

OFFICIATING THE HIGH SCHOOL RACE WALK (Rev. 9/2026)

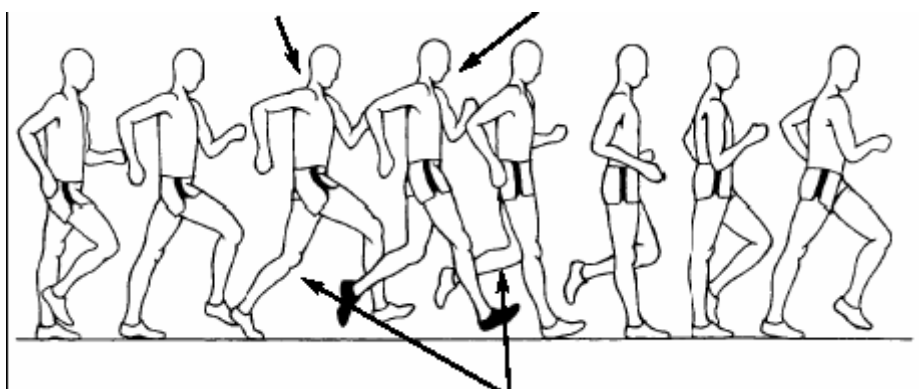
(Sources: 2026 USATF Competition Rules & 2026 USATF Race Walk Officiating Best Practices)

Art. 1...Definition of Race Walking.

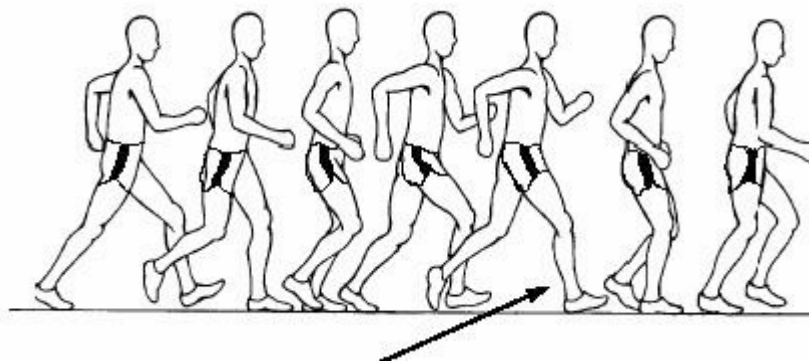
- a. Race walking is a progression of steps so taken that the walker maintains contact with the ground so that no visible (to the human eye) loss of contact occurs. The advancing leg must be straightened (i.e. not bent at the knee) from the moment of first contact with the ground until in the vertical position.

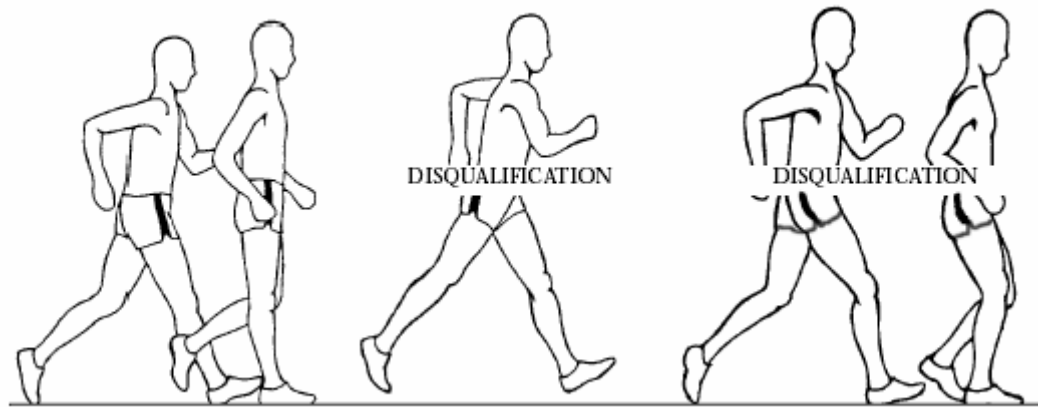
Art. 2...Race Walking Infractions.

