




How the race walking rule has changed over the years

1877: The first rule was introduced in 1877. Race walking is defined as: "*A succession of leaps, and the toes of one foot must not leave the ground until the heel of the other foot is on the ground*."

1880: The following was added: "*In race walking events, disqualifications are left to the discretion of the judges*."

1908: A guideline for judges was issued at the London Olympics: "*If a walker appeared 'incorrect', the judges could consult each other*". Rule already applied by the English Walking Association founded in 1907.

1912: Another guideline for judges was issued at the Stockholm Olympics: "*Instead of disqualifying walkers, they were asked to 'retire' if they violated the rule.*"

1924: The Paris Olympics caused great chaos when the judges' decision was overruled by the Jury of Appeal. The consequence of this was that race walking was eliminated from the 1928 Olympics and at the 1932 Olympics in Los Angeles only the 50 km was held.

1935: The Council of IAAF at a meeting in Berlin 1935 decided to appoint a special commission (Walking Committee) to study the rules as well the organization questions in different countries.

1936: The definition of the rule changed in: "*Walking is a progression by steps so taken that unbroken contact with the ground is maintained*."
Judging and DQ: "*A competitor whose mod of progression fails, in the opinion of two of the Judges of Walking, to comply with the definition during any part of the competition, shall be disqualified and informed of his disqualification by one of the Judges of Walking.*
Judges may advise a competitor upon his mode of progression if it should appear that the competitor be in danger of ceasing to comply with the definition of walking."

1947: The definition of the rule changed following the introduction of knee rule as part of the definition.
"*… and in particular, that during the period of each step, in which a foot is on the ground, the leg shall be straightened (ie. Not bent at the knee) for at least for one moment*".

1986: A historic turning point occurred in the history of race walking judging. Since the years 1950s, athletes had been informed only by the head judge with a white flag when they had received a caution from any judge. However, this caution was communicated to the athlete only the first time, and therefore no one athlete truly knew their technical situation.
The same thing happened with red cards (at that time called warnings). As early as 1983, discussions and proposals began to be held regarding whether to make both the cautions from individual judges (with what are now the yellow paddles) and the red cards themselves visible through the use of a special posting board placed near the finish line so that the athlete could know their technical situation at each lap. In the following decade, with the advent of electronics and the accelerated transmission of red cards, this information system was refined and greatly appreciated by athletes.

1991: Revision the technical rules including a redefinition that clarify the contact rule by specifying it is "*visible to the human eye*" loss of contact that is contrary to the rules.
The purpose of this change essentially was to eliminate the confusion surrounding video and photograph evidence of the loss of contact.

2001: IAAF Council introduced "*Emergency Rule*" for straight DQ in last 100m by Chief Judge (called special power).

2013: After a test in 2012, was introduced the "*Penalty Zone*" aimed at reducing (if no eliminating altogether) the number of DQs by introducing time penalties instead. First step was U16 and the U18, after U20 and finally senior. This is the current rule!