



RACE WALKING 101 – AN INTRODUCTION

Presented by the

Western Province Athletics Race Walking Commission (WPARWC)

1. What is Race Walking?

Race Walking differs from running in that the athlete is required to familiarise themselves with correct race walking technique in order to maintain contact with the ground whilst trying to move forward as fast as possible. The technique of the athlete is therefore of paramount importance and is governed by Rule 230 of the International Association of Athletics Federation (IAAF) rule 230 and defined as:

“Race walking is a progression of steps so taken that the walker makes contact with the ground so that no visible (to the human eye) loss of contact occurs. The advancing leg shall be straightened (i.e. not bent at the knee) from the moment of first contact with the ground until in the vertical upright position.”

Athletes are scrutinised during an event by a team of judges. The aim of the judges is to get as many athletes to the finish line ensuring that they are complying with the rules of race walking. A judge will issue a caution to an athlete by way of showing them a yellow paddle if the judge has concerns about an athlete's mode of progression, where they feel the athlete is in danger of breaking one of the two rules mentioned above. The yellow paddle will bear a symbol either > (for bent knee) or ~ (for loss of contact) and this will inform the athlete which element of the rule they are in danger of contravening. The judicial use of these cautions is how a judge may legally assist an athlete in getting to the finish line.

When a judge sees an athlete obviously not complying with either aspect of Rule 230 then the judge will issue a Red Card against the athlete, this is a notice for disqualification. The Red Card should be delivered to the Chief Judge immediately. When the Chief Judge receives three red cards from three different judges all for the same athlete then that athlete shall be disqualified from the race by the Chief Judge showing them a red paddle. Only the chief judge can disqualify an athlete.

A judge should wherever possible show a yellow caution paddle to an athlete prior to issuing a Red Card. In competitions held under IAAF rule 1.1 a, b, c, d and f the Chief Judge has the power to disqualify an athlete in the last 100m of the race when their mode of progression obviously fails to comply with Rule 230.1 regardless of the number of Red Cards that athlete has received. An athlete disqualified under these circumstances shall be allowed to finish the race.



WPA Team 2012 – National Champions

2. Rule 230

The following is the current wording of the I.A.A.F. Rule covering Race Walking. Note that there is reference in Rule 230 to various other I.A.A.F. Rules; a complete set of the Rules is available to download from www.iaaf.org.

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ATHLETICS FEDERATIONS

SECTION VII - RACE WALKING EVENTS

RULE 230

Race Walking

Definition of Race Walking

1. Race Walking is a progression of steps so taken that the walker makes contact with the ground, so that no visible (to the human eye) loss of contact occurs. The advancing leg shall be straightened (i.e. not bent at the knee) from the moment of first contact with the ground until the vertical upright position.

Judging

2. (a) The appointed judges of Race Walking shall elect a Chief Judge, if one has not been appointed previously.
(b) All the Judges shall act in an individual capacity and their judgements shall be based on observations made by the human eye.
(c) In competitions held under IAAF Rule 1(a), all Judges shall be International Race Walking Judges. In competitions held under IAAF Rule 1 (b) and (c), all Judges shall be either Area or International Race Walking Judges.
(d) For road races, there should normally be a minimum of six to a maximum of nine Judges including the Chief Judge.
(e) For track races, there should normally be six Judges including the Chief Judge.
(f) In competitions held under IAAF Rule 1(a) not more than one Judge from any country can officiate.

Chief Judge

3. (a) In competitions held under Rule 1(a), (b), (c), (d), the Chief Judge has the power to disqualify an athlete inside the stadium when the race finishes in the stadium or in the last 100m when the race takes place solely on the track or on the road course, when his/her mode of progression obviously fails to comply with the paragraph 1 above regardless of the number of previous Red Cards the Chief Judge has received on that athlete. An athlete who is disqualified by the Chief Judge under these circumstances shall be allowed to finish the race.
(b) The Chief Judge shall act as the supervising official for the competition, and act as a Judge only in the special situation noted in paragraph (a) above in competitions under IAAF Rule 1(a), (b), (c) and (d). In competitions held under IAAF Rule 1(a), (b) and (c), a maximum of two Chief Judge's Assistants shall be appointed. The Chief Judge's Assistant(s) are to assist with the notification of disqualifications only and shall not act as Race Walking Judges.
(c) For all competitions held under IAAF Rule 1(a), (b) and (c) an official in charge of the Posting Board(s) and a Chief Judge's Recorder shall be appointed.

