

# Javelin for beginners

In some areas of the U.S., or of the world, a new thrower may be introduced to the javelin at a young age. In other places, throwers may not have a chance to toss the spear until they're young adults. In the U.S., for example, most states don't even include a javelin throwing event in their state championship meets. As with most throwing events, the younger you're introduced to the javelin, the lighter the implement that you'll toss. Both boys and girls may begin with a 300-gram javelin, then work their way up to 600 grams, which is the international standard for women's competitions. Older boys will advance to the 800-gram male standard.

The first thing some throwers must learn is that the javelin is thrown with the entire body. The overhand delivery may remind many athletes of baseball or football throwing, but those techniques won't work when you're throwing the javelin. Indeed, some coaches feel that strong-armed baseball and football throwers don't make good javelin competitors, because the motions are so different.

As with other track and field throwing events, javelin throwers must combine speed with positioning, accelerating down the runway at high speed, then placing their bodies in just the right position to make the strongest possible throw.

## **Safety:**

The javelin competition evolved from spear hunting several thousand years ago. Today's javelin isn't designed to kill anything, but its sharp point is obviously still dangerous. For that reason, younger athletes will often begin with rubber-tipped javelins to avoid injuries and calm nervous parents. Whether the javelins are rubber- or metal-tipped, coaches and meet officials must be vigilant to keep everyone

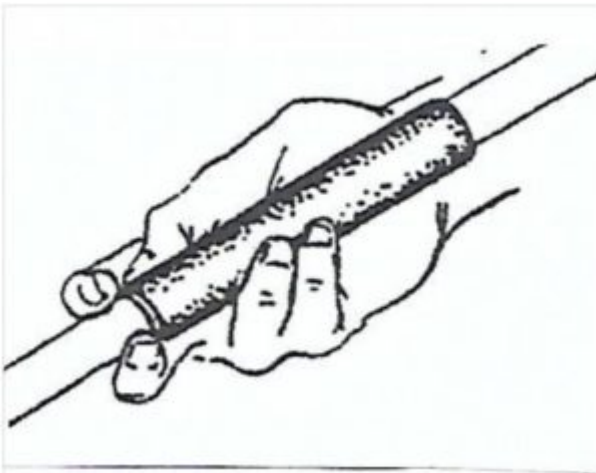
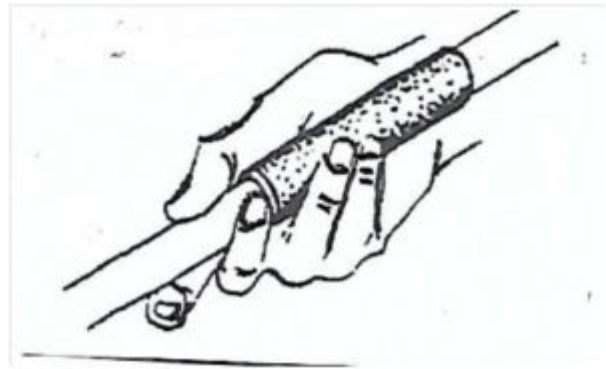
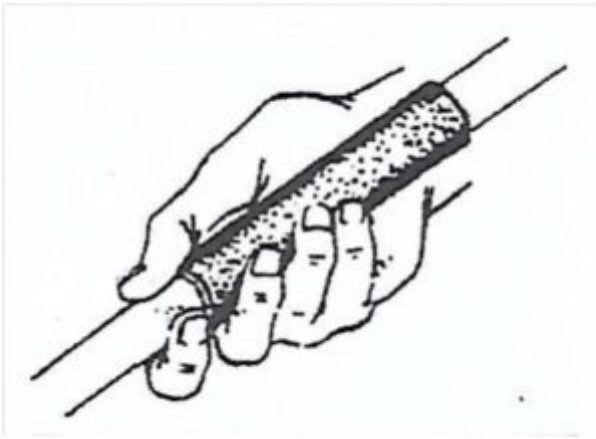
far from the landing area when younger competitors are throwing, because their aim is more likely to be off.



The throwers' health is another safety concern. Javelin throwing is very taxing on the body, so young athletes should learn proper warm-up and stretching routines. Additionally, growing athletes will likely perform many drills that deal with separate aspects of the throw, in part to limit the number of full throws they perform.

### **Grip:**

There are three different javelin-throwing grips, with no consensus about which is best, or about which grip is easier for novice throwers. A coach may teach the grip he thinks is best, such as the American style, in which the thrower grips the javelin's cord between the thumb and index finger; the Finnish style, in which the cord is gripped between the thumb and middle fingers; or the Fork style, in which the thrower grasps the cord between the index and middle fingers. The best approach may be to teach all three styles, then let each thrower determine which method feels most comfortable.



### **Run-Up:**

Unlike some other throwing events, new javelin competitors may not begin by throwing the javelin. Instead, they'll probably start with the run-up. Somewhat like the pole vault, javelin throwers must accelerate down the runway while carrying their implements. New throwers will learn how to hold the javelin high, palm-up, while accelerating gradually during the straight-ahead running phase.



Some coaches may even have new throwers walk through the

approach first, then jog, before they begin running with the spear. It's also possible that new throwers will learn the run-up technique without holding a javelin.

Once the young throwers become comfortable with the straight-ahead running phase, they must learn how to transition from standard running to the crossover steps that place their bodies in the proper position for the throw. Again, transition and crossover running drills may be performed at slower speeds, with or without a javelin.



One thing the new thrower won't learn is the rotational technique, which was banned several decades ago.

### **Throwing Motion:**

The athlete's first throwing drills may not include a javelin. Instead, competitors may throw a ball that's several times heavier than a javelin. The first javelin attempts may be standing throws, although some coaches feel that new throwers should always perform drills that include some forward motion plus a follow-through. The javelin thrower will then typically advance to either 3- or 5-step throws. Other drills may focus on throwing after performing the crossover steps, on properly securing the plant foot and on leaning back just before the release.



Source: [trackandfield.about.com](https://trackandfield.about.com)

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