

2025 T&F Rule Changes

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The following summarizes the major track and field rule changes for the coming year that are most directly relevant to the working official. There are many additional changes not noted here that are of a more administrative nature, are editorial changes, or are reorganization of specific rules. If you work as a referee, you are advised to review all the rule changes in the relevant rule books. Complete information on all rule changes can be found in the 2025 editions of each rule book. (*Editor's comments are in italics and enclosed in parentheses.*)

National Federation (High School) Rule Changes for 2025

- Rule 3-6-3, 5-7-6 – The 100 meter distance for recalling a standing start race because of a fall is now reduced to 50 meters. (*This brings the high school rule into line with the NCAA rule. It applies to any stand-up start for distance races and any race started in lanes containing more than one runner. The rule for cross country races is still 100 meters. Reminder: This recall applies only to HS and NCAA competitions; there is no such recall rule for USATF or WA competitions.*)
- Rule 5-13-3 – Wording changes clarify that runners must not deliberately run inside the curb of the track to gain an advantage either by shortening the race distance or by improving position. (*Leaving the track during a race by stepping inside the curb on the turn or on the straight is allowable if the runner is pushed in that direction, but the runner must return as quickly as possible to the track [and the runner who did the pushing might be subject to DQ for interference]. But a runner must not deliberately step inside the curb on the curve to shorten the distance of the race, nor can the runner step inside the curb on the curve or the straight for the purpose of passing another runner.*)
- Rule 6-2-2 Note 1 – In vertical jumps, at any given bar height, the time for all competitors remains the same until the next bar height. (*Unless, of course, a jumper is making consecutive attempts.*)
- Rule 6-2-2 Note 2 – In the vertical jumps, regardless of the number of competitors remaining, the first attempt of a competitor - at any given height - is one minute. (*A couple of notes to clarify these issues.*)
- Rule 6-2-2f – A new rule requiring verbal or visual notification by use of a yellow flag to inform field event athletes when 15 seconds remain in their time to begin their attempt. (*This change brings the high school rules in line with all the other rule books regarding the 15 second notification.*)
- Rule 6-2-2 Chart – Changes to clarify the time limits for beginning attempts in the field events.
- Rule 6-.3-2 Note 1 – Wording changes to clarify that in a jump-off in the vertical jumps, when the tying athletes have gone out at different heights because of passing, the jump-off will begin at the next height in the predetermined progression after the tying height.
- Rule 6-9-22 – Requires that the vertical plane of the cross bar in the high jump be set a minimum of 4 inches from the landing pads.

NCAA Rule Changes for 2025-2026 Rulebook

2025 was a rule change year for the NCAA, so there are a number of major changes for college meets. Note that the NCAA rule book is now organized into three sections (indoor, outdoor, cross country), with many of the rules appearing in both the indoor and outdoor sections. An important thing you need to be aware of is that the NCAA has now moved toward adopting the lane violation rules (although not completely) and shoe conformance rules of World Athletics in order to increase the likelihood of acceptance of any world record performances by collegiate athletes in collegiate meets.

- Rule 1-47 to 50, 9-47 to 50 Definitions - At the conclusion of each round of competition in the respective event, and after any existing challenges to attempts within the respective round have been resolved, the results of that round of competition in the event shall be time stamped and designated as official results. (*A series of new definitions of 'Official Results' for horizontal jumps, throws, track events and vertical jumps, each of which now require the official in charge of the event to record the time of the completion of each round, as well as the normal completion time of the whole event. The reason for this becomes apparent when you read the new language regarding 'challenges' (verbal protests) in Rule 5-7.1-2 and Rule 13-7.1-2, noted below.*)
- Rule 3-5.6, 11-6.6 – Requires use of a 5cm line on the ground (usually adhesive tape) with edge closest to approaching athlete placed along the vertical plane through the edge of the high jump crossbar closest to the take-off area. (*NCAA now has adopted the use of the indicator line for the high jump, as has been the case for USATF and WA for several years.*)
- Rule 3-6.6, 11-7.6 – Requires the use of the zero line in the pole vault, aligned with the back edge of the PV plant box. (*NCAA now has adopted the use of the 1cm indicator line on the ground for the pole vault, as has been the case for USATF*

and WA for several years. In the online version of the NCAA rule book, subparagraph b mentions a 5cm line on the landing pad; this portion of the rule has been rescinded.)

