

Cross Country Rules Changes - 2026

Fri Nov 07 2025

3-2-3k (NEW): Permits the Games Committee to determine takeoff board placement in horizontal jumps.

Rationale: The change gives the games committee authority to determine takeoff board placement in the long jump and triple jump aligning with existing role in setting starting heights for high jump and pole vault. The rules previously did not assign this responsibility, and clarification ensures consistency, fairness and appropriate oversight. Athletes may still change which approved takeoff board to use during competition.

3-8-6: Expands the acceptable calibers and provides flexibility for starting devices.

Rationale: Due to increased cost and limited availability .32 caliber blanks. Expanding the acceptable calibers provides flexibility for meet management while maintaining the safety and functionality required for starting devices.

4-6-5: Permits an appropriate health care professional, designated by the games committee, to evaluate a downed competitor without resulting in disqualification.

Rationale: The change permits the games committee to designate an appropriate health care professional to evaluate a downed competitor on the course without resulting in disqualification provided no assistance is given in progressing along the course. It prioritizes athlete safety by permitting on-course evaluation while preserving the integrity of the competition.

4-6-6c (NEW): Clarifies athletes are not permitted to wear any type of audio or video recording devices during a race, trial, or while in restricted areas.

Rationale: No athlete participating in a meet is permitted to wear any type of audio or video device to record or transmit in a race, trial or in restricted areas. This language aligns with other NFHS rules books.

6-2-2 NOTES (3) (NEW): Clarifies that the time limit for a consecutive attempt applies within a height and at a height change.

Rationale: The chart does not differentiate whether consecutive trials are within a height or at a height change. Adding this note will clarify the rule and establish a standard procedure.

6-3-2b4(a): Incorporates metric measurements alongside imperial to promote clarity and consistency in meet management.

Rationale: Standard metric progressions are typically in 5 cm increments, with 15 cm aligning closely to the traditional 6 inches. This change simplifies implementation, aligns with common metric practices, and supports consistency in meet management.

6-8-6 (NEW): Standardizes warm up times for athletes entering the high jump and pole vault after 60 minutes have elapsed.

Rationale: The current rule allows warm-up only after passing three consecutive heights, which can result in long periods of inactivity—sometimes over an hour—in large competitions. This can be a disadvantage and potential safety concern for athletes entering later. Changing the rule to provide a standardized 1.5 minutes for high jump or 2 minutes for pole vault warm-up for any athlete entering after 60 minutes have elapsed promotes fairness, consistency, and risk minimization.

6-9-21: Clarifies that padding is required for hard and unyielding surfaces that are elevated relative to the ground.

Rationale: The addition of "above ground level" clarifies that the padding requirement applies specifically to hard and unyielding surfaces that are elevated relative to the ground. This refinement helps differentiate between surfaces that present a greater risk of impact during a fall (such as raised concrete, asphalt, wood, or platform extensions) versus ground-level areas that may already be accounted for with landing system setup.

6-10-5: Incorporates javelin construction specifications into the rules book for clarity and consistency.

Rationale: Moving the implement construction specifications for the javelin into the rules book provides greater clarity, consistency, and accessibility for high school coaches, athletes, and meet officials. By incorporating the construction requirements directly into the NFHS rules book, we ensure that all necessary information is readily available, specific to the high school level, and aligned with the intent of education-based athletics. This approach maintains appropriate equipment standards while promoting ease of understanding, consistent enforcement, and fairness across all levels of high school competition.

9-1-1: Adds the 200 meter dash as an option for indoor meets.

Rationale: Adding the option of the 200 or 300 meter dash in indoor meets provides states with greater flexibility to structure events based on facility size, athlete development, and meet goals. This change supports broader participation and aligns with the varied formats of indoor track and field across the country.

9-6-1: Establishes a standardized 20-meter exchange zone for indoor relays.

Rationale: A uniform 20m exchange zone in indoor track and field creates a single standard for ease of officiating.

2026 Editorial Changes

4-3-1b(8), 6-4-2, 9-1-1

Other Changes

Middle Level Recommendations for Aero Javelin

2026 Points of Emphasis

1. Throws Safety – Shot Put, Discus and Javelin
2. Restricted Areas
3. Protest/Appeal Process