

# Starting Block Technique: Common Starting Block Mistakes

## 1. Positioning Your Hips Incorrectly

Using a set position that puts the hips behind the front foot. That can be a problem.

## 2. Raising Your Head Too Quickly

Looking up too soon, causing the torso to rise and hips to drop. When the head pops, hips drop, causing the foot to start ahead of the hip. This in turn causes the delay, the body rolls over the foot before you can apply force.

## 3. Overstriding

Overstriding on the initial steps. When you tell an athlete, "You've got to get out as far as you can." That's great, but they're going to start reaching and when they start reaching, when that foot hits the ground they've got to pull themselves over their hip. Acceleration is a push, not a pull.

## 4. Focusing on the Front Foot

Don't worry about what happens with the front foot at the start because you're going to push with your front foot. Focus on what happens with the back foot. The back foot is going to move your hips forward. The front foot is at a biomechanical disadvantage, because of the angle. If the back foot isn't assisting the front foot you got nothing. The push needs to come from the back foot. If the back foot isn't applying force to the pedal, you're not moving your hips forward. When you're in a set position and you don't push and you only go from the front, your hips don't travel forward that far. If you push from the back, they will go.

## 5. Moving Backward in the Starting Blocks

Seeing an athlete in that set position, under video, is important. Football coaches use ton of video. They do it for a reason. It's not a bad thing to watch your athletes during "set practice." Put a camera up and watch each one of them get up in the blocks, take their set position. Have them watch themselves release. You'll see some kids in the blocks go backwards before they go forward.

## 6. On the Set Position

In the set, hips should be slightly higher than the shoulders. The back must be straight. Don't be all hunched over in the set. You can't create power lines from that. You have to have a flat back. The head should be in line with the back to make the transition during the acceleration phase easier. If the head is down, it forces your hips to drop. So your head needs to be in line, not down and tucked, but in line with your spine.

## 7. The Lead Arm's Position at the Start

If you look really, really closely at high-speed video of the start, people's reaction time, you want to just look at the lead arm – not muscling it out, but flicking it out. If you can react as fast as you can with your lead arm, to the gun, everything else will take care of itself, because we've done all the preparation work beforehand. It's like you're catching a butterfly out of the air. You want to flick the arm out. And when you do that you're sending impulses back through to your lower body, getting everything started.