



March 18, 2026

NFHS Track and Field Weekly Rule Interpretations

Pace Lights and Pacing: Pace light technology is a frequent question received in the NFHS office.

SITUATION: During a meet the coach of team A asks that meet management utilize the electronic pacing light on the track for the 3200 meter race. Meet management asks the meet referee if this is permissible and is informed it is not. **RULING:** Correct Procedure.



COMMENT: NFHS rules consider this technology a type of aid and is not permissible. Any sort of pacing device or person is not permitted in high school races unless the individual is entered in the actual race. This prohibits adult pacers as well. [4-6-5 and 4-6-6]

SITUATION: During the 1600-meter run, a teammate of A1: (a) runs a few steps toward the track shouting encouragement, or (b) runs alongside A1 for five or more strides. **RULING:** Legal in (a). Illegal in (b). **COMMENT:** It is not the intent of the rule to disqualify anyone for a spontaneous act of enthusiasm. However, running alongside a competitor for five or more strides would be considered pacing. [4-6-5]

Assistance: The assessment of a downed competitor within the competition area by a health-care professional designated by the games committee, for the purpose of determining the competitor's ability to continue without providing assistance, shall not be considered aid. [4-6-5 note]

SITUATION: A1 is finishing the last lap of the 3200. On the back straightaway, A1 passes a fellow competitor and notices that B1 is struggling to breathe. A1 slows and helps B1 by holding the fellow competitor up. A1 continues to help around the curve when a health-care provider who was assisting an athlete at the pole vault finally runs out to help. A1 finishes the race. Both competitors are disqualified. **RULING:** Incorrect procedure. **COMMENT:** A competitor who provides assistance to an injured or ill competitor should not be disqualified if neither the individual competitor providing the assistance nor the team gains an advantage as a result of providing the assistance. [4-6-5]

SITUATION: In the final stretch of the 3200, A1 appears to be shaky, displaying lack of balance, and extremely fatigued. A1 then falls to the ground and attempts to crawl to the finish line. A medical official, approved by the games committee, comes to evaluate the downed runner (A1) and (a) walks alongside and talks with the athlete as the athlete crawls, (b) helps A1 to feet and determines A1 can complete the race on their own (c) helps A1 to their feet and assists A1 toward the finish line. **RULING:** (a) and (b) Legal, even though A1 was helped to their feet for the medical evaluation, A1 did not receive aid from the designated health-care professional (c) illegal, A1 was assisted down the track toward the

finish line and completion of race. **COMMENT:** The games committee will establish appropriate health-care professionals for a meet. These individuals may evaluate a downed competitor during a race without resulting in disqualification provided no assistance is given in progressing along the course. [4-6-5]

Recording during race or trial

SITUATION: In the triple jump, the event judge notices A1 is wearing a pair of glasses that have a light on the front during warm-ups. The judge notifies the athlete that they are not permitted to wear recording (audio or visual) devices during a trial nor in restricted areas on the track. **RULING:**

Correct procedure. **COMMENT:** The event judge may also notify the head field judge of the warning. If the athlete continues to wear the recording devices during a trial the athlete is disqualified from the event. [4-6-6]



SITUATION: A2 shows up to the clerk wearing sunglasses for their 400 meter race. As the clerk places each athlete in lane and notices that A2's glasses now have a light on the bridge of the glasses. The clerk notifies the athlete they are not permitted to wear audio or visual recording devices during an event. **RULING:** Correct procedure. **COMMENT:** The clerk may also notify the meet referee and starters of the warning. If the athlete continues to wear the recording devices during a trial the athlete is disqualified from the event. [4-6-6]

SITUATION: A2 finishes the 200 meter race and the meet referee notices that there is recording device in their glasses. The meet referee notifies the athlete of their disqualification. **RULING:** Correct procedure. **COMMENT:** The athlete is not permitted to wear audio or video device during a race or trial or in restricted areas. [4-6-6]



