



## Relays

Relays in athletics are the time when athletes get to come together as a team. Relay racing is the art of running with a baton and passing it from one teammate to the other, and making three exchanges with the fourth runner crossing the finish line with the baton.

The most difficult concepts to instill in relay athletes are running away from someone while trying to receive something from that person, and passing within the “zone.” The ultimate goal of the relay is to move the baton around the track and across the finish line in the fastest way possible without getting disqualified.

Coaches need to incorporate relay passing into daily conditioning exercises. The coach may find that some athletes are better at handing off than receiving a baton. Place the athletes accordingly. The lead-off runner only has to hand off, but must be consistent at getting a legal start. The second and third runners have to both hand off and receive the baton. The fourth runner only receives the baton but must know how to effectively finish a race.

The Special Olympics relay races include the 4x100-meter and the 4x400-meter, which can also be called 400m and 1600m relays.

### 4 x 100m Relay

All runners in the 4x100m relay must stay in their designated lanes the entire race.

Leg	Baton Ability	Athlete Strengths
<b>Lead-off Leg</b>	Passes baton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Good starter, with good acceleration and balance</li><li>• Can run the curve, staying in the lane</li></ul>
<b>Second Leg</b>	Receives baton Passes baton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Very fast runner</li><li>• Ability to run strong straightaway</li><li>• Excellent speed and endurance</li></ul>
<b>Third Leg</b>	Receives baton Passes baton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Can run the curve, staying in the lane</li></ul>
<b>Fourth Leg or “Anchor” Leg</b>	Receives baton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Most competitive runner</li><li>• Ability to catch and pass runners</li></ul>

### Teaching Relay

Holding baton

- ♦ Grasp one end of the baton with the fingers around the baton and thumb lying on top of it.
- ♦ When teaching how to hold, use a piece of tape around the baton, indicating where the athletes should grasp the baton.

Receiving baton

- ♦ Identify the 20m exchange zones with athletes.
- ♦ Stand just inside the zone.
- ♦ Have power foot forward (see Starts Section).
- ♦ Hold recovery hand back. Receiving hand depends on what type of exchange is chosen.



### Beginning and Advanced Exchanges

In beginning exchanges, the baton carrier has baton in the right hand; baton receiver accepts the baton in the left hand and immediately shifts it to the right. The risks are that athletes could drop the baton when changing hands and that the shift may hinder running action.

In advanced exchanges, the baton receiver does not switch the baton from one hand to the other; the runners exchange as follows:

<b>1st runner</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• carries baton in right hand</li></ul>
<b>2nd runner</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• receives in left hand, carries in left hand and passes with left hand, stands closer to right in lane</li></ul>
<b>3rd runner</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• receives in right hand, carries in right hand and passes with right hand, stands closer to left in lane</li></ul>
<b>4th runner</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• receives in left hand, carries in left hand, stands closer to right in lane</li></ul>

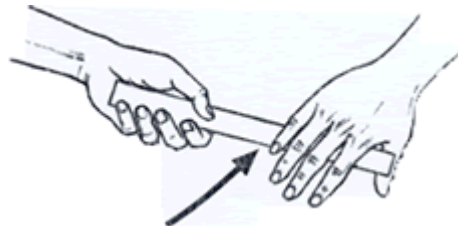
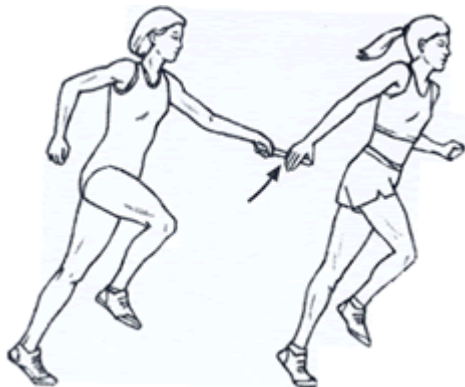
It is recommended to teach athletes the advanced exchange wherever possible.

### Up-Sweep Exchange

The baton is placed “up” into the waiting runner’s palm. The waiting runner holds the arm with palm facing down. The thumb and finger form an upside down “V.”

#### Teaching Points

1. Upon command from incoming runner or when incoming runner hits predetermined mark, outgoing runner begins to sprint.
2. Outgoing runner reaches back with receiving hand, forming an inverted “V.”
3. Incoming runner places baton in receiver’s hand with an upward motion.
4. Outgoing runner takes baton from incoming runner.



