

Walk NEBRASKA

The Need for Speed: Racewalking

Are you thinking about changing your walking technique? Have you tried “formal” walking? There are two types of formal walking: (1) power-walking (also known as speed-walking) and (2) racewalking. Both types require technique. Power-walking is done more recreationally and as an Olympic sport. For racewalking, there are special rules and regulations. Although racewalking is a technique that can be used at any walking speed, it is generally used by walkers to increase their speed and endurance. It provides a great aerobic workout and burns more calories per mile than power-walking or running. According to racewalk.com, there are two basic rules:

Rule 1: Racewalking is a progression of steps so taken that the walker makes contact with the ground while no visible (to the human eye) loss of contact occurs.

This is what differentiates racewalking from running. It means there is a moment when the heel of the front foot and the toe of the rear foot appear to be in contact with the ground at the same time. Before the racewalker takes the rear foot off the ground, the front heel must make contact with the ground. Contact with the ground appears to be maintained at all times.

Athletes stay low to the ground by keeping their arms pumping low, close to their hips. If one sees a racewalker's shoulders rising, it may be a sign the athlete is losing contact with the ground. What appears to be an exaggerated swivel to the hip is, in fact, a full rotation of the pelvis. Athletes aim to move the pelvis forward and minimize sideways motion in order to achieve maximum forward propulsion. Speed is achieved by stepping quickly with the aim of rapid turnover. This minimizes the risk of the feet leaving the ground. Strides are short and quick with pushoff coming forward from the ball of the foot, again, to minimize the risk of losing ground contact. World-class racewalkers (male and female) can average under seven and eight minutes per mile in a 20 km (12.4 mile) racewalk.

Rule 2: In racewalking, the advancing leg must be straightened (i.e., not bent at the knee) from the moment of first contact with the ground until in the vertical position.

This differentiates racewalking from other forms of walking. It does not mean that your legs are straight at all times. The rule is that the knee should be straight when the heel strikes the ground. It must remain straight until it passes under the body; then the knee bends and swings forward taking the next step.

When you see a beginning racewalker, you might think they are clumsy looking, with chicken-like awkward movements. However, an experienced racewalker moves in a fluid forward motion. If you want to racewalk, you must learn the proper techniques and practice. Practice makes perfect!

Sources: #

<http://www.racewalk.com/howto/BasicTechnique.asp> or check out racewalking on YouTube.

For more information, contact Ann Fenton, Extension Educator at afenton1@unl.edu. **Know how. Know now.**



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