

UK ATHLETICS - MAINTENANCE GUIDANCE

1. TRACK EQUIPMENT

1.1 Track Kerbing

This should be checked regularly for damage. Plastic kerbing is subject to cracking due to UV light degradation. The sections that are removable for the High Jump and Steeplechase should have the fastenings and bolts lightly oiled if made from steel. If, when removed, brackets and pins are also removed, then care should be taken to ensure that no debris in the form of surface crumb etc. falls into the holes and hinders replacement. Kerbing when removed for this purpose should be placed so as not to cause a hazard to other users. The remaining kerbing should be visually checked to ensure that it is secure and undamaged. Any damaged joining brackets, kerbing or clips should be repaired or replaced at the earliest opportunity. Any weed growth under the kerbing, in the case of inward drainage should be removed immediately.

It is good policy to ensure that vehicles going onto the grass always enter and exit through a section where the kerb has been removed. This avoids damage to the kerbing by trucks and gang-mowers.

1.2 Starting Blocks

These should have the foot plate surface checked. Replacement pads are available and are fitted by screws or contact adhesive according to design. Check that all the fixing spikes are screwed in tight and are straight, with none missing. Please note that research has shown that for starting blocks the ideal length to ensure stability is 11mm. The use of 6mm or 7mm spikes is likely to result in the blocks slipping in use, thereby causing damage to the track. (These shorter spikes are suitable for shoes but not for starting blocks.) Check foot plate fittings and lightly oil any moving parts.

1.3 Track Judges' stands, Timekeepers' stands and Starters' stands

These require little maintenance. Oil the wheels and check the metalwork and platforms, especially the welding joints to ensure that they are safe for use. Check wooden steps for defoliation of the plywood or rot. Any handrails must be secure. If necessary repaint periodically.

1.4 Microphones, Amplifiers, Loudspeakers, and Electrical Equipment

Check cables and connectors for damage and charge batteries. Check that any underground photo-finish cables have watertight ends – any screw caps should be lightly greased or oiled. Check pull-through ropes for excessive abrasion.

1.5 Hurdles

Check regularly for splitting or damaged tops. Plastic tops, whilst durable can be very dangerous to athletes where spike damage leaves a sharp spur on the upper surface. A little oil should be put on the bottoms or clips for height adjustment and on the sliding weights. Check that all hurdles have the mechanism for ease of movement and locking in place. The sliding tubes should be wiped with a lightly oiled cloth or sprayed with silicone polish.

1.6 Steeplechase Hurdles

Check tops regularly for splinters or other damage – if damaged either replace or rotate through 180 degrees until the damage can be repaired. Ensure that legs are fixed securely to tops and are vertical. Ensure that mechanism to adjust height is working properly and can be safely secured at relevant heights. Lightly oil or grease the mechanism regularly. Treat water-jump hurdles like other hurdles but in addition ensure that the water-jump itself is emptied regularly and that any debris is cleaned out.

2. EQUIPMENT FOR FIELD EVENTS

2.1 POLE VAULT

2.1.1 Pole Vault Landing Area

Check that all fastenings are intact. Look at the clips and buckles and especially make sure that interior fastenings are secure and that all the units are firmly held together. Replace broken or damaged fastenings immediately because any weaknesses will have a domino effect with additional strain on remaining fastening leading to further breakages. Check that the wear sheet fits well and is secured to the base units. Again, replace any broken clips immediately. Look for depressions in the foam – an indication that foam is deteriorating. In such cases seek professional advice. If the bed is on pallets, or a purpose-built frame, ensure that the edges of the pallets do not protrude outside the foam and that the edges of the pallets facing the runway are solid faced so that neither the pole nor an athlete's foot can go under the pallet.

Keep the take-off box painted matt white to assist with sighting. Ensure that any drainage holes are clear. If the design is such that an insert is required between the runway and the box, ensure that this fits securely.

If roll-over covers are used lightly oil the wheels periodically and if metal. check for any damage which may leave dangerous sharp edges.

2.1.2 Pole Vault Stands

Check that all nuts and bolts are tight and that the stands are adjusted so that they are vertical when in use. Lightly oil the base carriage wheels and sliders. Dependent on the design, check that the sliders have cast sleeves in them and the casting are complete, with any required split pins present. Check that the base rails are not bent and lightly oil. Check the tension on the tape – this works on friction between the pulleys and the tape. Do NOT oil the tape as this will cause the tape to slip. If the winding handle slips, tighten the tension nut on the top of the stands by a quarter turn and try again. Do not over-tighten. If winding is tight, loosen the tension nut by a quarter turn. If the tape "grinds" on winding, it is likely that the winch pulleys are damaged and the tape may break – this usually requires servicing by the manufacturer. Check that the bar support pegs are not bent and are secure. Check that support arms are not loose. In most designs these can be tightened using the pulleys on the outside of the stands.

