

Track and Field



*Olympic Shot Put
and Discus*



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Tests of Strength

Brute strength, agility of movement and the graceful coordination of a dancer all are necessary to achieve success in the shot put or discus. Because of their size and the demands of their sport, these weight men often are fiercely independent.

The shot put is 16 pounds for men and eight pounds, 13 ounces for women and is thrown from a circle seven feet in diameter. The proper way to hold the shot is in the curve of the fingers, and the metal sphere should be positioned under the chin with the right elbow completely bent and pointing down. The starting position is at the back of the circle with the athlete's back turned toward the throwing area. The proper sequence is to start a gliding motion with a kick back of the left leg, pivot the body around with the elbow extended upward at a sharp angle, and then the throw, at which time the body weight is shifted to the left foot.

The men's discus weighs four pounds, six ounces, and the women's is two pounds, three ounces. The wooden disk with a metal rim is thrown from a circle 8 feet 2 1/2 inches in diameter. The discus is held with the flat surface against the

palm of the hand with the edge of the discus against the firm joint of the fingers. Begin the pivot on the heel of the left foot, keeping the discus as far back as possible at this point. The right hip is rotated forward with the right knee slightly bent on the throw, and on release the discus should rotate off the middle finger in a clockwise spin.

United States men have dominated both of these events, with Al Oerter winning the discus in four consecutive Olympics between 1956 and 1968, on each occasion surpassing his previous Olympic record. Bearded Mac Wilkins of the U.S. set another mark of 254 feet in the 1976 qualifying en route to his gold medal. Following a string of six consecutive Olympic successes in the shot put, the U.S. hasn't won since Randy Matson in 1968, and was shut out of all medals at Montreal for the first time since 1936. Only once has an American woman won the gold in either event. The 1976 champions were Evelyn Schlaak of East Germany in the discus (226 feet, 4.5 inches) and Ivanka Khristova of Bulgaria in the shot put (69-5), both Olympic records.