March 25, 2026

NFHS Track and Field Weekly Rule Interpretations

Aids in Field Events: In field events, competitors shall not use weights or artificial aids. The competitor shall not wear a shoe or shoes which incorporate or contain any devices that give the competitor an unfair advantage during a trial. In the pole vault, pushing the vaulter on the back at take-off in warm-up and competition is not permitted. [6-2-16]

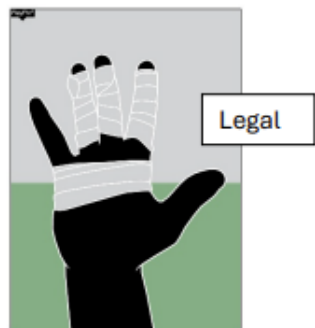
SITUATION: At the shot put the event judge notices that athlete C1 is wearing a device on their hand that groups finger together and then crosses the palm and wraps around the wrist. The event judge asks the athlete to remove the device as this is considered an artificial aid.

RULING: Correct Procedure. **COMMENT:** This device is considered an aid and not permitted during competition. [6-2-16, 6-4-1, 6-5-1]



SITUATION: At the shot put the event judge notices that athlete C1 is wearing a device on their hand that slides onto several fingers and then crosses the palm and wraps around the wrist. The event judge asks the athlete to remove the device as this is considered an artificial aid. **RULING:** Correct Procedure. **COMMENT:** While the fingers can move independently this device is considered an aid and not permitted during competition. [6-2-16, 6-4-1, 6-5-1]

SITUATION: While A1 is warming up for the discus event, the event judge notices the athlete (a) has fingers taped together, (b) has tape on the fingers but all fingers can move independently. In Situation (a) the event judge asks the athlete to remove the tape. Situation (b) is legal. **RULING:** Correct procedure. **COMMENT:** Athletes are permitted to apply tape to their fingers as long as they are not taped together and all fingers can move independently. [6-4-1, 6-5-1]





April 1, 2026

NFHS Track and Field Weekly Rule Interpretations

Excused Athlete: NFHS Rule 3-2-3p specifies that the games committee determines both the time limit and the procedures to follow when a competitor is excused. State associations may adopt different policies regarding excused athletes and can enforce rules that are stricter than NFHS guidelines. It's also important to remember that track and field is education-based, so officiating should prioritize fairness and support rather than a "gotcha" approach.

6.2.3 SITUATION D: Guidelines for a competitor who has been excused from a field event to compete in another event include:

- The competitor must receive permission from the head event judge.
- The head event judge must record the time excused.
- The head event judge may allow the competitor to take a trial/attempt out of turn before being excused.
- The head event judge will use some judgment in extending the time excused under special circumstances, e.g., 3200-meter run.
- In the high jump and pole vault, if the competitor has failed to return in the allotted time and all other remaining competitors have passed, failed or cleared the existing height, the crossbar may be raised to the next height, and the judge will automatically pass the excused competitor to the new height.
- Coaches must take into account the limited time allowed to compete in another event when determining the events any individual competitor enters.
- When an unusual circumstance, injury, reruns, etc., occurs that will prolong the absence of the excused participant, it shall be the competitor's responsibility to communicate this to the head event judge.

SITUATION: During the pole vault competition, the bar is at 14 feet, 0 inches. A1, who has not started vaulting, is excused to participate in the 100-meter dash. When A1 returns 15 minutes later and finds the bar at 14 feet, 6 inches, and is told by the head event judge that they only have two attempts/trials remain because a trial/ attempt was counted for A1's failure to return within the excused time limit. The decision is protested to the meet referee. **RULING:** The protest should be upheld. **COMMENT:** When A1 failed to return in the allotted minutes, A1 forfeited the trials at that height and should be recorded as passed trials/ attempts. While the crossbar will not be lowered, A1 is allowed to enter competition at the new height, with three trials remaining. [6-2-3]

SITUATION: In the finals of the long jump, A1, who has the second-best jump in the prelims, is excused to compete in the 4x400-meter relay. A1 takes the option, from the head event judge, to take a second trial/attempt immediately following the first round of trials before reporting to the relay clerk.

A1 has not returned prior to the third round of trials and when the judge calls the competitors for the final trial, B1, who is last in order, refuses to take the final attempt until A1 has taken a final attempt.

