

WORLD ATHLETICS SHOE RULE (T5.2) FAQs

1. This is a World Athletics (WA) rule, does it apply to competitions in the UK?

Yes. All competitions on the track, road and cross country held under UKA Rules are subject to the application of the rule to ensure fair competition and, should records be achieved, then those records can be ratified. WA will review the rule following the Tokyo Olympic Games. The table below shows the thickness of sole currently allowed across the complete range of athletics events.

Event	Max thickness of the sole	Further rule requirements
Field events (except triple jump)	20mm	Applies to all throwing events and vertical and horizontal jumping events, except triple jump. For all field events the sole at the centre of athlete's forefoot must not be higher than the sole at the centre of the athlete's heel
Triple jump	25mm	The sole at the centre of the athlete's forefoot must not be higher than the sole at the centre of the athlete's heel
Track events (including Hurdles events) up to but not including 800m	20mm	For relays the rule applies to the distance of the leg being run by each athlete
Track events from 800m and above (including steeplechase events)	25mm	For relays the rule applies to the distance of the leg run by each athlete. For race walking events the maximum thickness of the sole is the same as that for road events
Cross country	25mm	
Road events (Running and Race Walking events)	40mm	
Events under Rule T57 of the technical rules: Mountain, Fell & Hill and Trail	Any thickness	

2. Where can I find details of which shoes are 'legal' and which are not?

To ensure that the most up to date guidance and rulings are followed then check the WA website at: [https://www.worldathletics.org/download/download?filename=03606233-0a4e-4be0-bba0-fca1506872a3.pdf&urlslug=Technical%20Rules%20\(amendment%20to%20Rule%205\)%20](https://www.worldathletics.org/download/download?filename=03606233-0a4e-4be0-bba0-fca1506872a3.pdf&urlslug=Technical%20Rules%20(amendment%20to%20Rule%205)%20)

The list of currently approved shoes can be found at: www.worldathletics.org/news/press-releases/list-of-approved-competition-shoes-published but note that this list is updated monthly and does not include all approved shoes. (Most generally available 'old technology' shoes are not included in the list and are likely to be compliant, but, if there is doubt as to the thickness of the sole, athletes should make further enquiries.) All shoes are subject to checking at events. Shoes must be 'reasonably available' on the open retail market to all athletes and must not offer an unfair advantage over other athletes.

3. Which events does the rule apply to?

Whilst, as set out in answer 1 above, the ruling applies to all events across all age groups, the practical difficulties in checking shoes at many events make it probable that detailed checks will only be carried out where Technical Officials or event organisers have doubts about the compliance of the footwear of an athlete, or where such reasonable doubts are brought to their attention. Primary responsibility for conformity lies with the athlete. Spot checks may be carried out.

Although the formal rules of competition are clear, Competition Providers and Technical Officials are encouraged to use their discretion at entry level events, especially in the younger age groups (schools or club events) or within mass participation 'fun run' style events, if the shoes in question are unlikely to create a significant unfair advantage and where it may not be in the best interest of the individual or in the spirit of the 'sport' to enforce the rule. This may be the case where, for example, events do not count towards qualifying for championships or national rankings or where a child is wearing 'trainers' for track and field competition as they do not possess a pair of spikes.

4. *Do different specifications apply to different athletics events?*

Yes. Road shoe soles must not exceed 40mm thickness and spiked shoes must not exceed 20 or 25mm depending on the relevant track or field event as set out in the WA table. Varying specifications apply to all shoes, spiked or not, as used for different track and field events. **(N.B. some shoes may be approved for road racing but be non-compliant for use in track events – shoes with a sole thickness greater than 25mm / 20mm may not be used in track and field events).** No shoe may have more than one rigid plate within the sole.

5. *Does it mean that my son / daughter, who is in the U15 age group, may be sanctioned if wearing the shoes that I have just bought?*

Yes, that is strictly possible, particularly at higher level events such as championships, but it may be thought unlikely that the shoes will be non-compliant if the shoes are reasonably available on the open retail market and, bearing in mind the note above, it is expected that reasonable decisions and common sense will be applied. Post-event checks on shoes must be conducted at competitions which do not operate a Call Room before any sanctions are applied.

6. *Will Schools' and Masters' competitions be affected?*

Yes. Competition Providers such as the English Schools' AA and British Masters will operate their competitions under the appropriate Schools' Governing Body or World Masters Rules but these bodies use WA and UKA Rules as their base and are not allowed to relax any rules.

Whilst the formal rules of competition are clear, we do urge event organisers and Technical Officials to use 'common sense'. Where athletes are participating at entry level in the younger age groups (schools or club events) or within mass participation 'fun run' style events, then it may not always be in the best interest of the individual or in the spirit of the 'sport' to conduct checks. This is particularly the case when events do not count to qualifying for championships or national rankings.

