

APEX TRACK CLUB (ATC) HANDBOOK



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ATHLETIC SUCCESS FOR YOUTH (8-18) CHAMPIONS

A. “YOUTH ATHLETE BILL OF RIGHTS” (applicable to all sports)

The youth athlete has the right to:

1. Participate in sports at a level commensurate with their own maturity, ability and motivation.
2. Have qualified adult leadership.
3. Play and compete as a child, not as an adult.
4. Share in the leadership and decision-making of their sport participation.
5. Participate in safe and healthy environments.
6. Proper preparation for participation in sports.
7. Equal opportunity to strive for success.
8. Be treated with dignity.
9. Have fun in sports.

B. APEX COACHING PHILOSOPHY

1. ATC operates under five basic principles:
 - a) coach-driven;
 - b) athlete-centered;
 - c) science-based;
 - d) performance-focused;
 - e) fun-required.
2. There are many dangers, both physical and psychological, in early specialization. Therefore, we encourage multi-lateral skill development through a variety of sports and forms of physical activity, with the foremost priority being general physical fitness.
3. Winning v. losing is not the sole, or even primary, measure for success. Effort, and secondarily the result, is rewarded. Self-esteem through effort is paramount!

4. ATC is interested in both the athlete AND the bigger person behind the physical ability.

Track & Field focuses on individual athletic performance in a team environment. For both the individual and the team to achieve success, staying healthy and strong, having an enjoyable experience, learning the skills, and preventing injuries play important roles.

C. PARENT AND YOUTH ATHLETE RESPONSIBILITIES

1. School comes first...always!
2. Of the five ATC guiding principles, the last, “fun-required,” is the primary responsibility of the youth athlete and their parents. Have fun, be fun, make it fun.
3. Respect the coaches. They will make every effort to be fair and knowledgeable; however, their decisions are final.
4. Respect the sport. Come to practices and meets with a good attitude, ready to listen, ready to learn, and ready to compete.
5. Respect the facility. With the proliferation of youth sports in an already congested metropolitan area, indoor and outdoor track time is rare. Track time, gratis, is even rarer. ATC, and its athletes, MUST:
 - a) Leave the facility as clean as they found it, if not cleaner;
 - b) Use the allotted practice times as opportunities to excel;
 - c) Conduct themselves with the utmost respect for those who are allowing ATC to access the track;
 - d) Only use the facilities during the dates and times allotted for practices; and
 - e) For Episcopal High School (indoor season), there are additional responsibilities. First, check in at the Braddock Road Guardhouse is required. You and your youth athlete’s name will be on a list for entry onto school grounds. Visitors/invitees/prospective ATC athletes will not be allowed, unless prior approval is obtained. In addition, you are only permitted entry onto school grounds just before practice and must leave soon after practice. Second, as this is a boarding school, students and faculty have priority usage; however, every accommodation will be made to work together, given the limited resources available.

D. PRACTICE

Indoor Season: Episcopal High School, Flippin Field House, 1200 North Quaker Lane, Alexandria, VA 22302 (use the Braddock Road entrance).

E. AGE GROUPINGS

Youth competitions typically take place in two-year age divisions. These age divisions provide young athletes the opportunity to compete with other athletes of similar ability. The age divisions for competition year 2014 are as follows:

Age Division/Year of Birth

- 8 & Under (or 7-8)/2007+
- 9 - 10/2005-2006
- 11 - 12/2003-2004
- 13 - 14/2001-2002
- 15 - 16/1999-2000
- 17 - 18/1997-1998

F. SPRINT FAQs

What are the sprint events?

The sprint events are the 100M, 200M & 400M dashes in outdoor competition; the 55M, 200M & 400M dashes in indoor competition.

I want to help my child maximize their potential/ability and achieve their running/track & field goals. I want to properly focus my child at practices and meets. How can I tell if my child has sprinting ability?