- a. **Loss of contact** occurs when the competitor visibly appears to have both feet off of the ground at the same time. One foot should always appear to be in contact. Accordingly, there must be a moment when both feet appear to be in contact (i.e., before rear toe-off, the front foot must make contact.)



- b. **Bent knee** occurs when the competitor visibly fails to straighten the forward supporting leg upon contact, and or, fails to keep the supporting leg straightened until in the vertical upright position. Flexion at the knee from first contact until mid-stance is not allowed in race walking. (The supporting leg may be flexed at the knee after it has passed under the body.) Athletes who land with straightened legs after the vertical position are in violation as well, because the definition requires the leg to be straightened before the vertical.





Correct Technique

"Loss of Contact"

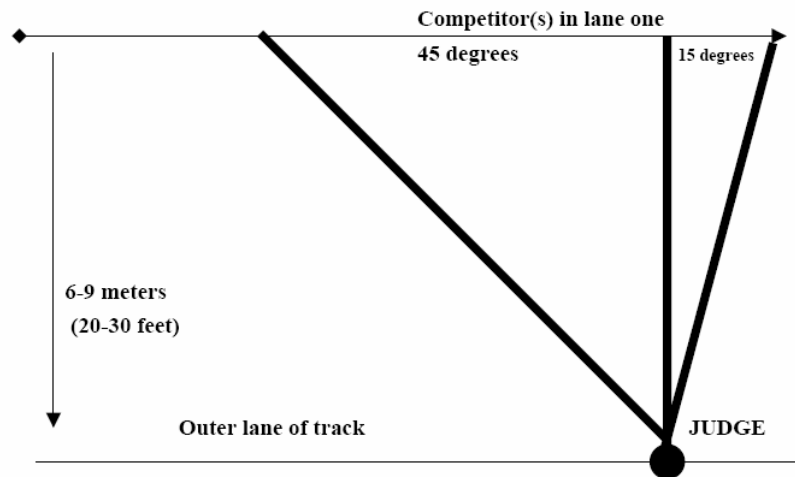
"Bent Knee"

Art. 3...Judging.

- a. The Judges of Race Walking shall have the sole authority to determine the fairness or unfairness of walking, and their rulings may not be appealed. Judging decisions are made as seen by the human eye. Video or pictures are never used. All judges shall act in an individual capacity.
- b. A race must have a minimum of three judges. In championship events, there shall be five judges including a Chief Judge. The judges shall be numbered one (1) to five (5).
- c. A **Chief Walk Judge** will assign the other judges to their respective judging areas, explain the procedure to be used during the race and notify competitors of disqualification. A **Recorder** and a **Disqualification Notification Board Operator** may assist the Chief Judge.
- d. The **Chief Judge** shall explain the rules and officiating procedures to the athletes prior to the race beginning.
- e. Judges shall keep track of their decisions on **tally cards**, which are to be submitted to the Chief Judge or Recorder at the conclusion of the event. In championship events the Recorder should prepare a **summary sheet** of the judges' decisions.
- f. To make a judgment, look **first** for contact, and **then** for straightening of the leg at the knee. When the decision is made to make a call on the competitor, the call must be based on the definition of race walking and not the other indicators that brought attention to the competitor. If in doubt about making a call, give the benefit of doubt to the athlete and do not make a call.
- g. NOTE: Cautions and Red Cards for bent leg ought NOT to be given if the athlete hyper-extends the leg at the knee, is bowlegged, has large thighs, or has protruding knees. Look to see that the knee is straightened, rather than straight (like a stick). Failure to straighten the leg at the knee at contact or during stance before the vertical position is really a matter of the support leg not being locked upon contact, or failure to keep the knee locked until the body has passed the vertical position.

Art. 4...Judging Position.

- a. The walk judges should view the walkers from the side. Judging shall not be done from either the front or the back of the walkers. (The judges may officiate the walk from the infield, or from the track.)



