

# Hurdles .. Skill Development for Young Athletes



Many young hurdlers are taught with barriers set at competition height and distance between hurdles.

Although young athletes will do some hurdle training with hurdles set for competition, constant training in this manner does not assist the learning of correct hurdle technique, and development of the most important fundamental of hurdling: **SPEED**

Speed is a product of the neuromuscular system.

Although muscle composition is inherited (and determines speed potential), neuromuscular patterns can be adapted with training. The type of training undertaken must develop the capacity of the neuromuscular system to operate quickly.

Quite simply: if you want to run fast, you must train fast (and, to run fast, the issue of duration and nature of recovery must be addressed).

Hurdlers take three strides between hurdles.

The athlete with the fastest stride rate will be the fastest between the hurdles.

Training with hurdles constantly set at competition distances and heights will, too often, develop a slow stride rate, and does not stimulate the desired neuromuscular response of hurdle clearance.

Instead of training with hurdles set at competition height and distance:

1. **Lower the hurdle height:** Depending on the stage of development of the athlete, this can be anywhere from 5-20 cm. below competition height. A lower hurdle encourages confidence and greater hurdle clearance speed. **Drive the knee up – snap it down to the ground as fast as possible.**
2. **Decrease the distance between hurdles:** (discount the hurdles) Competition distance may be discounted up to a metre. Aim to achieve **fast stride turnover**.

## Training for Speed

1. **Warm-Up:** appropriate general and event specific warm-up (inc. hurdle drills).
2.
  - 2.1 Runs over 4-6 hurdles (reduced height and discounted).
  - 2.2 Runs (as above) but remove H2.
  - 2.3 Runs - remove H3.
  - 2.4 Runs – remove H1.

Complete recoveries, but remain warm ... feedback time.  
Terminate as fatigue produces technique errors.

No. of repetitions: will depend on training age, fitness, motivation, time available, ...  
However .. better to undertrain than overstrain

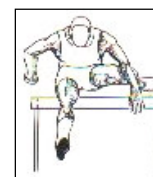
3. **Warm Down:** **thorough**, appropriate warm down.
4. **Variety:** Go to each session well-prepared with a variety of drills and activities.  
It takes time to plan and set out hurdles sessions, but, the time is well spent and positive responses from athletes practicing professionally and acquiring new skills is the reward.

**Primary Goal: SPEED ... over and between the hurdles**

Mark Woodbridge  
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# A Sample Session Series

An outline of sessions applied at the OZ Squad (Victoria) Camp, 1995



## Session 1: 1. Technique Training

- 1.1 Overheads and video of elite hurdling; identification and discussion of technical strengths and weaknesses.
- 1.2 Runs over 3H: low, reduced spacing; these are warm-up runs to give the coaches an overall view of ability level, and, allows the athletes to settle down.
- 1.3 Drills and Skills: Wall Drills, Marching Drills, Skip Drills, Running Drills (1, 3, and 5 strides between hurdles)
- 1.4 Video: 3 or 4 Hurdles; slightly reduced competition distances; competition heights; standing / crouch starts; video front and side.
- 1.5 Individual Video Analysis: Athletes take notes .. use of analysis sheet.

## Session 2: 2. Developing Speed

- 2.1 Introduction: Overheads and Video; Race Plan; Components of the Hurdle Race; Goal Times (Worksheet); Split Times (Worksheet).
- 2.2 Practical Work: Warm Up; Hurdle Rhythm Sprint  
Discount Hurdling: reduced heights / spacings; 4H; splits.  
4H (no H2); 4H (no H3); 4H (no H1)
- 2.3 Warm Down: Jog / Stretch; discussion of split times.

## Session 3: 3. Developing Speed (cont.)

- 3.1 Introduction:
  1. Power / Acceleration Phase  
e.g. 100m: Start to 30/40m; Hurdles: Start to H2/H3.
  2. Maximum Velocity / Speed Phase  
e.g. 100m: 30/40m to 70/80m; Hurdles: H2/H3 to H7/H8.
  3. Speed Endurance Phase  
e.g. 100m: 70/80m to Finish; Hurdles: H7/H8 to Finish.
- 3.2 Practical Work: Developing Each Phase
  1. Power / Acceleration Phase:  
Various Starts: standing, falling, 3 pt., 4pt.  
Plyometrics: Multiple Jumps; Bounds; Hops.
  2. Maximum Velocity / Speed Phase:  
Flying 30's; Ins and Outs.
  3. Speed Endurance:  
Over-distance, e.g. 150's; 12 hurdles.

## Session 4: 4. Intermediate Hurdles

- 4.1 Introduction: Video; Hurdling Action; Bend Hurdling; Alternate Leg Hurdling; Race Plan; Split Times.
- 4.2 Practical: Warm Up; Drills: emphasis .. alternate leg hurdling; 9 Stride Hurdling; 10 Stride Hurdling; Approach to H1; H1 to H4.  
  
Video analysis (if time permits).  
Warm Down.

(Coach: Mark Woodbridge, ATFCA Victoria)

Outline of sessions prepared by Mark Woodbridge (in 1995) .. fundamentals remain valid – technology today allows variations in presentation.

There are more example sessions available .. [www.nwaswimaths.com](http://www.nwaswimaths.com) .. Programs / Articles

***Every athlete is an experiment of one***

The coach plays a critical role in deciding the readiness of athletes for the introduction of successive skills