- Rule 3-8.2, 3-8.3 – The handle for the filled head weight shall have sides that do not exceed 160 mm or are not smaller than 100 mm inside measurement. A handle with no permanent connection point shall have all three sides of equal length. The handle for the all-metal head weight shall have sides that do not exceed 190 mm or smaller than 100 mm inside measurement. If the implement includes a harness, it shall be fabricated from a minimum of four structural straps sewn together to form a sling, with the four structural straps of webbing crossing underneath the head of the implement. (Clarification of the requirements for the indoor weight implement.)
- Rule 3-7.1 – Internal movement is permitted in synthetic covered indoor shots. (In the online version of the NCAA rule book, it says internal movement is not allowed. This has been corrected.)
- Rule 3-9, 11-12 – Effective 1 December 2026, it will be required that all equipment be recalibrated on a specified schedule for timing (every four years), implement inspection (annually) and distance measurement (annually). (A heads up to colleges and officials about new requirements beginning next year.)
- Rule 4-18.2, 12-19.2 – New language to specify duties of physicians/athletic trainers in clearing athletes for return to competition. (Clarifies how to handle situations where an athlete starts and does not complete an event but wants to continue competing in later events; a two-step process that referees need to be aware of. This applies not only an athlete that doesn't finish because of an injury, but also includes a hurdler who hits a hurdle or falls and does not finish the race.)
- Rule 5-2.7, 13-2.7 – When the number of competitors in preliminary rounds of field events are equal to or fewer than the number to advance to the final, a competitor will advance only if they have a valid mark in the preliminary rounds. (This is a change from the previous rule, which allowed a competitor to advance if they had just made an attempt during the prelims, even if it was a foul. Just like in track events, the athlete must earn their way into the final, they cannot just 'back in' without a valid mark.)
- Rule 5-7.1-2, 13-7.1-2 – 1. At the conclusion of a trial, the field event competitor or the competitor's coach may verbally register a challenge to the event official regarding any action or ruling pertaining to their competitor's current attempt. A challenge shall only be allowed from the time the competitor is called up and the countdown clock starts to the time the next competitor is called up and their countdown clock starts. Physical evidence related to a competitor's performance shall be measured, recorded, unannounced, and preserved until the referee renders a decision. 2. Protests relating to singular matters that develop during the conduct of the meet shall be made in writing at once and shall not be later than 15 minutes after the results have been deemed official and time stamped. (A change in terminology, from 'immediate or verbal protest' to 'challenge' of an official's call, which does not require protest paperwork, and only the competitor or the competitor's coach can make a challenge. After the immediate window of time of the competitor's attempt, the coach can only file a written protest, which must be done within the 15 minute time limit. This new language clarifies the parameters of the challenge and how they should be handled. Note the introduction of 'time stamped' here; this becomes important when considering the new definitions noted above. Protests must now be filed within 15 minutes of the completion of the round that is the subject of the protest. A coach can no longer file a protest during the finals, or after the event's conclusion, about something that happened during the prelims)
- Rule 5-8, 13-8 – New language that clarifies that only official meet video designated by meet management can be used by officials and referees for making decisions.
- Rule 5-9, 13-9 – Adds a table of abbreviations to be used in preparation of start lists and results.
- Rule 6-2, 14-2 – Modifies the failure to participate rule to apply only to meets that are scored competitions.
- Rule 6-3.1.b.3, 14-3.1.b.3 - In non-scored competitions, meet management may allow for pacing by individuals legally entered into a race or by the use of pacing light technology.
- Rule 6-4.4.d, 14-4.4-d - The front-facing identification number must be visible without alterations when the athlete is competing and shall be worn above the waistline and below the institution's name and/or logo. There shall be no front-facing identification number issued or worn by participants in track events that finish in lanes. (An interesting change that now requires that athletes competing in races run entirely in lanes do not wear bib numbers or name bibs on the front (but presumably can on the back). Apparently the hip numbers and staying in a defined lane is now considered sufficient for identifying each athlete in the race.)
- Rule 6-4.5, 14-5 – Extensive new language now requires that shoes worn in competition be listed on the World Athletics approved shoe list (<https://certcheck.worldathletics.org>). (This change is being made because there have been problems getting world record ratification for performances in collegiate meets that had no monitoring of shoes, as now require by World Athletics. This means that at any major