- b. The Chief Walk Judge should be in a position to oversee the entire race (i.e., the Chief Judge should judge the start and then move to the finish straightaway).

Art. 5...Numbers.

- a. To facilitate judging, race walkers shall wear identical numbers on the front and back of their competition jerseys.

Art. 6...Cautioning Competitors.

- a. Any judge may caution competitors (i.e. show a Yellow Paddle) when, by their method of walking, they are in danger of violating the definition of race walking. When showing an athlete a paddle to caution them, be close enough to the athlete so the paddle shall be shown to the athlete at a height of chest to head level and they can clearly see the paddle and symbol of the infraction that is being violated.
- b. **Yellow paddles** with symbols representing possible loss of contact (~) or possible bent knee (>) are to be used. (If paddles are not available, the caution may be given verbally, by calling out the walker's number and stating either "loss of contact," or "bent knee").



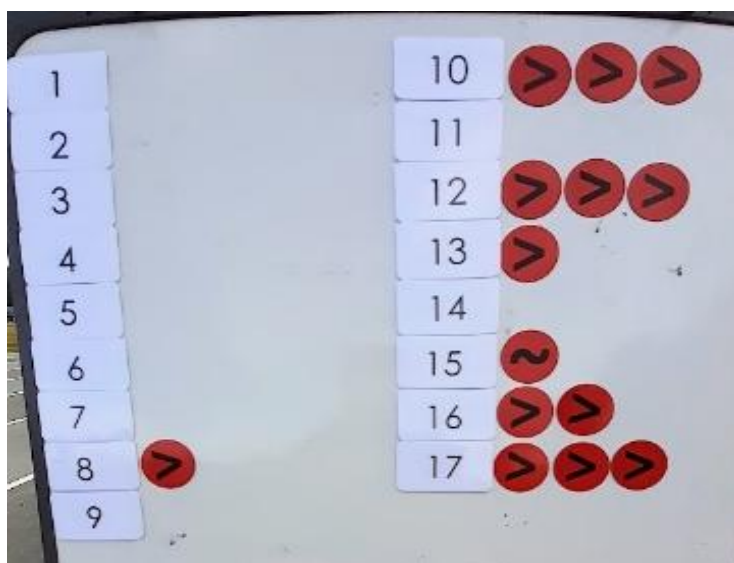
- c. A judge may caution a competitor once for each infraction. (A judge may not caution a competitor twice for the same possible infraction.)
- d. Competitors are not entitled to a caution before disqualification. Wherever possible, the judge(s) should caution a competitor before writing a **proposal for disqualification**.

Art. 7 ...Disqualification of Competitors.

- a. When in the opinion of a judge, a competitor fails to comply with the definition of race walking, the judge should issue a proposal for disqualification (commonly called a **red card**). This indicates the judge has observed a foul by the athlete. The competitor's number and infraction should be marked on the red card.
- b. Proposals for disqualification shall be submitted to the Chief Walk Judge or recorder as soon as possible.
- c. A walk judge may issue only one proposal for disqualification per athlete. (Note: Two or more judges may issue red cards for the same infraction.)
- d. In championship events a **disqualification posting board** shall be used to keep competitors informed about the number of red cards issued.

Disqualification Posting Board

This is an example with athlete numbers and red card violations displayed next to the athlete's number, so the athletes are aware of how many fouls they have accumulated during the race.



- e. When three (3) different judges propose disqualification on the same competitor, that competitor is disqualified and shall be notified of this disqualification by the Chief Race Walk Judge. Disqualified competitors must leave the track.
- f. The Chief Judge shall notify athletes of their disqualification with a **red paddle**.
- g. An athlete may be disqualified (notified of their disqualification) after the race, in which case the competitor or coach should be notified as soon as possible.

Addendum:

1. Race Walk Judging Paddles are available for purchase at <https://raleighwalkers.com/officiating-paddles/>
2. Race Walk Officials Forms are available for download at <https://usarw.racewalk.com/judging-forms/>
3. Race Walk Event Best Practices are available for download at <https://usarw.racewalk.com/best-practices/>