2.1.3 Vaulting Poles

Check that bungs are present, secure and undamaged at the bottom of poles. Check that about 30cms at the bottom of the pole is taped to provide protection where the pole bends against the edge of the box. Check poles for deep scratches and cracks which might cause the pole to break with a potential for injury to the athlete.

2.1.4 Cross- bars

Check for spike damage or splinters, discarding damaged bars which can cause injury to athletes.

2.2 HIGH JUMP

2.2.1 High Jump Landing Area

Check that all fastenings are intact. Look at the clips and buckles and especially make sure that interior fastenings are secure and that all the units are firmly held together. Replace broken or damaged fastenings immediately because any weaknesses will have a domino effect with additional strain on remaining fastening leading to further breakages. Check that the wear sheet fits well and is secured to the base units. Again, replace any broken clips immediately. Look for depressions in the foam – an indication that foam is deteriorating. In such cases seek professional advice. If the bed is on pallets, or a purpose-built frame, ensure that the edges of the pallets do not protrude outside the foam and that the edges of the pallets facing the runway are solid faced so that an athlete's foot cannot go under the pallet.

If roll-over covers are used lightly oil the wheels periodically and if metal, check for any damage which may leave dangerous sharp edges.

2.2.2 High Jump Stands

If the design of the stands incorporates wheels, lightly oil. Uprights should be lightly oiled or sprayed with silicone polish so that they slide easily. Lightly oil any screw threads on sliders or verniers and ensure bar supports are flat and straight, with no sharp edges. Do not over-tighten any adjusting screws or knobs. These should be thumb tight.

2.2.3 Cross- bars

Check for spike damage or splinters, discarding damaged bars which can cause injury to athletes.

2.3 LONG/TRIPLE JUMP

2.3.1 Take-off boards, blanking boards and troughs

Lift the boards and ensure that troughs are cleared of any sand or debris. If drainage holes are present ensure that these are clear. Otherwise, bail out any surplus water.

Lightly oil or grease with a wax-based lubricant, any vertical or horizontal adjusting screws. Adjust these so that the board sits level with the runway, is horizontal in both planes and fits securely in the trough. Take-off boards should be painted matt white.

Clear out any sand from under the no-jump indicator and ensure that the indicator sits securely, is not bent and sits level. Ensure that the profile of the plasticine is correct and that the plasticine extends across the full width of the board.

2.3.3 Runway

Sweep runways regularly. Dependent on the amount of sand and other debris, a blower may sometimes be a better option. Pressure wash as necessary.

Periodically trim back any grass that may encroach on the edges of the runway.

2.3.4 Sand Pits

Check the sand on a daily basis for any debris such as stones, glass or paper. Remove all debris. Dig regularly to a minimum depth of 300mm and rake level. Check regularly that pits are fully filled. Sweep spare sand back into the pit, but check carefully for debris. Water regularly.

Periodically, if pits are left uncovered and open to the elements and animals, it may be necessary to disinfect the sand or change it.

If roll-over covers are used lightly oil the wheels periodically and if metal, check for any damage which may leave dangerous sharp edges.

2.4 THROWS FACILITIES

2.4.1 Hammer and Discus cages

Oil gate hinges and wheels. Grease any pulleys and check that ropes/hawsers are not frayed or damaged. Check netting for holes. A temporary repair can be made by tying together with cable ties or cord, but any deformations of the mesh impose additional strain and overlaying with a patch, secured on all four edges should take place for larger holes. Ensure that there is sufficient loose netting at the bottom of the cage to prevent implements sliding underneath and that the net is properly secured where a system of brackets is in place. Secure with sandbags where necessary. Cages are designed so that the correct dimensions are achieved when the net hangs vertically from the gallows arms at the top. Nets should not be tied back tight to the frame at any point, especially at the front where the gap at the mouth of the cage must be 6m. To prevent the cage billowing on exposed sites, a rope can be threaded through at around head height, without altering the overall profile of the net. Some designs include short ropes or hawsers to secure the net to the uprights at various points but again it is vital that these are adjusted to maintain the vertical profile of the net. Ensure that holes used to secure the gates in position are clear, or that other securing mechanisms are in good working order. For designs using "curtain" gates, ensure that there are suitable shackles in the ground anchors.