Cautions

4. Athletes shall be cautioned when, by their mode of progression, they are in danger of failing to comply with paragraph 1 above by showing the athletes a yellow paddle with the symbol of the offence on each side. They cannot be given a second caution by one and the same Judge for the same offence. Having cautioned an athlete, the Judge shall inform the Chief Judge of his action after the competition.

Red Cards

5. When a Judge observes an athlete failing to comply with paragraph 1 above by exhibiting visible loss of contact or a bent knee during any part of the competition, the Judge shall send a Red Card to the Chief Judge.

Disqualification

6. (a) When three Red Cards from three different Judges have been sent to the Chief Judge, the athlete is disqualified and he shall be notified of this disqualification by the Chief Judge or a Chief Judge's Assistant by showing the athlete a red paddle. The failure to give notification shall not result in the reinstatement of a disqualified athlete.

(b) In all competitions, either directly controlled by the IAAF or taking place under IAAF permit, in no circumstances shall the Red Cards of two Judges of the same nationality have the power to disqualify.

(c) In track races, an athlete who is disqualified shall immediately leave the track and, in road races, shall, immediately after being disqualified, remove the distinguishing numbers and leave the course. Any disqualified athlete who fails to leave the course or track may be liable to further disciplinary action in accordance with IAAF Rules 22.1(f) and 145.2.

(d) One or more Posting Boards shall be placed on the course and near the finish to keep athletes informed about the number of Red Cards that have been sent to the Chief Judge for each athlete. The symbol of each offence should also be indicated on the Posting Board.

(e) For all IAAF Rule 1(a) competitions, hand held computer devices with transmission capability must be used by the judges to communicate all Red Cards to the Recorder and the Posting Board(s).

The Start

7. The races shall be started by the firing of a gun. The commands and procedure for races longer than 400m shall be used (Rule 162.3). In races which include a large number of athletes, a five-minute warning before the start of the race should be given, with additional warnings if required.

Safety and Medical

8. (a) The Organising Committee of Race Walking events shall ensure the safety of athletes and officials. In competitions held under IAAF Rule 1(a), (b) and (c), the Organising Committee shall ensure that the roads used for the competition are closed to motorised traffic in all directions.

(b) In competitions held under IAAF Rule 1(a), (b) and (c), the events shall be scheduled to start and finish in daylight.

(c) A hands-on medical examination during the progress of an event by a member or members of the official medical staff appointed by the Organising Committee and clearly identified by armbands, vests or similar distinctive apparel shall not be considered assistance.

(d) An athlete shall retire at once from the race if ordered to do so by the Medical Delegate or a member of the official medical staff.

Drinking/Sponging and Refreshment Stations




9. (a) Water and other suitable refreshments shall be available at the start and finish of all races.
(b) For all events up to and including 10km, drinking/sponging stations shall be provided at suitable intervals if weather conditions warrant such provision.
(c) For all events longer than 10km, refreshment stations shall be provided every lap. In addition, drinking/sponging stations for water only shall be placed approximately midway between the refreshment stations or more frequently if weather conditions warrant such provision.
(d) Refreshments, which may be provided by either the Organising Committee or the athlete, shall be placed at the stations so that they are easily accessible to, or may be put by authorised persons into the hands of, the athletes.
(e) An athlete who collects refreshment from a place other than the refreshment stations renders himself liable to disqualification by the Referee.
(f) In competitions held under IAAF Rule 1 (a), (b) and (c), a maximum of two officials per country may be stationed behind the refreshment table at any one time. No official shall, under any circumstances, run beside an athlete while he is taking refreshment.

Road Courses

10. (a) For competitions held under IAAF Rule 1(a), (b) and (c), the circuit shall be no longer than 2.5km and no shorter than 2km. For events that start and finish in the stadium, the circuit should be located as close as possible to the stadium.
(b) Road courses shall be measured in accordance with IAAF Rule 240.3.

Race Conduct

11. In events of 20km or more, an athlete may leave the road or track with the permission and under the supervision of an official, provided that by going off course he does not lessen the distance to be covered.
12. If the Referee is satisfied on the report of a Judge or Umpire or otherwise that an athlete has left the marked course thereby shortening the distance to be covered he shall be disqualified.