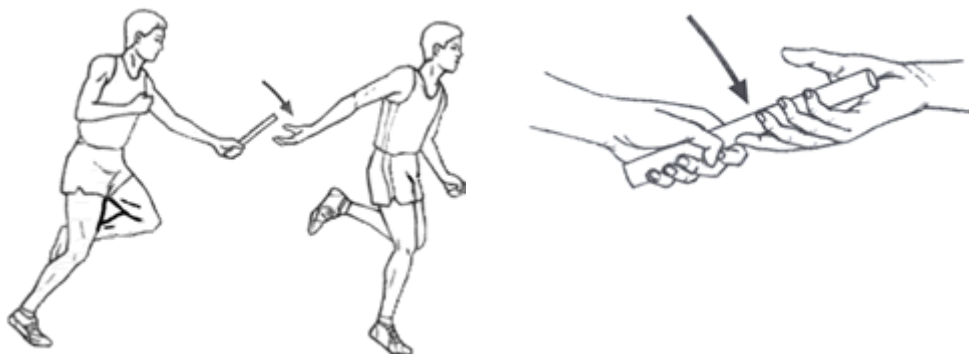


### Down-Sweep Exchange

The baton is placed “down” into the waiting runner’s palm. The waiting runner holds the arm with palm facing up, in a “V,” with the thumb positioned toward the body. This technique is the most popular of the relay exchanges.

#### Teaching Points

1. Upon command or when incoming runner hits mark, outgoing runner begins to sprint.
2. Outgoing runner reaches back with receiving hand almost parallel to track.
3. Palm is facing up, forming a “V,” with thumb turned toward torso.
4. Incoming runner places baton in receiver’s hand with a downward sweeping motion.
5. Outgoing runner takes baton from incoming runner.



### 4 x 400m Relay

A visual pass is described (see below) for the 1600m (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 runner must stay in lane the entire lap. The 2<sup>nd</sup> runner can break for lane 1 after running around the first turn. The 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> runners may break for lane 1 after receiving the baton, as long as other runners are not impeded.

Leg	Athlete Role
<b>Lead-off Leg</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Get the team out in front.</li> <li>• Must be aggressive and strong, and have a good sense of pace.</li> <li>• Ability to run in lane the entire lap.</li> </ul>
<b>Second Leg</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep the team in the race.</li> <li>• Must be physically strong, able to handle bumping.</li> <li>• Must be able to negotiate the breakpoint.</li> <li>• If the team is not in first place, job is to get team in first place.</li> </ul>
<b>Third Leg</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Put team in a position to win.</li> <li>• Must be able to run well from behind or maintain a lead and build upon it.</li> <li>• Often, this is second best possible anchor on team.</li> </ul>
<b>Fourth Leg or “Anchor” Leg</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secures the victory, puts the relay away.</li> <li>• Must be able to run well from behind or maintain a lead.</li> <li>• Ability to catch and pass runners.</li> <li>• Often, the strongest/fastest leg – the “horse.”</li> </ul>



## Teaching Points

### Receiving a Visual Pass

1. Receiving athlete stands in front of first zone line (nearest start line), and to the right side of lane.
2. Place power foot forward and look back over the left shoulder.
3. Hold inside hand back (left hand) and keep body weight slightly forward.
4. Look back over inside 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.

## Relay Drills

Practice, practice, practice is the key to successful relay teams. Below are a few reminders before we get into training drills.

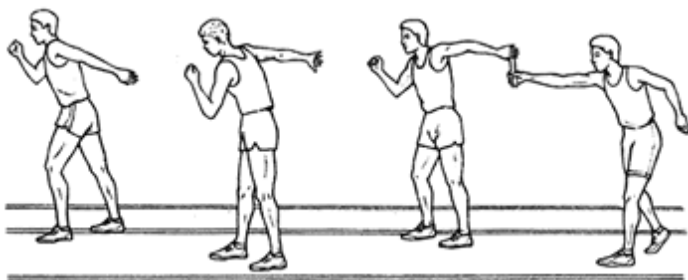
### Light Touches Drill

#### Purpose

- ♦ Experience receiving and giving baton.
- ♦ Improvement of hand-eye coordination.

#### Teaching Points

1. With full relay team, take positions as if running relay.
2. Fourth leg is in front of 3rd leg, in front of 2nd leg, in front of 1st leg.
3. First leg has baton in right hand, will pass to 2nd leg and so on until baton reaches 4th leg.
4. Repeat. Can also do this while jogging.



### Continuous Relay Drill

#### Purpose

- ♦ Practice handing off in exchange zone

#### Teaching Points

1. Athletes will run 100m (or shorter) intervals.
2. Incoming runner passes to next runner.
3. Runners will remain where they finished running their interval while baton is carried around track.
4. Each runner passes to the next runner.
5. Repeat.