

Stepping up: Distances between hurdles / hurdle heights

It's frustrating, but few developing hurdlers acquire "comfort" until growth spurts are complete (or near complete).

As young athletes age, hurdle spacings change, heights of hurdles change .. a seemingly forever changing set of challenges for the sprint hurdler.

I feel I'm chopping my stride ... I can't make it to H1 in eight paces common complaints, but issues that can should be addressed with a plan, with patience, and professionalism. It may be a simple change in your foot placement in the blocks .. but, **persist** and **practice**.



Be patient .. work on your drills, work on your technique

Don't consider yourself personally disadvantaged; the requirements have evolved over time .. experts have looked at growth rates (and there is no set growth rate) and race expectations ... for almost all, there will be a frustrating period when you have to hang in there .. so, more reason to have the fundamental technique aspects of the hurdle clearance and execution **securely** implanted in your motor skill arsenal.

Believe me, if you can't run / hurdle properly over low hurdles, you are very, **very** unlikely to do so over higher hurdles.

Early achievers, when hurdle heights are low, too **OFTEN** overlook the need to **master** correct mechanics. As hurdle heights rise, as spacing increases ... completion of the hurdle task becomes more challenging, often too challenging .. athletes regress, give up, and we loose the speedsters that hurdling needs.

Hurdlers **must** develop and bring their speed to the event ... **equally** they must refine their technique so that perfect clearance mechanics can be delivered under pressure (not just in a stress free drill practice environment).

Too few young athletes, accustomed to or seeking instant gratification, have the patience to refine their skills over an extended period of time .. they change events, or, are lost to the sport.

Try this: the **Acceleration Ladder** (for specifications see NWA - Athletics Programs)... note, at the outset, that the claim is not made that the ladder approach suggests a perfect stride pattern that all must follow ... rather, the ladder suggests that increases in stride length should occur in an organised and regular manner. Optimum stride length should be achieved at least two strides before the first hurdle.

We are trying to develop a dynamic stereotype of starting ... a start that will enhance your hurdle performance

So play around with the expectations .. establish a model that suits your athlete, and draws them gradually towards the outcome they are seeking .. it's not easy .. it takes time, patience and focus from both athlete and coach.

For example: start with a basic model (DVD support of Acceleration Ladder execution is available .. an eyeful is better than a mouthful)

50 / 15: Start ▶ (.50m) ^{Step 1} .50m ▶ (.65m) ^{Step 2} 1.15m ▶ (.80) ^{Step 3} 1.95m ▶ (.95) ^{Step 4} 2.90m ... this is just a model, a starting point .. but, persist: read **Try this** (again)

e.g. Stepping up to: **Girls & Boys U15 100H:** 13 metres to Hurdle 1

Adjust the spacing of the athlete's steps .. mark it out on the track .. chalk, tape ..
Start ▶ (.50) ^{Step 1} .50m ▶ (.90) ^{Step 2} 1.40m ▶ (1.20) ^{Step 3} 2.60m ▶ (1.50) ^{Step 4} 4.10m ▶ (1.60) ^{Step 5} 5.70m ▶ (1.60) ^{Step 8}

(now I know that may not be where you want/need to be - but a plan is forming, a strategy is being enacted)

Adjust step distances ... seek the model that best suits your athlete ... try to achieve an optimum stride two strides before the first hurdle

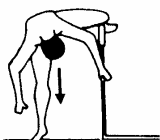
Every athlete is an experiment of one ... (coaches are there to help athletes overcome their doubts)

Drills: be sure to emphasize high knee lifts in A-Skip and A-Run drills .. teach the mind and body to maximise lift .. let it become an automatic response; it will pay off with precise and more confident initial steps .. the first step .. the first three steps, are critical as the hurdler races to H1; "discount" the distances to H1 initially .. **speed** to H1 .. **speed** to H1 ▶ H2 ▶ H3.

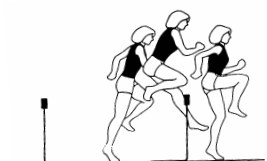
Persist .. listen to what the athlete **feels** ... but, **persist**

It takes 50 repeats to form a habit ... it can take thousands of repeats to change a habit.

Also remember that practice sessions are when we are allowed to make mistakes
strive to perform perfectly .. learn from mistakes



Don't miss out on the opportunity to learn
Knowledge accumulates quickly
but .. only in open minds



Why do we so often see close finishes in sprint hurdle races ?

Special Thanks: Speed Dynamics: High Hurdles 1 and 11, Drills for Speed