

TEACHING THE JAVELIN

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The javelin, like the other throwing events has its peculiarities. At 800 and 600 grams respectively these men and women's implements are the lightest of the four throwing events. It is the only throwing event that takes place outside of a ring with a long run up. Therefore greater demand is placed on transitional movement skills as the throw moves from straight ahead run to crossover strides and finally the throwing position. We will begin to examine and explain the steps and drills necessary to achieve a throw from a full approach. Each section will have technical points to cue your throwers on while doing the drills.

THE GRIP

In most literature about the javelin three grip styles are discussed; the Finnish, Fork and American. Research has been done on which style promotes better rotation of the javelin in flight and which one takes advantage of the strongest fingers in the hand. The commonalities among all three styles are that the palm should be kept up from the crossover steps through the delivery. The javelin will rest across the palm in all three styles. When picking a style with a novice or experienced thrower "feel" and how the thrower gets behind the throw will be important. Some throwers will like to have the bony portion of the finger or thumb joint directly behind the grip cord. This will give them a solid surface to pull and push against when delivering the javelin. Others will slightly modify this portion of the grip.

LEARNING THE STANDING THROW

By using other implements (medicine balls, knoccken or javelin balls) in addition to drills done with javelin you will be able to teach delivery mechanics from the ground up. Using medicine balls is a good way for the athlete to learn how to use the entire body to deliver an implement. Movements like jumping involve extension at the ankle, knee and hip. The drills with the medicine ball move from directly overhead throws to throws that involve a blocking of one side. On all drills below a ball between 4-7 pounds that bounces should be used. All drills can be done anywhere from 1-3 sets of 6-10 repetitions. During discussion of technique assume that the thrower is right handed.

1. **Straight up throws** – Begin a medicine ball just below your chin. Squat quickly and jump up delivering the ball as high as possible over head.
2. **Unders** – Begin with ball overhead quickly bend and put it between your knees and deliver forward in an arching manner as far as possible.
3. **Russian twist** – Start with ball at belly button height with arms slightly bent. Begin by moving ball to one side. Two crucial teaching points on this exercise. First cue turning of the backside or away foot so that the toe faces the instep of the other foot. Second body weight should shift completely from one side to the other on each twist. Move continuously from right to left.
4. **Side or hip throw**- Start by facing 90 degrees away from a wall or partner. Begin with the ball at bellybutton height and swing it back behind the right hip, also shifting body weight to that side. Deliver the ball at hip level. Move in the same manner as the Russian twist turning the right foot and shifting body weight over the front leg. Repeat throw. Also do drill from non-throwing side.
5. **Two-arm javelin throw with medicine ball** – Begin in same position as Side or hip throw. Instead of beginning the throw when the ball is behind the right hip, continue moving the ball back and away so that the ball ends up stretched behind your head and all your weight is on your rear foot. Just as the throw is starting you should be facing the direction of the throw and have your shoulders square to the wall or partner. Use the same cues as before to get your body weight over your left side on delivery.

Throwing medicine balls allows your athletes to learn how to summate forces to deliver an implement. The sequence of drills below uses the javelin.

1. **Two arm throws** – Pick a grip from above and put javelin in the same delivery position as #5 above adding your left hand over the right. Either step into the throw or do it from a stagger position like above. Pick a target a few feet away and try to hit it. Work your way down the field, slightly increasing the distance of the target.

2. **Downhill Target throws** – Use a slight decline. Start the javelin at eye level. Progress in this manner

- A. Start with feet staggered
- B. Start with left foot next to right and move it to delivery position.
- C. Start left behind right and move it to delivery position.

3. **Level Target throws** – Use same progression as previous drill. Increase target distance as you work your way down the field. This can also be done from 3-step position.

4. **Standing throws** – Begin with left foot behind right and move it into delivery position. Keep your left shoulder even with your right when blocking. Keep your hand up so that javelin tip stays level. This will enable you to "get under" or "behind the javelin". Move your left arm from a long position with the palm out to an elbow to rib position. Keep the right side moving (pushing and turning) while the left is getting into position.

LEARNING 3 AND 5 STEP THROWS

The 3 and 5 Step throws begin in the same position, with the javelin withdrawn and the right foot in front of the left. When doing throws from these two distances cue the athlete to keep their left arm up and slightly bent with the palm facing out (thumb down). Chin should be near left shoulder. We have discussed cues for the delivery and blocking action in "Standing throws"; here we will focus on action of the crossover steps.

The next to last left (one taken before the last right) is crucial to the final throwing position. It must be active and link the acceleration of previous crossover steps. Cue this action by reminding the athletes to keep moving. They will want to "get ready" to throw and slow down.

By cueing the use of this step, it will aid in getting their block leg (last left) down faster.

Running the crossover steps will take some time to master. It is a skill to accelerate while running in a side on position. Here are some drills, which will help you run in this position better.

Lateral movement drills 20m, 2-4x ea. with jog return, pick 3-6

Side shuffle w/no arms, small amplitude

Side shuffle w/no arms vertical emphasis

Side shuffle w/no arms horizontal emphasis

Repeat above with arms, sweeping circles

Cariocha, small amplitude, work hip turn

Cariocha, lateral emphasis

Tapioca, lateral emphasis and high knee action with back leg

Crossovers with out carry action, ea. side

Crossovers with carry action, ea. side

Finish with 8-10 run, crossover, etc. every 5 steps

Variations

Do some drills with javelin

Do 8-10 run, crossover with javelin

Do these up a slight hill

LEARNING THE APPROACH FULL THROW

The first part of learning the approach is getting the javelin withdrawn. This movement is completed in two strides. The completion of the withdrawal is the beginning of the 5-step position we just discussed. The smoother this portion of the throw can be the less loss of momentum will result. This action should be practiced walking, then jogging and finally from a run.

1. Start with javelin in the overhead carry position (over shoulder, flat or nose slightly down) step first with your left, then right (begin the withdrawal) and then left (javelin is withdrawn). Check the position of the javelin and left arm, repeat.

2. Once this has been practiced from walking, jogging and running begin to use it in connection with 5 step approaches. This will serve as a link between those throws and full approaches. First from a walk, then a jog and finally a run. Once the javelin is withdrawn (beginning of the 5-step throw), the 5-step portion can be walked, jogged or run. You can throw from this drill or just run through.

Adding the remaining steps needed to have a full approach is relatively easy. An 11-step approach is a good starting point. Some drills mentioned in the 3 and 5 step section will help you transition from the run to crossover portion of the approach.

1. The approach should start with a left step (11 strides). Begin by walking the approach counting the number of steps and knowing which one to begin the withdrawal on. Practice this without a javelin from a walk, jog and a run.

2. Add the javelin and proceed in the same fashion with approaches walked, jogged and run. There is no need to throw yet.

3. Next begin marking where the left foot (block leg) lands when running through the approach. When you have marked 4-6 approaches, note the distance and add a javelin length to it and measure the entire approach. This can either be done by javelin lengths or by measuring tape. Do this on the same surface, as you will normally throw from.

4. You can run approaches straight through like described above or you can come to a stop around the toeboard in the standing position.

The javelin throw's components should be practiced in progression so that there is a link in the learning pattern between the basic movement the desired end result. Because each portion of the throw is set up by action of the previous movement it is important to be consistent and practice perfectly so that the portions flow into each other.