7. *How will the rule be applied?*

The Referee and Technical Officials on duty at the event will be responsible for applying the rule. This may be through observation, spot checking, checking through a Call Room or by protest from other competitors. Wearing non-compliant shoes in competition may result in disqualification but note the response to Question 3 above. Where a Call Room is operating, the Competition Provider should consider ensuring that callipers will be available for use by the Technical Officials on duty. Competition providers also need to have available the up-to-date list of approved shoes. Providers also need to warn athletes when sending event information as well as having notices around warm up areas.

8. *Can shoes be modified, for example by using an insert?*

Yes, but they are subject to the same conditions and may be checked to ensure compliance with the rules. WA Rule T5.6 says: 'Athletes may not use any appliance, either inside or outside the shoe, which will have the effect of increasing the thickness of the sole above the permitted maximum, ...'

9. Is there a therapeutic use exemption (TUE) for orthotic inserts that are prescribed for an athlete?

Yes, but an exemption can only be granted by World Athletics. Applications for a TUE exemption must be submitted to Dr Stéphane Bermon <stephane.bermon@worldathletics.org> and copied rules@worldathletics.org and Vijay Parbat <vijay.parbat@worldathletics.org>.

10. My favourite flat soled shoes that I wear for racing on the track and road were bought before the rule was introduced; can I race in those?

Yes, probably, but note Question 4 above and that shoes are subject to checking for compliance.

11. Does the rule apply to Para events?

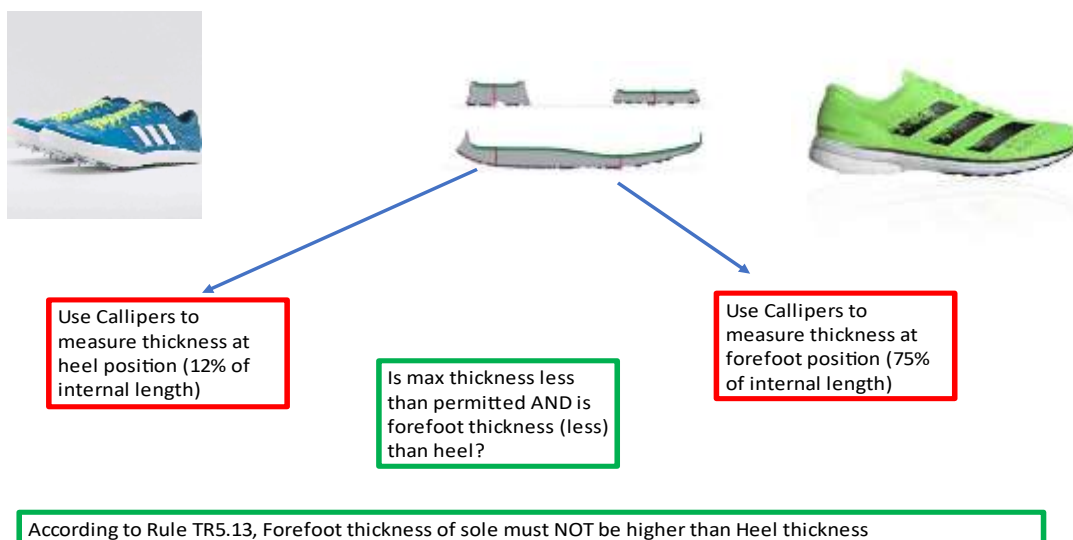
World Para Athletics (WPA) has adopted the WA Rule and it will be applied at competitions in the UK. Details of the change can be found in WPA Rule 6.2 at <https://www.paralympic.org/sites/default/files/2021-02/WPA%20Approved%20Amendments%20%28January%202021%29.pdf>

12. How will Technical Officials evaluate a shoe that is subject to protest?

At events where a Call Room is being operated then all checks will be conducted in the Call Room. At other events the Referee and other Technical Officials will take the responsibility to conduct checks, largely determined by observation and protest lodged by other competitors. The first check will be to see if the model in question is included on the WA lists of compliant and non-compliant shoes. If that does not resolve the check then it will be necessary to examine the shoe and measure the thickness of the sole.

World Athletics have produced a paper containing instructions on the critical measurement points and this is available at <https://www.uka.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/World-Athletics-Shoes-Rule-T5-formerly-143.pdf>.

The following diagrams show those critical points.



13. *I referee road and cross country races and understand that the most effective way to measure the depth of a sole is to use callipers and a ruler; if this is the case, should I buy a set and if so, where can I find a suitable model?*

At all events, including track and field, where the rule is to be applied it will be necessary to have an appropriate set of callipers available. This could be arranged by either the Competition Provider or Referee / Technical Officials. One possible supplier is <https://www.machine-dro.co.uk/calipers> and details of a suitable model can be seen at <https://www.machine-dro.co.uk/machine-dro-me-cal-sp-75-digital-caliper-special-jaw-0-75mm-0-3-inch>.

14. *Should Competition Providers include information in their information and advice to athletes?*

Yes. Information provided to athletes on the application of the shoe rule in advance of the competition will help to avoid issues arising on the day.

Note

If there are any questions or issue not addressed in the paper, please contact rules@uka.org.uk for further guidance.

Thanks are due to Steve Marshall, Clive Young and the UKA Technical Advisory Group for their assistance in preparing the FAQs.