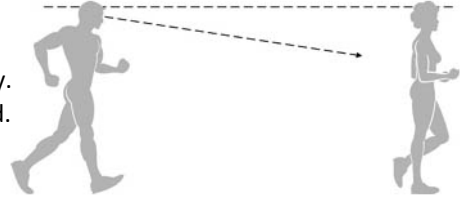
	Bent Knee
	Loss of Contact
	Disqualification

Race Walking Paddles

3. Race Walking Technique (About.com/howtoracewalk)

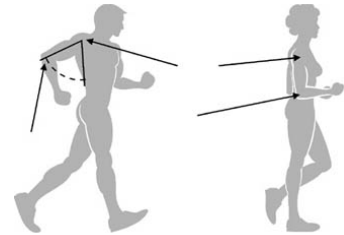
Head and Posture

- Head level, eyes looking approximately 20 yards in front of the body.
- Relax, avoid tension in the neck. The jaw should also remain relaxed.



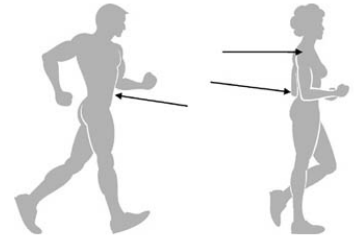
Arms

- Arms should be bent 85-90° at the elbows - at all times.
- Swing arms loosely and vigorously, pivoting from the shoulders.
- Keep hands close to the body, heel of the hand brushing by the hip bone.
- The hands should not cross the vertical nor horizontal midline of the torso.
- At the completion of the forward swing, the upper arm should be parallel with the torso. In the forward swing, the hands are not driven upward.
- During the back swing, imagine you are reaching for a handkerchief in your hip pocket. Avoid extending the arm past your current range of motion - this can lead to bent over posture and restricted breathing.
- Keep the hands relaxed - a loosely clenched fist with the thumb on top is the most effective technique.
- Proper arm action is very important in achieving and maintaining a powerful torso and leg technique - resulting in a faster, controlled pace.



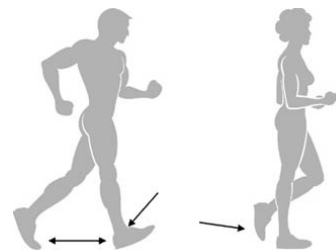
Torso

- Keep the body posture relaxed and straight. In other words, walk tall.
- Avoid leaning too far forward or sitting back. This can result in a loss of power.
- Keep abdominal muscles firm to maintain neutral lower back curvature. Over tightening of the abdominals can cause lower back discomfort. Over relaxation of the abdominals can cause "sway back".
- The shoulders must remain relaxed. Avoid "hiking up" the shoulders as this will cause tension in the neck and shoulder area.



Feet

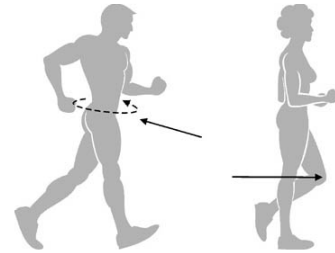
- One foot must constantly be in contact with the ground. The lead foot must make contact before the rear foot loses contact.
- Landing too far forward of the torso is over-striding and an inefficient technique that will slow the pace, cause "soft knee", and possibly lead to an injury of the Iliopsoas (groin) and Popliteal (behind the knee) muscles. On up-hill terrain, the hamstrings and gluteal muscles can be injured by over-striding.
- Land on the heel, ankle flexed within your range of motion. Roll straight forward through the center of the forefoot and off the end of the toes. Be sure not to lift the toes when flexing the ankle - this can stress the tendons at the top of the ankle.



- As the advancing foot has rolled off the toes, keep the ankle relaxed and the toes pointed towards the ground until past the supporting leg, at which time the ankle will begin to flex in preparation for the heel plant.
- Anterior Tibialis (shin) tightness, burning, or soreness may occur in the beginning, so take it easy until these muscles become conditioned.

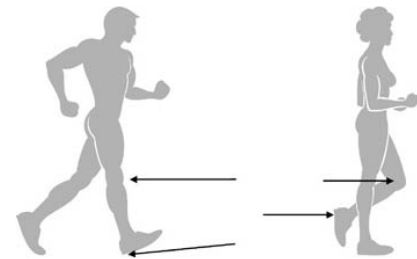
Hips

- Flex (rotate) pelvis forward and back horizontally. The action is similar to the "Twist" dance of the early 1960's.
- The Oblique (side abdominal) muscles are the primary flexors for this action.
- Avoid excessive lateral (side to side) hip motion as this can lead to an injury to the Gluteus Medius and Minimus (side of hip) muscles.
- Driving the knees forward and towards the centerline of the body will help bring the pelvis around. Flex (rotate) pelvis forward and back horizontally. The action is similar to the "Twist" dance of the early 1960's.



