Are you interested in athletics, or what in the US would be called “track and field”? ANNA HOCHSIEDER presents useful words and phrases to talk about running races, jumping and throwing objects.

**Sports day**
The school I went to held a **sports day** every summer. The children **competed** in various **track events**, such as the **400-metre sprint** and the **100-metre hurdles**, as well as in **field events**, such as the **long jump** and throwing the **javelin**. Being no good at **sport** myself, I used to hate those days. I would come last in every **race** — often after making a **false start**. My biggest success was when I **tied for last place** with a classmate.

My son Daniel, on the other hand, is a **natural athlete**. He loves any type of **physical exercise**, especially **athletics**. He’s an excellent **sprinter** as well as a **middle- and long-distance runner**. His best time in the **100-metre sprint** (N. Am.: dash) is 10.9 seconds, and he’ll finish a **5K** (five-km run) in less than 20 minutes. He’s also just joined his school’s **cross-country** team.

Daniel also **does well in field events**. Watching him **leap** backwards and **fly through the air** head first to **clear the bar** in the **high jump** or **putting the shot** (throwing a six-kilo metal ball) fills me with a mixture of pride and fear. He’s had his share of **sports injuries**, but he’s not one to give up easily.
PRACTICE

Now, try the following exercises to practise talking about athletics.

Exercise 1

Cross out one word in each line (A–C) that you would not associate with the activity described on the left.

A. running: bar | finish line | lane | starting blocks
B. jumping: baton | hurdle | pole | sandpit
C. throwing: discus | javelin | shot | stopwatch

Exercise 2

Match the sentence halves below to complete the definitions.

A. If you compete in an event... 1. you take part in a 5,000-metre race.
B. If you come in first in a race... 2. you start running too soon, so that the race has to begin again.
C. If you tie for first place... 3. you arrive at the finish line before the other competitors.
D. If you make a false start... 4. you and another person win, finishing with the same number of points.
E. If you run a 5K... 5. you jump over it without touching it.
F. If you clear the bar... 6. you take part in a sporting contest.

Exercise 3

Study the picture and text on page 48 again, and find the answer to each question below. Some letters have been given.

A. What do you call the sport in which you throw a heavy ball as far as you can? 
   s_________ - ________t

B. What do you call a race between teams in which each team member runs one section of the race? 
   l_________ ________r

C. What do you call a race in which people run very fast over a short distance? 
   p_________ ________t or ________h

D. What do you call a race in which people jump over a series of small frames or fences? 
   u_________ s

UK / US differences

Athletics is the British English word for sporting events in which people run races, jump over obstacles and throw objects. Speakers of US English use the expression track and field.

For physical activity done for pleasure or to keep fit and healthy, British English speakers use the uncountable noun sport, while speakers of US English use the plural noun sports:
- Do you enjoy sport? (UK) / Do you enjoy sports? (N. Am.)

In British English, the plural noun sports is used only before another noun, as in sports injury or sports day (called field day in US English).

athletics [aθ‘letiks]  –  Leichtathletik
obstacle [‘obstʌkl]  –  Hindernis

Answers

1. A. baton  C. stopwatch
2. B. 3, C, E, F, G
3. A. shot put  D. hurdles