collegiate meet where there is any possibility of a world record performance there will have to be a 'shoe control official' who inspects a random sampling of 5-10% of shoes being worn in competition. The WA approved shoe list in the above link is updated at least monthly.)

- Rule 7-5.2.b, 15-5.2.b – Modifies the lane violation rule to approximate the World Athletics rule. A single step on or over the lane line to the left in races run in lanes is not a violation, but a second such step anywhere else in the race is a violation resulting in disqualification. Relay teams are considered a single unit. *(Again, a response to problems with getting collegiate meet performances ratified as world records. Note that this language is not exactly the same as the WA rule. One step on the line during a race is OK, but a second step anywhere else in the race is subject to a DQ. One difference is that these single step violations are not carried over to later rounds of the same event in NCAA competitions. A second difference is that the NCAA language allows one step not just on the line but also inside the line. A step fully inside the line, where no part of the shoe is in contact with the lane line, is a DQ in WA rules. This change in the lane violation rule means NCAA umpires are going to have to note and report any single step on the lane line, as well as the multiple steps they've reported in the past, and referees are going to have to keep track of these single step reports. The umpire reports also should specifically note whether the step was on or over the line.)*
- Rule 7-9-12, 15-9-12 – An extensive, almost complete rewrite of the rules regarding heat, sections, qualifying and lane assignment in a more concise and organized manner. *(A number of subtle changes in areas like assigning lanes, particularly in the longer sprints. Read the new language carefully.)*
- Rule 8-1.6, 16-1.6 - In the high jump, all competitors shall have their measured marks in place a minimum of 30 minutes prior to the start of competition. From a time period of 30 minutes prior to the start of the event, until the start of the event, no tape measures or measuring devices shall be allowed on the high jump apron for a competitor to measure or establish a mark. *(This is a small change important for HJ officials, meant primarily for meets with large numbers of competitors. In situations where an athlete's mark inadvertently is pulled up, the official can allow the use of the tape in the final 30 minute window to reset the mark. Does not apply to Combined Events, since they usually have only 30 minutes for warm-ups.)*
- Rule 8-3.2.a, 16-3.2.a – Now requires that the bar in the high jump be initially raised in an increment of 5cm.
- Rule 8-3.3.a, 16-3.3.a – Now requires that the bar in the pole vault be initially raised in an increment of 15cm.

USATF Rule Changes for 2025

At the 2024 USATF annual meetings held this past December in Orlando, the Rules Committee considered 82 rule changes. Sixty-three of them were accepted as submitted or with amendments; 19 were rejected, tabled or withdrawn. Twenty-one of the proposed changes involved the need to comply with recent World Athletics rule changes, but most of the changes involved Youth and Masters rules or changes to clarify interpretation of the rule. Among the rule changes of most immediate concern to working officials are the following:

- Rule 110.8 – Add: “Whenever possible, officials shall not judge an event in which an immediate family member or significant other is entered.” *(Formally states an informal policy in use for decades, but leaves some room for situations like youth meets where it is difficult to get enough officials.)*
- Rule 126.9 – Adds a Note to recommend that in throwing events only one set of flags be used at the circle or arc, and recommends signaling systems to be used in place of flags by officials in the landing sector. *(To reduce the risk of confusion when more than one set of flags is being used to signal a fair or foul attempt. WA compliance.)*
- Rule 132.4 – Adds “Competing under protest: P” to the chart of abbreviations used in results reporting. *(WA compliance.)*
- Rule 144.4(i) – In the rule regarding an athlete viewing video recordings of attempts, eliminates the words ‘previous’ from the phrase ‘of images of previous trial(s)’. *(To eliminate the interpretation that ‘previous’ does not include the just completed trial.)*
- Rule 163.5(g) – In the rule regarding lane violations, add a Note 5 “All lane infringements should be tracked in the competition data systems and shown on the start lists and results. See Rule 132.4 for the symbol to be used. The carry-forward rule applies throughout a given running event, not to a different running event. In the Combined Event, an athlete should only be disqualified for more than one infringement, if it occurs during the same race. There is no carry-forward of the infringement to subsequent races within that Combined Event.” *(To provide clarity for the carry-forward rule.)*
- Rule 166.2(a), 166.2(f) – In Rule 166.2(a) delete the wording and the Note after “up to 12 runners may start the 800 Meters”. In Rule 166.2(f) delete Note 2 and add the following to Note 1: “The decision for the start-line configuration rests with the Games Committee for the first round and with the appropriate Referee thereafter. The procedure may be applied to any event situation where there are more athletes than lanes available. For Youth Athletics exception see Rule 303.1(c).” *(Eliminates contradictions within other sections of Rule 166 created by recent WA rule changes.)*