The only true measure of sprinting ability is the stopwatch; however, there are some fairly good indicators of a child's sprinting potential/ability:

- 1) Sprinting is a speed and power event. Endurance is typically not a factor. Honestly assess your child. Do they come home from school and say that they are the fastest child on the playground? In a soccer game, are they the first one to the soccer ball every time? Are they the first one down the basketball court every time? And if they are fast, can they only hold that speed for a relatively short while, and then quickly tire out?;
- 2) Sprinting requires the ability to move the limbs at high speeds through large ranges of motion (range of motion is not the same as flexibility). In the legs, this is most frequently

expressed as “quick turnover,” which looks much like pedaling a bicycle with the rear wheel off the ground—the legs appear to cycle in a rapid set of movements. When your child runs, do their legs move very fast compared to their peers? Do their feet seem to float over the ground, and yet each time their foot hits the ground, they get farther and farther ahead of the peers?

If your child exhibits some, or all, of these characteristics, then they may be just right for the sprint events.

Spikes or no spikes?

Practicing/training in spikes is not recommended! A good set of running shoes is needed for anything other than competitions/events. At events, spikes should only be worn during the races themselves and in warm-ups just prior to the events. The easiest way to maneuver through the constant changing of shoes is simply to get an inexpensive pair of flip-flops. The athlete wears the flip flops in the stands. When warm-up time arrives, flip-flops are slipped off and the spikes go on. Warm-ups ensue, and the subsequent race is run. The spikes come off.

Spikes are light and fairly comfortable out of the box, but need to be broken in a little to be completely comfortable. The first few races should serve as the break-in period, with the knowledge that any discomfort or fit issues will subside over time.

Sprint spikes are more rigid than distance spikes and usually don't have much padding in the sole. Good running shoes will serve most athletes very well, all of time (practice & competition), but for those who will compete at the higher levels, spikes really do help put force into the ground!

What should my youth athlete eat/drink?

Nutrition is outside the purview of ATC's track and field program; however, as with any athlete, the basic rules always apply:

- 1) Highly-refined sugars and processed carbohydrates greatly diminish performance;
- 2) Extra protein helps with rebuilding muscle tissue after practices/meets, helps keep the stores of creatine up, and assists in the ATP energy-production system;
- 3) Adequate hydration is extremely important; and
- 4) Caffeinated beverages are not recommended; sports/energy drinks should be used in moderation.

Will my youth athlete get a good workout at a sprint practice?

YES! Sprinting is a discipline and phenomenon unto itself, distinctly different from competitive distance running and most people's experience with general running/jogging for physical fitness. Each of the three areas requires significant expenditures of energy, increase cardiovascular fitness, and shape the body, albeit in different ways. Sprinting practices are mentally and physically difficult. The athlete will feel like a significant physical accomplishment has been achieved, and their body will need time and nutrition to recover.

Sprinting, when done properly, hypercharges your metabolism for a significant time after the workout stops; you may find that your youth athlete, after a practice or meet, will want to eat and hydrate more than usual. This is because his/her metabolism is on fire! And they will sleep very well!

My youth athlete really wants to be a good sprinter. What can I/we do outside of practice? Should he/she run extra? Strength train?

First of all, this kind of enthusiasm is great, and should be encouraged. Whether or not they will become a good, or even great, sprinter, is of secondary importance. The fact that track & field/running serves as a focal point for a child wanting to be good at something, and is willing to go the extra mile to do so, can be modeled for future behavior in other areas, including academics. With that being said, let the athlete decide how they want to pursue the extra training. If they want to run at home and do some of the drills they learned in practice, let them have fun!

ATC does not endorse or recommend any kind of strength or weight training program. Weight training for strength and power is not the goal of the youth sprinter; the basics of the discipline must first be mastered.

The MOST IMPORTANT thing for a youth sprinter to be able to do is develop what is called their "general strength." This is the individual's ability to overcome their own body weight. Only when an athlete is able to do this through a range of demanding athletic motions can he/she go further.

What can my child expect from participating in the sprint practices/events?

FUN! Nothing is more exhilarating than walking up to the line, pausing in the calm before the storm, and letting the sound of the gun surprise you, only to be followed by an all out sprint for the finish line. For almost everyone, the earliest memories of the playground contain at least one instance of someone coming up and asking, "wanna race?" From our earliest days, competition of every kind drives us. Athletic competition, particularly seeing who is the fastest,

is thrilling and exhilarating...building confidence, group morale, and the skills to master our fears and focus our drive into positive results.