RULING: B1 has earned the right to make the last attempt/trial, and the request will be honored.

COMMENT: If A1 fails to return within the limit, and there are no extenuating circumstances that would warrant any special consideration, the head event judge could declare that A1's third and final attempt/trial is forfeited. [6-2-3]

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RULING: B1 has earned the right to make the last attempt/trial and the request will be honored.

COMMENT: If A1 fails to return within the limit, and there are no extenuating circumstances that would warrant any special consideration, the head event judge could declare that A1's third and final attempt/trial is forfeited. [6-2-3]



April 8, 2026

NFHS Track and Field Weekly Rule Interpretations

Under NFHS rules, every entered athlete starts the meet as a contestant. That status changes the moment they report to the clerk of the course for a running event, or to the field event judge for a field event. Once the athlete reports they become a competitor. It's a simple transition, but it carries real consequences. Contestants who do not report shall not be allowed to participate in that event. State Associations may make these rules stricter so make sure you check your state's rules.

Rule 4 – 1

ART. 1 . . . A contestant is any athlete entered in the meet. The contestant becomes an entry at the time the games committee has established as the deadline for accepting entries.

ART. 2 . . . Contestants officially become competitors when they report to the clerk of the course or field-event judge for an event in which the contestants are entered.

ART. 3 . . . *Contestants who fail to report prior to the clerk of the course closing the entries in the running events or after the judge starts competition in the field events shall not be allowed to participate in that event.*

FAILURE TO REPORT OR LATE REPORT

SITUATION: A1 fails to report to the clerk of the course for the prelims in the 100-meter high hurdles. Because of a false start, the race is recalled, at which time A1 appears at the starting line and asks to be placed in the heat. **RULING:** The request will be denied. **COMMENT:** Entries were closed when the clerk turned the runners over to the starter. [4-1-3]

SITUATION: A1 has been assigned to the third flight of the long jump. A1 reports to the long-jump event judge: (a) after flight No. 2 has completed preliminary trials, but prior to the start of competition in flight No. 3; or (b) after competition has started in the third flight, but prior to A1's being called to the order of trials. **RULING:** Deny participation in (a) and (b). **COMMENT:** The contestant must report to the field-event judge prior to the start of the event. [4-1-3]

SITUATION: Following the final call for the 4x200-meter relay, only one member of Team A reports to the clerk of the course. **RULING:** Team A shall not be allowed participate. This shall count as an event for those four listed to participate. [4-1-3]



April 15, 2026

NFHS Track and Field Weekly Rule Interpretations

SITUATION: Ten days after the meet, officials discover Team A used an ineligible participant in the 4x100-meter relay. Team A, which finished first in that relay, won the meet by two points. **RULING:** Team points and places in the 4x100-meter relay are forfeited by Team A. Team A forfeits the meet championship to the newly adjusted point leader. **COMMENT:** The rule provides for correction of the meet results at any time, unless determined otherwise by the state association policy, when involving a participant who is disqualified from further participation in the meet. [2-3-2]

SITUATION: In the 4x100-meter relay, Team A wishes to place a mark on the track outside the exchange zone to aid the outgoing runners in timing their start. The mark, or marker, is: (a) half of a colored tennis ball placed in Team A's lane; or (b) a colored tongue depressor; or (c) a chalk mark. Meet management approves the marking in (a) and (b), but prohibits any markings such as chalk, water-soluble spray paint, etc. **RULING:** Correct procedure. **COMMENT:** The games committee and/or meet management is within its authority to prohibit all markings on any surface, including the running track. (3-2-4, 3-2-3h)

SITUATION: Following the 4x200-meter relay, it is discovered that the clerk of the course assigned Team A to the incorrect starting line and the referee orders the race to be rerun. During the original race, the head umpire reports that A1 and A2 did not complete the exchange within the limits of the exchange zone and Team B was guilty of a lane violation. Team C requests to use one of its alternate runners in the rerun. **RULING:** If the referee believes the incorrect starting line may have contributed to the relay-exchange violation, Team A would be permitted to participate in the rerun. Team B will be disqualified and not eligible for the rerun, and Team C may substitute an alternate runner in the rerun provided that runner was listed as one of the eight possible entries on its relay entry card. (5-10-2, 5-11-1, 5-12-1)

