



Coaching the Triple Jump

Boo Schexnayder

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The purpose of the approach in the triple jump is to provide horizontal velocity, and our aim is to conserve it throughout the phases.

A good runner shows a slight undulatory path of the hips in the sagittal plane while running, and a good triple jumper modifies this path into big phases.

The shift from the run to the phases is not radical, the hop blends characteristics of the run and phases.

The Approach Run consists of three phases. They are:

1. The Drive Phase, (6 steps), a period of slow rhythm, increasing body angles, and high displacement.
2. The Continuation Phase, a period of upright posture, vertical pushing, and increasing frequency.
3. The Transition Phase (4 steps), a period of preparation for takeoff. The transition phase should resemble the continuation phase, but often problems and changes result as the jumper approaches takeoff.

Technical Features that should be observed in the approach run are:

1. Proper posture, consisting of neutral head and pelvic alignments
2. Progressive body angles through the drive phase, accomplished by using the legs to push the body up into running position.
3. Vertical velocities being generated with each step
4. Relaxation and patient frequency increase, allowing the pelvis to move freely within its postural alignment.

There are several general considerations that apply to all the phases. We will examine these before we discuss each phase individually. These are:

1. Proper posture, consisting of neutral head and pelvic alignments, and the absence of forward or backwards lean.
2. Proper contact patterns. These include isometric preparation of the quadriceps and ankle (dorsiflexion) prior to impact, a heel to toe rolling type of contact, and efficient levels of eccentric and concentric activity. The backward movement of the foot prior to landing is a mostly a consequence of continued contralateral (LRLR...) action, and does not result from a grabbing action. Excessively grabbing or clawing at the surface results in premature concentric work, consequential loss of elastic benefit, and improper flight trajectory.
3. Proper swinging segment usage. This involves swinging the arms and free leg in a powerful, complete, angular movements. Arms, regardless of style used, should display extension early in the swinging movement. The swing leg should show the same, evidenced by a low recovery of the foot during the swinging action. This low recovery and extension of the free leg early in the swing motion involves the pelvis in the movement, thus helping to maintain pelvic posture.
4. Each phase should demonstrate a takeoff angle higher than the previous phase.



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The final steps of the approach should continue to exhibit good mechanics, notably continuing to display vertical velocities upon the pushoff from each step.

The penultimate step should not be radically different from any other of the final steps, and should not promote lowering of the body.

The takeoff step should be placed directly underneath the body at contact, and should exhibit foot contact patterns similar to those described in the phases

The trajectory of the takeoff should be relatively flat. The pelvis should not display radical vertical displacement.

Horizontal displacement during takeoff should be high. The hips should move significantly past the takeoff foot before the takeoff foot leaves the ground.

The free leg action off the board should involve flexion of the hip as well as advancement of the hip. The free leg should aid in pelvic alignment, countering the forward rotation induced by the takeoff leg.

This takeoff should not be hurried, as a shift from the fast run rhythm to the slower phase rhythm is made at this point.

During the hop, to preserve stability and posture, contralateral movement should continue. Therefore, upon takeoff, an extension and backward movement of the free leg, similar to a running stride, should be performed.

This extension of the free leg is difficult to teach, as many athletes reflexively tend to flex limbs when in flight. When beginning to learn this skill, greater flight times result, so the rhythm of the skill becomes much slower at his point. Addition to high frequencies here and throughout the phases is an obstacle to learning that many athletes must overcome.

The recovery of the takeoff leg should be reflexive, resulting from a prestretch of the hip flexors caused by displacement. Actively pulling or cycling the leg through produces forward rotation of the pelvis and inhibits contralateral function.

Generally speaking, activity of the hop leg during the hop should be symmetric with respect to the long axis of the body. Asymmetries will repeat in later phases.

The jumper should prepare to enter the step prior to the hop landing. This entry should feature proper singing mechanics as previously discussed, as to preserve pelvic alignment.



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During the step, the athlete should again position for proper swinging mechanics and contact patterns.

Troubles during the step phase are always associated with forward rotation of the pelvis, and are caused by errors prior to that point.

The jump phase should exhibit proper postural alignment and blocking fundamentals. Swinging segments should stop upon takeoff.