

Relay Exchange Officiating (Umpires)

Ideally, there should be four umpires at each exchange zone – two at the beginning of the zone and two at the end.

It is important to realize that in the 4x100 and the first exchange of the 4 x 400, the exchanges are staggered and it can be difficult to observe the baton position in all 8 lanes. The primary position which allows for the best view of all exchanges is on the outside of the track, about 3 metres past the end of the 20m exchange zone.

When the competitors arrive at the exchange area call out their assigned lanes as a check. Remind them of the 20m exchange zone for their respective lanes and the 10m run-up zone. They are allowed two pieces of coloured tape to be placed at the edge of the lane so as to prevent it from getting caught in the spikes of competitors. The athletes should be familiar with their position in the run up according to their rehearsed training.

Listen for the announcement calling for your exchange area ready signal. You may have a walkie talkie handset or traditionally raise the green flag. When all exchange zones are ready the race will start.

In the rule, it states the baton shall be handed “within the exchange zone. The incoming and outgoing runners shall not simultaneously touch the baton outside of the 20-meter exchange zone.”

The actual exchange occurs when the outgoing runner first touches the baton and ends when the outgoing runner has sole possession of the baton before the competitor exits the zone. .

Focus on the baton; it does not matter where the runners are; it is only required that the exchange occurs while the baton is in the 20m zone (often marked by inward facing triangles or lines) to be legal.

The baton must be passed off; in other words, from the hand of the incoming runner to the hand of the outgoing runner. It may not be thrown or tossed.

Both competitors cannot be touching the baton at the same time outside the 20-meter exchange zone.

If, by chance, the baton is dropped outside of the zone, only the competitor who drops it may pick it up. However, if the baton is dropped within the exchange zone, either one of the runners may retrieve it as long as there is no interference with the other competitors.

The umpire is looking for any signs of an illegal exchange as well as tripping, pushing, shoving or slowing of competitors in a particular lane.

Any infractions observed should be noted as to the nature of the violation and specifically which lane and the umpire should raise the red flag. If possible confer with the other umpire in your exchange zone then immediately report directly (or by walkie talkie) to the head finish line judge or the track referee.