SITUATION: At the start of the 4x100 race, Runner No. 3 is bouncing around in and out of the exchange zone to warm up. As Runner No. 2 approaches, Runner No. 3 enters the zone and clearly stops to prepare to receive the baton. They then run forward farther into the zone and exchange the baton inside of the zone. The umpire recommends they be disqualified for not being in the zone at the start of the race. **RULING:** Incorrect ruling because the athlete made a deliberate stop within the zone to prepare. **COMMENT:** The rule is intended to have the runner stationed inside the exchange zone before receiving the baton and not necessarily when the race is started. [5-3-3]

SITUATION: In the boys 4x400-meter relay, Team A is running in Lane 6. Approximately 5 meters from the finish line, A4's baton drops after hitting A4's leg. It flies through the air in front of the runner and: (a) A4 catches it about 3 meters before crossing the finish line, or (b) A4 catches it just after crossing the finish line. The coach of Team B, which finished second behind Team A, protests to the referee citing that Team A did not legally cross the finish line and should be disqualified. **RULING:** If in (a) the head umpire and referee

determine A4 was in control of the baton when A4 crossed the finish line and no interference occurred and no advantage was gained, it is legal. In (b), since A4 was not in control of the baton as A4 crossed the finish line, Team A is disqualified. [5-10-6]

SITUATION: During a relay, A1 passes the baton to A2 in assigned Lane 1. A1, steps off the track. During the actual exchange, A1 was running on the grass surface outside the lane, but within the exchange zone while A2 remained within the assigned exchange lane and zone. The baton was: (a) within the exchange zone, (b) outside the lane and zone when it was exchanged. No interference with any other competitor occurs.

RULING: It is an illegal exchange in both (a) and (b). Team A is disqualified. **COMMENT:** The exchanges are illegal because in (a), A1 is off the track and in (b), the baton is not handed off in the exchange zone. It is not legal for the outgoing runner to touch the baton outside of the exchange zone. [5-10-7]



April 22, 2026

NFHS Track and Field Weekly Rule Interpretations

SITUATION: Prior to the beginning of competition in the high jump, A1 notifies the judge of a desire to pass until the bar reaches 6 feet, 6 inches. When the bar is raised to 6 feet, 4 inches, A1 requests permission to jump: (a) prior to the beginning of the competition at 6 feet, 4 inches; (b) after competition has begun at that height; or (c) after competition in A's flight at 6 feet, 4 inches has been completed. **RULING:** Legal in (a). In (b), A1 will be permitted to take the regular position in the order of trials. If A1's position has been passed during the first round of trials, A1 will have two remaining trials at 6 feet, 4 inches. If A1 misses both trials, A1 will have one trial remaining at the next succeeding height. In (c), A1 cannot begin competition until the next height. [6-8-1]

SITUATION: B1 has passed the first four heights in the high jump competition that started 49 minutes ago. Prior to entering competition, the coach of B1 requests 90 seconds for warm-up before the bar is raised. The event judge gives the athlete a warm-up. **RULING:** Incorrect procedure. **COMMENT:** Competitors who have not entered the competition within 60 minutes from the first attempt of the competition shall be allowed a warm-up in the high jump and pole vault. [6-8-6]

SITUATION: A1 and B1 have waited to enter the pole vault competition in a large invitation until the bar reached 14 feet. The time from the first competitor's attempt until the bar reached 14 feet was over an hour. The event judge removes the bar and gives A1 two minutes of warm-up and then gives B1 two minutes of warm-up before the bar is placed at 14 feet. **RULING:** Correct procedure. **COMMENT:** Competitors who have not entered the competition within 60 minutes from the first attempt of the competition shall each be allowed a 1½-minute warm-up in the high jump and a 2-minute warm-up in the pole vault. Officials should manage the clock as time approaches the one hour and coaches should prepare their athletes to be ready. [6-8-6]