Legs and Stride

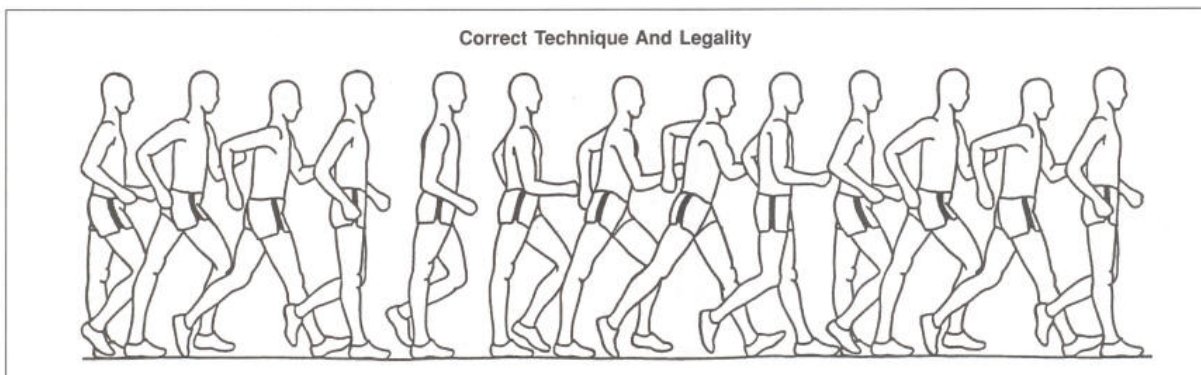
- The knee of the advancing leg must be straightened when the advancing foot makes contact with the ground.
- Bring the knee through low when the advancing leg swings forward.
- Move legs slowly at first, and then gradually increase leg speed (cadence).
- The proper way to achieve a faster pace is to increase leg speed, not over-striding. Maintain the natural stride length for your body and increase the number of strides per minute. Gradually work towards achieving 160 steps per minute. Over time, you may reach 180-200 SPM. However, initially your stride length may shorten as the cadence is increased



Warm-Up and Cool Down

Begin each practice session with a warm-up of 5-10 minutes of easy walking, then 5-10 minutes of stretching and flexibility drills. End with a 5 minute cool down of easy walking and again 5-10 minutes of gentle stretching.

For more information about technique, training and common pitfalls visit **About.com's** page on how to race walk. <http://walking.about.com/od/rwtechnique/ss/howtoracewalk.htm>



Note the heel-and-toe contact during the widest spread of the stride, and the straight leg as the heel contacts the ground.

4. Race Walking: An Olympic Sport

Race Walking has been part of the Olympic Games since 1908 and features in World Championships at various levels, European Championships, Pan American Games, Commonwealth Games, All Africa Games and other international, continental and local track and field meetings. Distances presented are 20km for men and women, and 50km for men.

Nicolene Cronje made South African history when she became the first women and second ever SA Race Walker to be sent to the Athens Olympic Games in 2004, since George Hazel who represented South Africa in the 20km and 50km race walking events at the 1960 Olympics in Rome. Marc Mundell competed in the 50km race walk at London 2012 where he bettered his own African & SA record in a time of 3hr55min32sec.



Nicolene Cronje leading SA Championships 2007 in PE



Marc Mundell walking in the London 2012 Olympic Games

5. Which WPA Walking Events can I participate in?

1. WPA Track Walks (forming part of Track & Field season)

Competitors walk on an athletic track with laps of 400m each. Distances raced mainly on track are 1 500m, 3 000m, 5 000m and 10 000m for both men and women. Longer distances such as the 20km, 30km and 50km races would comprise generally of a 2km loop on a road surface just outside the track or at a more convenient venue.

Strict judging for correct race walking technique is enforced by a team of race walking judges positioned around the track according to the IAAF Rule Book.

Track walks are ideal for developing speed. Junior and Youth walkers are encouraged to develop their skills during track season. WPA Youth and Junior colours are awarded to athletes who qualify and get selected to compete for WPA teams at National Championships.

