

HOW TO NOT SCREW UP A 4X100/4X200 BATON EXCHANGE

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Winning relays do not always have the fastest runner. Four good runners with superior technique can beat four great runners with inferior technique. Here's how to make sure your relay is a winning relay:

THREE GOVERNING LAWS OF RELAY EXCHANGES

- 1. NEVER LEAVE THE EXCHANGE ZONE WITHOUT THE BATON.** If you are nearing the end of an exchange zone and do not have the baton, slow down, turn around, or (if necessary), STOP. A poor exchange is better than no exchange any day.
- 2. ALWAYS FINISH THE RACE.** If the baton is dropped, pick it up and finish the race. If a dropped baton stays in the exchange zone and doesn't interfere with another team's relay, you are still in the race. Regardless, let the officials decide if you are disqualified or not; you focus on finishing.
- 3. TIMING IS EVERYTHING (AND I MEAN EVERYTHING).** Don't fall asleep at the switch by leaving late, and don't jump the gun by leaving too early. Hundredths of a second can make a difference. With Law #1 in mind, leaving late is worse than leaving early (you can fix an early leave), but you should always know your steps and adjust them if necessary. Do not guess.

BASIC PROCEDURES

- Stay in your lane all the way. Do not leave your lane. Do not leave your lane (unless the baton has been dropped and has left the lane, in which case look both ways before you cross the street).
- Keep the baton in the MIDDLE of the lane—Legs #1 and #3 receive, carry, and exchange it in your right and run on the left side of the lane; Legs #2 and #4 receive, carry, and exchange it in your left and run on the right side of the lane.
- The outgoing runner must match the speed of the incoming runner at the exchange. If each person does their job right, the baton will never slow down.
- The BATON (not the receiver) needs to be in the exchange zone during the exchange.
- Plan to make the exchange in the first third of the exchange zone.
- Know where to place your "go" mark, and TRUST your go mark.
- If the baton is dropped inside the exchange zone, EITHER competitor can pick it up. If it is dropped before the exchange zone, the incoming runner must pick it up and pass it in the exchange zone. If it is dropped after the exchange zone, the outgoing runner must pick it up. If it leaves the lane, STILL PICK IT UP. You are only disqualified if it (or you) interfere with another runner.

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RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE INCOMING RUNNER

- ATTACK THE ZONE. Do not slow up or relax until the baton is passed AND has left the zone.
- Share the stick. You take the bottom half, and extend the top half.
- Maintain good running form when you pass. Don't wind up or run with your arm out. A relay is dramatic enough; you don't need to make it look cooler. Just extend your arm to theirs, that's it.
- Speak FIRST, then reach. Do NOT give the command ("stick" "hand" etc.) and extend the baton at the same time. Give the command, wait for the receiver to offer you the target, THEN reach and place the baton in the open hand.
- Stay. In. Your. Lane. Even after the pass is made.
- Follow the outgoing runner all the way out of the zone. Do not slow until the exchange is made and you both leave the zone.
- ALWAYS look back before exiting the track, lest someone is still racing past you.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE OUTGOING RUNNER

- Step off the distance to your "go" mark (determined in practice). Make your mark (usually with chalk). Return to your spot inside the acceleration zone. You MUST be inside the acceleration zone when the gun goes off.
- Position your feet for a fast takeoff and a good line-of-sight to your "go" mark.
- TRUST YOUR MARK. Accelerate 100% and do not hold back. Make the incoming runner catch you or communicate necessary changes to you.
- Never extend your arm to receive the baton before you hear the incoming runner's command.
- Never extend your arm to receive the baton before you enter the zone, EVEN if the incoming runner commands it.
- When you hear the command, extend the hand *straight back, horizontally, with palm up, fingers together, and thumb out*. Make a table for the baton. Hold the arm steady, and do not look back.
- When you feel the baton, grasp firmly and GO.

HAVE A PLAN. PRACTICE THE PLAN. KNOW THE PLAN. TRUST THE PLAN.