G. DISTANCE FAQS

What are the distance events?

The distance events are the 800M, 1500M/1600M/Mile and the 3000M in outdoor competition.

I want to help my child maximize their potential/ability and achieve their running/track & field goals. I want to properly focus my child at practices and meets. How can I tell if my child is a distance runner?

Distance running is a combination of sprinting, endurance and mental will. Shorter distance events (such as the 800M) require more speed along with the ability to endure speed over a longer distance. Longer distance events (such as the 3000M) require endurance and the mental ability to keep running while the body says “stop.” Honestly assess your child. Can they run and run and run without getting tired? Can they run at a moderately fast pace for some distance? If so, then the distance events may be perfect for them.

Spikes or no spikes?

Practicing/training in spikes is not recommended! A good set of running shoes is needed for anything other than competitions/events. At events, spikes should only be worn during the races themselves and in warm-ups just prior to the events. The easiest way to maneuver through the constant changing of shoes is simply to get an inexpensive pair of flip-flops. The athlete wears the flip flops in the stands. When warm-up time arrives, flip-flops are slipped off and the spikes go on. Warm-ups ensue, and the subsequent race is run. The spikes come off.

Spikes are light and fairly comfortable out of the box, but need to be broken in a little to be completely comfortable. The first few races should serve as the break-in period, with the knowledge that any discomfort or fit issues will subside over time.

Distance spikes are not as rigid as sprint spikes and usually have a slightly padded sole (through the heel). Good running shoes will serve most athletes very well, all of time (practice & competition), but for those who will compete at the higher levels, spikes really do help put force into the ground!

What should my youth athlete eat/drink?

Nutrition is outside the purview of ATC's track and field program; however, as with any athlete, the basic rules always apply:

- 1) Highly-refined sugars and processed carbohydrates greatly diminish performance;
- 2) Extra protein helps with rebuilding muscle tissue after practices/meets, helps keep the stores of creatine up, and assists in the ATP energy-production system;
- 3) Adequate hydration is extremely important; and
- 4) Caffeinated beverages are not recommended; sports/energy drinks should be used in moderation.

Will my youth athlete get a good workout at a distance practice?

YES! At practice, your athlete will engage in a number of training protocols, including long, slow distance runs; tempo runs, interval training runs, repetitions, and fartlek's (varying one's speed between slow and fast training intensities). Distance practices are mentally and physically difficult. The athlete will feel like a significant physical accomplishment has been achieved, and their body will need time and nutrition to recover.

Distance training increases your metabolism for a significant time after the workout stops; you may find that your youth athlete, after a practice or meet, will want to eat and hydrate more than usual. This is because his/her metabolism is on overdrive. And they will sleep very well!

My youth athlete really wants to be a good distance runner. What can I/we do outside of practice? Should he/she run extra? Weight train?

First of all, this kind of enthusiasm is great, and should be encouraged. Whether or not they will become a good, or even great, distance runner, is of secondary importance. The fact that track & field/running serves as a focal point for a child wanting to be good at something, and is willing to go the extra mile to do so, can be modeled for future behavior in other areas, including academics. With that being said, let the athlete decide how they want to pursue the extra training. If they want to run at home and do some of the drills they learned in practice, let them have fun!

ATC does not endorse or recommend any kind of strength or weight training program. Weight training for strength and power is not the goal of the youth distance runner; the basics of the discipline must first be mastered.

The MOST IMPORTANT things for a youth distance runner to be able to do is develop what is called their "general strength" and increase "endurance." This is the individual's ability to

overcome their own body weight and persevere throughout a distance race. Only when an athlete is able to do this through a range of demanding athletic motions can he/she go further.

What can my child expect from participating in the distance practices/events?

FUN! Nothing is more exhilarating than walking up to the line, pausing in the calm before the storm, and letting the sound of the gun surprise you, only to be followed by a race for the finish line. For almost everyone, the earliest memories of the playground contain at least one instance of someone coming up and asking, “wanna race?” From our earliest days, competition of every kind drives us. Athletic competition, particularly seeing who is the fastest, is thrilling and exhilarating...building confidence, group morale, and the skills to master our fears and focus our drive into positive results.