Masters Walkers can qualify for Provincial or National colours in South Africa subject to certain qualifying criteria. Please refer to WPA Masters Committee for more information.

2. WPA Race Walking Grand Prix events

There are four (4) Grand Prix events held throughout the year. These are held on a 2km track or route. Distances vary from 30km, 20km and 10km down to 5km, 3km and 1km for young development athletes. These events are judged for correct race walking technique. They are also used to select athletes who will represent WPA at the SA Race Walking Championships each year.

It also creates an excellent opportunity for clubs wishing to have their younger development walkers participate in shorter distances which is not always available at provincial competitions.

Masters Walkers can qualify for Provincial or National colours in South Africa subject to certain qualifying criteria. Please refer to WPA Masters Committee for more information on this.

The Novice 10km race give first time race walkers the opportunity to participate in a race walking event without the fear of being disqualified. WPARWC members and route judges will advise Novice walkers on correct technique. Novice results will be kept separate from the main events.

3. WPA Road League Walks

These league walks are held in conjunction with road running races with the start ten (10) minutes after the running event. Distances are kept to 10km and are on a tarred road surface, generally following the same route as the running race. WPA clubs hosting these events can encourage more walkers to participate by having age category prizes as well as the normal open and junior prize categories.

There is normally a series of 6 (six) to ten (10) league walks over the year that will qualify a walker to score individual points to become the top male or female walker for each calendar year. These points also count toward overall interclub points. Points are calculated according to League Performance Tables based on finishing time performances in a 5-year age category with a maximum of ten points earned per race. The top walking club for the year is eligible to win the League floating trophy. League Performance Tables are obtainable from the WPARWC.

Competitors must wear official club colours, provincial licenses, and age category tags and a "WALKER" tag on the back and front of their vests to qualify for league points and prizes. Novice walkers are encouraged to participate and will be able to compete as long as they wear a temporary license. Junior walkers must wear a "J" tag on the front and back of their vest. "WALKER" tags are compulsory for prize money winnings at all league races.

These league races are judged according to our own domestic WPA rules which are more relaxed, because the IAAF competition rule does not make provision for these road races. They are judged for correct race walking technique by three (3) judges who will be on the road following the athletes in their vehicles. They will roam the route, covering all the front athletes and then moving to the back of the field of walkers to identify athletes "failing to comply" with proper race walking technique.

A judge may show a yellow paddle to an athlete if an athlete is "in danger of failing to comply" with proper race walking technique, which is aimed to assist the athlete, so that they can correct their walking technique. Running in a League walking race will automatically disqualify a walker.

When a walker who has been disqualified by the judges, reaches the finishing line, the Chief Judge will inform him/her that they have been disqualified. Their race card will be removed from the finishing results board making the athlete ineligible for any prize money. The official results will also reflect a DQ next to that athlete's name.

4. Social Walks

These would be "walking-only" races where there is normally no prize money but everybody receives a finishing medal. These races are not normally affiliated to WPA and normally organised by charity or sponsored organisations. (Examples: The Big Walk, Blisters for Bread and Jive Walk)

Running events that attract large numbers of walkers are also considered Social walks as there will be no judging for correct technique and no prize money offered specifically for walkers. These would be referred to as "walker-friendly" races. (Examples: Spar Ladies race or shorter fun runs)

Walkers are encouraged to also participate in these great events.



Leading men at SA Championships 2012
– 20km

6. Resources

Provincial website:

www.wpa.org.za – For WPA news, fixtures and race flyers. WPARWC contact details can be found on this website.

National websites:

www.racewalk.co.za – For information on South African Race Walking

www.athletics.org.za – For ASA news, fixtures and results

www.raceresults.co.za – For Provincial and National road race results.

International websites: (information on technique and training can be found on these sites)

www.racewalk.com

www.racewalking.org

www.racewalkingrecord.co.uk

www.thewalkingsite.com

Book by Dave McGovern:

Complete Guide to Race Walking

Books by Jeff Salvage

Race Walk like a Champion

Race Walk Clinic - in a Book

Race Walk Faster by Training Smarter - An Intelligent Guide for Every Level Race Walker

Looking at the Best - A Detailed Analysis of Elite Race Walking Technique

Excellence in Training - A Race Walking Specific Training Log

Hope to see you on the track or road soon – Feel to contact us

WPARWC – wpracewalking@gmail.com

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