- Rule 180.17(b) – Add “These practice trials or throws shall be taken only from the runway or circle being used for the event.” *(The primary effect of this addition to the rule will be that in the javelin throw the ‘picking line’ commonly used in the landing sector in warm-ups will no longer be allowed. This is for WA compliance.)*
- Rule 180.23 – Add: “The Chief Judge shall direct the relevant athlete to adapt or remove any mark not complying with this rule. If they do not, the Judge shall remove the marks.” *(This regards the rule allowing throwers in circle throws to place a marker on the ground behind or adjacent to the circle. WA compliance.)*
- Rule 187.4(c) – “All substances used on the hands, gloves and on the implements shall be easily removable from the implement using a wet cloth and shall not leave any residue.” *(To clarify what types of substances can be used for a better grip in the throwing events.)*
- Rule 193.2 – Revise: “If the javelin breaks during a throw or while in the air, it shall not count as a failure, provided the trial was made in accordance with the rules. Nor shall it count as a failure if the competitor thereby loses his/her balance and as a result contravenes any part of this Rule. In both cases, the competitor shall be awarded a replacement trial.” *(To better align with the WA rule.)*
- Rule 193.11 – Modify specifications for the Aero Javelin in Youth Athletics, specifying the nominal weights shall be 250 grams or 450 grams, and adds a table of specifications for the 250 gram Aero Javelin. *(For the 8 and Under Division and the 9-10 Division, the 250 gram Aero Javelin will replace the 300 gram Mini Javelin effective December 1, 2026. Until then, either type can be used.)*
- Rule 195.9 – Updates the specification table for Masters weight throw implements and modifies the Note 2 to clarify that the construction, weights and dimensions for implements by Masters competitors are those adopted by WMA.
- Rule 200.2(c) – Add: “Note: The order for Masters competitions and records shall only be that in Rule 200.1(b).” *(The order for Masters competition in the outdoor pentathlon and the decathlon, and for acceptable records, shall only be that specified in Rule 200.1(b). WMA compliance.)*
- Rule 244.6. 244.7 – Adds specifications for finish line systems for Open LDR Championships.
- Rule 262.10 – Add: “For purposes of setting or breaking a Masters Record, if a Masters athlete has been suspended for more than 6 months by USADA or WADA for a violation of the anti-doping protocols, the time of suspension shall be doubled, during which time that athlete cannot set or break a Masters Record. After this additional time of suspension has ended, the athlete can only set or break a USATF Masters Record at a competition in which Masters athletes are subject to doping control.” *(Establishes parameters for banning Masters athletes from establishing Masters age group records after they have been sanctioned for doping.)*
- Rule 300.1(b), 300.1(h) – Establishes a High Performance/Emerging Elite division for 15-16 and 17-18 year olds in Youth Athletics. *(This new division is being established to create advanced competition opportunities for the older Youth athletes, to prepare them for the next level of competition. This new division will become effective on January 1, 2026.)*
- Rule 301 – For the 13-14 Division boys 100 hurdles, changes hurdle height from 33” to 36”. *(To provide a smoother transition for this age group to the 39” height in high school. This change won’t apply to indoor events until June 1, 2025.)*
- Rule 301 – For the 15-16 Division and the 17-18 Division, add Mixed Gender Relays (4x100, 4x400, 4x800), alternating genders for relay legs.
- New Rule 303.1(m) – “Always advance only eight athletes to the final round in both track and field events. *(Removes this sentence from the end of the previous subparagraph (l) and places it as a separate rule to emphasize it, since it often went unnoticed when it was embedded in the previous rule.)*
- Rule 320.5 – Revise to read: “The age division of a relay team is the age division of the youngest athlete on the entry form, as determined by Rule 320.4, and an athlete from that age division must actually compete in the relay. *(Tightens up the relay age group requirements, requiring a runner from the team’s age group division to actually compete on the relay. This eliminates a loophole where teams looking for extra points, with a stronger relay team than those in a lower age group, would add a team member on the entry form in that lower age group to get their stronger team in that event, but never actually run the younger runner that qualified them for the lower age division.)*
- Rule 332.2(i) – A number of changes to the hurdle placement specifications for Masters short hurdle events in the oldest age groups, including adding some new age groups. *(WA compliance. Check the published rule book for exact specifications. Also, check to see whether it applies this year or next year. My notes from the Rules Committee meeting say it doesn’t go into effect until 2026, but that note does not appear in the draft of the new rule book I was sent.)*
- Rule 332(i) – Change in the barrier height for the men’s 25-59 3Km steeplechase. Now 0.838m (33”) barriers are acceptable, as well as the previous 0.914m (36”) barriers. *(WA compliance. Either height may be used for competitions and for records, but the time for a new record must better the previous record no matter which barrier height is used; there will*

be only one record for the men's 25-59 3Km steeplechase. At the moment, few if any barriers have a 33" option, so this will take a while to become common as new barriers are purchased.)

- Rule 332.3(e)-(f) – Delete these two subparagraphs and replace with:
 - “(e) The total number of athletes remaining in the competition for rule 180.12(e) [*the time limit rule*] shall be determined by the total number of athletes remaining in the flight, not the total number of competitors remaining in an individual age/sex division.
 - (f) Rule 181.7(a) and Rule 181.7(b) [*regarding bar raising increments*] shall apply for all athletes in a flight, as a whole, regardless of the flight's age/sex division composition.
 - (g) Rule 181.7(c) [*regarding the event winner choosing their next height*] shall only apply to an athlete who has won their respective age/sex division in a flight and is attempting a U.S National or WMA Record. In such a case, the time allowed for the trial shall be that allowed as if only one athlete remains in the competition and the attempted record height shall be inserted into the predetermined height progression, if necessary, for that athlete only. (*A rewrite of this section to try to clarify how an official should handle vertical jump record attempts in competitions with mixed age groups and genders.*)
- Delete Rule 333.4 – Regarding prohibition of using the penalty zone in Masters race walks. (*The use of the penalty zone is now allowed in Masters race walk events. WMA compliance.*)

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