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# A MODERN RACE

A shot rips through the sky. Sound waves travel to your ears. Then your brain sends a message to the right leg. Your foot pushes off the **starting block**. All of this takes a tenth of a second.

Your head faces down. It makes a line with your body. The angle is 45 degrees. Your body forms an arrow. Arms stay parallel. That keeps power from escaping.



There is a goal. It is to hack gravity. Legs pump. Knees lift. Feet pound. Each step brings five times your body weight. Yet your heels barely skim the ground. Most of your time is spent in the air.

You are not alone. On either side are the fastest people in the world. The finish line comes. Less than a second separates runners. All eyes watch. But the race is too close to call.

Lasers are needed. Light **sensors** are too. These tell time to the millionth of a second. Cameras see all. They take up to 10,000 photos per second. A computer studies them. It looks for bodies. The first photo with a runner's **torso** shows the winner. The time is recorded. Results go up. The crowd finds out what happened.

This is a modern race. It is one of the simplest events. But measuring it is not. That is because of where athletes have taken the sport. They have pushed it to its highest level. There is a thin line. It separates what humans can do and what they can't. Every runner tries to cross it. They set new records. Each one pushes it forward. That is what track and field is all about.



### Fast Fact

Another name for the sport of track and field is athletics.