2.4.2 Shot stop boards

Stop boards should be painted white and checked regularly to ensure that they are secure.

2.4.3 Circle surfaces

Circles should be swept regularly and drainage holes kept clear. The 0.75m extension lines should be re-painted when necessary. Circle rims should be painted white. Some cracks can be filled, but a

wider thin layer of self-levelling compound will usually crack as a result of frost damage after a short time. Minor grinding may improve some slightly uneven surfaces, but you should seek professional advice.

3. IMPLEMENTS

3.1 Javelin

Check for straightness, especially the tail end. Check that the cord grip is not fraying or unwinding – they can be secured with Copydex or similar. If possible, check weight, length, and centre of gravity because the tips can wear according to ground conditions and alter the specification. After use wipe off dirt with a damp cloth and finish with a dry cloth, particularly on the grip if it is wet.

3.2 Shot

Often these are supplied painted with gloss paint. Removing the shine with fine wet and dry paper will give athletes a better grip. After use, wipe off the surface with a damp cloth to remove dirt and finish with a dry cloth. Check the weight regularly since shot can lose weight, particularly if the landing area is stony.

3.3 Discus

Wipe with a damp cloth to remove dirt and finish with a dry cloth. Check that the side plates are a flush and tight fit and the rim is free from splits and dents. If there is sufficient weight in the discus, dents in the rim can be filed or smoothed out, but this must be done in a way so that there is no flat section and must be evened out over a section of the rim. Centre plates, if fitted, may be removed and straightened if they become proud of the body. If the discus develops a “rattling” noise it is necessary to take the implement apart and extend the spring inside.

3.4 Hammer

Wipe with a damp cloth to remove dirt. It may be necessary to use a small brush to clean round the swivel. Finish with a dry cloth. Check that the swivel is moving freely, lightly oil it and if stiff, use WD40 or similar. If the swivel can be depressed into the head and no resistance is felt, it is faulty and must be replaced. If springy resistance can be felt, then it is good. Check that wires are not damaged or badly bent. Check the handles for cracks and replace if damaged. Check overall weight and length of hammers. Handles come in different weights and diameters; hammer heads come in different weights and diameters; and wires come in different lengths. Thus the correct combination of handle, head and wire is essential to ensure that hammers meet the required specification.

4. OTHER EQUIPMENT

4.1 Scoreboards

Oil the wheels, if any. Dry the number shutters and check they are working. They will stick if they get wet inside. Check any welding joints for cracks.

4.2 Trolleys

Oil wheels and swivels. Check any welding joints for cracks.

4.3 Countdown Clocks

Check regularly that they are working. Replace batteries as needed and if clocks are stored for prolonged periods, temporarily remove batteries. Occasionally hands may need attaching more firmly to spindle.

4.4 Wind Gauges

Lightly oil screw threads on tripods if made from steel. Check threads on underside of gauge. Replace batteries as necessary. If gauges are stored for a prolonged period, remove battery. If blades are touching tube the bearing is worn and the gauge needs manufacturer's attention. Renew certification as needed.

4.5 Weighing Scales

Charge electronic models regularly. Renew certification as needed. For balance scales check that there is a full set of weights. Where records are anticipated there should be a certified check weight.

4.6 Measuring Tapes

Lightly oil the spindle of the winding handle and check that the spindle is secure without over-tightening. Check that the tape is not twisted. The life of a tape can sometimes be prolonged by taping over the joint between the tape and the end loop when damage becomes apparent. Periodically unwind the tape completely and wipe with a damp cloth before drying. A metal tape may require very light oiling.

4.7 Referee's Kit

The design and content of these varies but check regularly that all items are present.

2.3.5 Wooden Rakes

Replace any broken or missing pegs immediately and periodically soak heads in water.

5. SENSIBLE SPARES TO STOCK

Hurdle top bars, clips and buttons.

Pole Vault bar supports, cast inserts for bases, bar support castings. (Dependent on design).

Long jump plasticine and no-jump indicator boards.

Hammer wires of different lengths and handles of different lengths and weights to suit heads.

Cable ties and/or cord for temporary repairs to nets. Keep old nets to cut up for patches.

Cross bars for High Jump and Pole Vault.

(With thanks to Alan Neuff and Sports and Play Construction Association)