Glossary

Anchor	The last runner in a relay race.
Bar	The crosspiece of wood, metal or plastic which high jumpers and pole-vaulters must clear.
Baton	A smooth, hollow metal or wooden tube which is passed from one relay runner to the next.
Bounding	Repeated and continuous leaping across a surface.
Box	The contoured dugout which pole-vaulters place their pole into to jump over the bar.
Breakline	An arc across the track, denoting the point where runners may leave their original lane and use any part of the track, which normally is the inside lane.
Changeover	The passing of the baton from one runner to the next.
Circle	The round area within which shot-putters, discus and hammer throwers must stay when throwing their respective projectiles.
Countback	A process used to determine the winner if two high jumpers or pole vaulters reach equal heights, based upon reviewing which athlete failed least in his or her jumps at that height or in the whole competition.
Crouch start	The crouched position all sprinters must assume before starting a race.
Decathlete	A contestant in a decathlon.
Decathlon	An athletic contest comprising of 10 different track-and-field events and won by the contestant having the highest total score.
Discus	A wooden plate rimmed by metal and heaved by athletes aiming for the greatest distance.
Exchange Zone	See take-over zone.
False start	An illegal beginning to a race in which a runner begins before the starter's pistol is fired.
Field event	An athletic event that involves jumping or throwing.
Foul	A violation where, most commonly, an athlete jumping or throwing for distance steps across the line or circle defining the limit of the athlete's approach to an attempt.
Hammer	A heavy metal ball attached to a wire cable, which is attached to a handle, used for the hammer throw.

©Alberta Learning, Alberta, Canada

Hammer throw The field event in which athletes attempt to throw the hammer as far as possible.

Heat An early race of an event, with the top finishers advancing to the finals or semifinals of the competition.

Heptathlete A contestant in a heptathlon.

Heptathlon An athletic contest comprising of seven different track-and-field events and won by the contestant having the greatest total score.

High jump
1. A vertical jump with which athletes attempt to clear a bar.
2. The field event in which athletes attempt to jump over a bar.

Hurdles
1. The obstacles which contestants must pass over, in a hurdles race.
2. A running race in which athletes must pass over set obstacles on the track.

Javelin
1. A metal or wooden shaft with a metal point, similar to a spear, thrown for distance.
2. The field event in which athletes attempt to throw the javelin as far as possible.

Jump-off A sudden-death contest used to determine the winner in high jump and pole vault if the athletes finish at the same height and a countback cannot determine the winner.

Jump the gun To commit a false start by beginning before the starter's pistol is fired.

Kick A burst of speed saved for the final stretch of a long race.

Lanes The eight alleys on the track which runners must run in during some races.

Lap
1. One time around the track.
2. To surpass another runner in a race by one loop of the course.

Leg One of a number of parts of a race, each of which must be completed to determine the winner.

Lifting A violation in the walk for lifting a foot before the leg has bent for a moment.

Long distance The label given to the races at least 5,000 metres in length.

Long jump Former name for the broad jump.
1. A jump with which athletes aim to cover the greatest distance from a given mark.
2. The field event in which athletes try to jump as far as possible.

Marathon A 42 kilometre road race re-enacting the distance run by a Greek messenger in 490 BC.

Middle distance The label given to the races covering 800 and 1500 metres.

©Alberta Learning, Alberta, Canada

On your mark	The starter's call for runners in a race to move to the starting line and assume position to start the race.
Pole vault	1. A leap over a horizontal bar with the help of a long pole. 2. The event in which athletes try to clear a bar with the help of a long pole.
Relay	A race in which athletes race in teams of four, taking turns to run.
Road race	A race, run on established roads or footpaths, not on grass or other soft ground.
Runway	A running strip for jumpers and throwers where they build up speed as they approach their attempts in their events.
Scratchline	A line marking the centre of the take-over zone.
Set	The starter's second call to runners in a sprint, alerting them to rise quickly into their final starting positions before the starter's gun is fired.
Shot	A heavy metal ball used in the shot-put.
Shot-put	The field event in which athletes try to put, or throw, the shot as far as possible.
Sprint	A short race at full speed, generally meaning a race of 400 metres or less.
Starter's gun	The pistol used by the starter to fire blanks in the air, signaling the start of a race.
Starting blocks	A pair of angled supports for the feet, temporarily attached to the track, to increase the power of a sprinter from a crouch start.
Steeplechase	A race run by people over a course which features obstacles such as water-filled ditches and barriers.
Stop board	1. The far point of a tapered box sunk into the runway for the pole vault, where the vaulter's pole is intended to lock into position as the athlete launches into the air for the vault. 2. The raised board that defines how far a thrower can range before releasing his attempt.
Sudden death	An extra round or rounds of competition held to resolve a contest that has resulted in a tie, i.e., a jump-off in the high jump or pole vault.
Take-off board	A rectangular board, usually made of wood, placed in the runway in the long jump and triple jump which marks the jumping area.
Take-off line	The plasticine line at the end of the take-off board in long jump and triple jump before which athletes must have jumped.
Take-over zone	A defined area in a relay race where the baton must be exchanged between runners on a team.
Track	1. The oval course laid out for racing. 2. Athletic events run on that course.

©Alberta Learning, Alberta, Canada (2001)

Triple jump	The jumping event which features the hop-step-jump sequence.
Uprights	The vertical poles, which hold the bar in high, jump and pole vault in place.
Walk	A race where the walker must have at least one foot on the ground at all times and the advancing leg must be kept straight.
Water jump	A man-made obstacle in the steeplechase usually consisting of a miniature swimming pool containing water up to 70 centimetres deep.
Zigzag principle	A style of draw which distributes the leading contenders evenly across the different heats.

©Alberta Learning, Alberta, Canada