Pass the baton

An athletic activities core task for key stage 2 children

What is the core task?

The ‘Pass the baton’ core task involves children running in a relay and trying to complete as many laps of the track as possible in three minutes. The children work in teams of four. Having considered each other’s strengths and weaknesses, they decide how to divide the time or distance between them in order to achieve as many laps as possible in three minutes (e.g. each team member could run for two laps, each could run for 45 seconds, or some team members could run longer or further than others). Having chosen an approach to running the relay, the children take it in turn to run for their allotted time or distance, concentrating on speed and good baton changes. They keep a record of the number of laps they complete and aim to beat their score the next time they perform the core task.

How are the children doing? Look out for them:

- choosing an approach that makes the most of the team’s strengths
- developing their running skills
- practising baton changes
- choosing and sustaining an appropriate running pace
- demonstrating a good running technique
- working together well as a team
- practising to improve their performance
- improving the number of laps they complete in three minutes

To help the children evaluate and improve their core task performance, ask them:

- How well did you contribute to the overall success of the relay race?
- How well did you pass and receive the baton?
- What were your tactics for the relay? Did they work well?
- What would you change to improve your team’s performance?
- Is there anything that you need to practise?

To make the task easier or harder, consider changing one or more STEP: Space  Task  Equipment  People

You need:
- batons
- stopwatches
- recording sheets
- a marked circular running track
- a video camera and playback equipment (this is optional, but it is useful to record the children’s first and then later attempts at the core task to show their progress).
Pass the baton: development activities

After the children’s initial attempt at the task, you will know what they can do, how well they can do it, and what they need to work at. To help all of them make progress and achieve in different areas, choose from the activities suggested here and add some of your own.

Developing skills

**Sprinting and running**
- Ask the children to explore walking, jogging and running in different ways (eg with their arms by their side, arms out wide, head still, head moving, knees high, on their toes, on their heels).
- Encourage them to identify a running technique that works well for them and to practise this.
- Ask them to run as fast as they can for a short time. Organise a range of sprint challenges (eg running for 5 seconds, 10 seconds, chasing a partner, running 30 metres).
- Ask the children to keep running for a longer period of time. Talk with them about techniques for doing this (eg slowing running down, taking little steps, using arms less to conserve energy).
- Teach the children to run at a steady pace and to estimate how long it will take them to run different distances (eg 50 metres in 20 seconds).

**Relay running**
- Organise a range of simple shuttle relays (eg passing the quoit when walking or running, passing the quoit from different hands, passing the quoit to the opposite hand).
- Once the children are comfortable using a quoit, introduce a baton.
- Set up a relay race around a circular track.
- Teach the children the correct baton changeover technique (timing incoming and outgoing runs, using opposite hands, moving out of the way after handing over the baton, how to hold a baton when running).

**Evaluating and improving**

**Developing physical and mental capacity**

**Warm-up activities**
- Teach the children a variety of warm-up activities appropriate for running. Help them to understand how these prepare their body.
- Ask the children to follow teacher-led stretches and talk with them about the need to stretch.
- Talk with them about the importance of carrying out stretches properly to avoid injury.

**Making and applying decisions**

**Varying running styles**
- Ask the children to try sprinting and then running for longer distances with a low body position and an upright body position.
- Ask them to compare how their body feels and to decide which works best and why.
- Ask the children to practise starting running from different positions (eg lying down, kneeling, crouching, standing) and to decide which works best.
- Give them a range of running and walking challenges to help them understand how to adapt their performance to the demands of the task (eg running for one minute, 100 metres, 10 metres).

**Organising, judging and recording**
- Teach the children the rules of running events (eg feet behind the line at the start, false starts, baton changeovers) and make sure that they understand these.
- Teach them how to use a stopwatch and give them opportunities to time an event.
- Teach them what to look for in a relay changeover.
- Talk with them about what isn’t allowed during a running event (eg running across another lane, getting in the way of another runner).
- Give them opportunities to record times and distances on a score sheet.

**Evaluating and improving**

**Why do sprinting and sustained running put different demands on the body? When do you breathe more deeply? When do you breathe faster? Which muscles do you use when you are running? How do you feel after a sprint? How do you feel after running for a longer distance?**

**Developing skills**

**Evaluating and improving**

**How should you use your arms when running really fast? How is this different when you are running more slowly? How do you breathe when you are sprinting? How does this change when you are running for a long time?**

**What should the incoming runner do as they approach the changeover? What should the outgoing runner do? What happens if you pass the baton to the same hand?**

**When is it best to run with a low body position? When is it best to run with an upright body position? How would you change your style of running for different events?**

**Ask the children to watch another team running a relay. What were the different stages in the run? How successful was it? What one thing do you think the team should change? What target would you set the team for its next run?**

**Ask the children to find out how long it takes an Olympic 4 x 100m relay team to finish its race. How long does it take your team to complete the same distance? How far can your team run in the same time as an Olympic team?**

**How the body works**
- Help the children to recognise how their breathing is different when they are sprinting and when they are running for a sustained period.
- Teach them how to control their breathing during different types of running events.
- Teach them how to increase power when sprinting (eg by using their arms).
- Help them to identify which muscles are used for different athletic events.

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**Athletics core tasks**

PRE-LEVEL 1  LEVEL 1  LEVEL 2  LEVEL 3  LEVEL 4  LEVEL 5  LEVEL 6  LEVEL 7  LEVEL 8

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