

Wicket Training

Spacings between the wickets.

There are NO pre-determined official spacings for wickets which is the tricky part about wicket training. But, not to worry, it will take only some minor tinkering along with following the guidelines below to get your wicket or “speed hurdle” training up and running. (Pun intended, sorry...)

Realize that the age group and gender of your athletes plays a large role in determining the spacing. A Division 1 wide receiver who is 6’5” 225lbs and runs a 4.4 40 yd dash will require much further spacings than the 7th grade soccer crew will. His stride length and strength mean Mr. DI will have considerably more horizontal displacement (forward progress) per step than the pre-pubescent fella playing soccer.

An elite high school girl could certainly use wicket spacings suitable for some high school guys as well. Generally speaking, teen boys are taller and stronger than the teen ladies so their wickets will need to be further apart whereas at the youth level the height/weight/strength levels are more similar with the ladies even being ahead for a time.

Also, plan for the first few hurdles to be closer together than the last few to allow for the smaller stride lengths which will be present while accelerating.

There is also no set amount of “run up” or accelerating steps BEFORE the first wicket but if you use anywhere from 5-10 you’ll find a sweet spot.

Here are some examples to copy, use or tweak.

Advanced High School Girls

The first 3 are spaced at 5’6
the next 3 at 5’9”
and the last 3 at 6’

or stay at 4’ for the first three and adjust by 3” at each hurdle for the last 6 or 7 wickets

5’ 6”, 5’6”, 5’ 6”, 5’9”, 5’9”, 5’9”, 6’, 6’, 6’

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High School Boys

The first 3 are spaced at 5'9"
the next 3 at 6'0"
and the last 3-4 at 6'3"

or stay at 5'9" for the first three and adjust by 3" at each hurdle for the last 6 or 7 wickets

5'9", 5'9", 5'9", 6', 6', 6', 6'3", 6'3", 6'3" (ish..)

Remember, these are VERY rough guidelines and there will be a lot of overlap between high school-aged boys and girls and even some 8th grade kids as well, while younger athletes will be more similar with the occasional athlete being the outlier.

Things to watch for to adjust the spacings.

If athletes look very bunched up with choppy strides, the wickets are too close for **them**. The athletes will be able to give great feedback on this too. They will know if it felt "fast" or awkward.

Swinging in the other direction, watch carefully for an athlete "casting" the front foot, which means "reaching" with it. There is never a good time for the toe/foot to land in front of the knee unless the plan is to slow down. If you see this, the hurdles are too far apart for **THAT** athlete or they just need more experience with the wickets. You'll know the difference if their running form over the wickets is radically different than it is without them.

That's why I always advise having more than one lane of training wickets, a faster/further apart lane and a slower, closer version.

A final reminder, the first few attempts, maybe even training sessions, using wickets **WILL LOOK LIKE A FAILURE**. Once the athletes assimilate though, they will get much better very quickly and at that point you are training them in a rock-solid modality that will emphasize great sprinting mechanics.

That coupled with the over-arching development plan means your athletes and teams are on their way to optimizing their athletic talents.