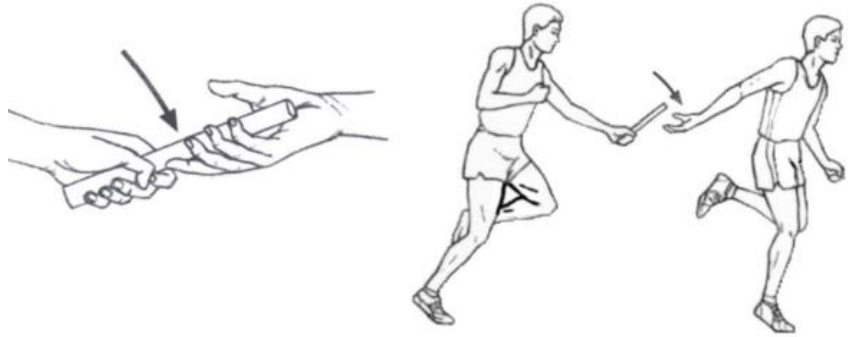
1. Outgoing runner begins to sprint at the signal from the incoming runner
2. Outgoing runner reaches back with receiving hand – forming an inverted V (see image)
3. Incoming runner places baton into outgoing runners hand, in an upward sweeping motion
4. Outgoing runner takes the baton from incoming runner and sprints.





## COACHING POINTS DOWN-SWEEP BATON EXCHANGE

1. Outgoing runner begins to sprint at the signal from the incoming runner
2. Outgoing runner reaches back with receiving hand – almost parallel to the track.
3. Outgoing runner's palm is facing up, forming a V with thumb towards torso.
4. Incoming runner places baton into outgoing runner's hand, in downward sweeping motion
5. Outgoing runner takes the baton from incoming runner and sprints.



## COACHING POINTS - RECEIVING A VISUAL PASS

1. Receiving athlete stands in front of first zone line (nearest start line) to the right side of lane.
2. Place power foot forward. Look back over the left shoulder.
3. Hold left hand back. Keep body weight slightly forward.
4. Look back over left shoulder for incoming runner.
5. Begin running forward when incoming runner reaches a point 4-5 meters from exchange zone.
6. Keep left hand back, fingers pointing to left, thumb pointing down and palm up.
7. Watch incoming runner pass baton overhand into left hand.
8. Turn to look forward, continue running, and move baton to right hand.



## 4 X 100M RELAY

All runners in the 4x100m and 4x200m relays must stay in their designated lanes the entire race.

| Leg                               | Baton Ability                  | Athlete Strengths  |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| <b>Lead-off Leg</b>               | Passes baton                   | Good starter, with good acceleration and balance<br>Can run the curve, staying in the lane |
| <b>Second Leg</b>                 | Receives baton<br>Passes baton | Very fast runner<br>Ability to run strong straightaway<br>Excellent speed and endurance    |
| <b>Third Leg</b>                  | Receives baton<br>Passes baton | Can run the curve, staying in the lane   |
| <b>Fourth Leg or "Anchor" Leg</b> | Receives baton                 | Most competitive runner<br>Ability to catch and pass runners<br>Consistent finisher        |

### TOP TIPS FOR COACHING 4X100M RELAY BATON EXCHANGE (SKILL DEVELOPMENT)

1. **Holding baton**
  - a) Use a piece of tape around the baton, indicating where the athletes should hold it.
2. **Receiving baton**
  - a) Identify all the 20m exchange zones with athletes.
3. **Practice holding the recovery hand back.** The receiving hand depends on what type of exchange is chosen.

## 4 X 400M RELAY

A visual pass is often used for the 4x400m relay. This technique can also be used for the 400m (4x100m) relay. However, the exchange may take longer.

In the 4x400m relay, the lead-off (first) runner must stay in lane the entire lap. The 2nd runner may break for lane 1 after running around the first turn. The 3rd and 4th runners may break for lane 1 after receiving the baton. However, they must not impede another runner.

| Leg                               | Athlete Role   |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| <b>Lead-off Leg</b>               | Get the team out in front.<br>Must be aggressive and strong, and have a good sense of pace.<br>Ability to run in lane the entire lap.  |
| <b>Second Leg</b>                 | Keep the team in the race.<br>Must be physically strong, able to handle bumping.<br>Must be able to negotiate the breakpoint.<br>If the team is not in first place, job is to get team in first place. |
| <b>Third Leg</b>                  | Put team in a position to win.<br>Must be able to run well from behind or maintain a lead and build upon it.<br>Often, this is second best possible anchor on team.                                    |
| <b>Fourth Leg or "Anchor" Leg</b> | Secures the victory, puts the relay away.<br>Must be able to run well from behind or maintain a lead.<br>Ability to catch and pass runners.<br>Often, the strongest/fastest leg – the "horse."         |



## TRAINING TO IMPROVE TECHNIQUE - RELAYS

| Observation  | Correction by coach  | Drill/Test   |
|--|--|--|
| Incoming runner runs into outgoing runner                              | Outgoing runner may need to start running sooner.<br>Outgoing runner may not be standing close to the correct side of the lane | Correction of starting position.<br>Repetitive practice building to full speed.  |
| Exchange happens outside of zone                                       | Outgoing runner may need to start running later  | Practice with incoming runner shouting command at same spot.<br>Tip: Use a mark on the track.  |
| Incoming runner has difficulty putting baton in outgoing runner's hand | Receiving arm position must be at correct height and angle<br>Athlete practices holding the receiving arm steady.              | Outgoing runner needs to be aware of how the arm is held using proper form.<br>Outgoing runner can focus on strengthening exercises to hold arm in correct position. |

## TOP TIPS FOR COACHING RELAYS (SKILL DEVELOPMENT)

1. Demonstrate correct stance for running start.
2. Demonstrate correct hand position for passing and receiving baton.
3. Demonstrate ready position for outgoing (receiving) runner.
4. Practice hand-off while walking and jogging, and in race conditions.
5. Emphasize making the exchange as quickly as possible.
6. Demonstrate hand-off between all legs of the relay.
7. Establish running order as soon as possible.
8. Remind athletes that the incoming runner must remain in lane at all times. This includes after exchange has been made. Nothing they do should interfere with other runners.
9. Encourage relay runners carry the baton during other parts of the session. E.g. conditioning, sprint drills. This will help them to become comfortable and confident in holding the baton.
10. Remind the incoming runner to run through the pass. This means they should not slow down in the exchange zone. Encourage them call out to the outgoing runner if he/she is running too fast or too soon to complete the exchange in the zone.
11. Place strip of tape on the track to indicate incoming/outgoing runner marks.