

High Jump Approach

Finding the right high jump approach is not nearly as complicated as many people believe. It can be done in a very short period of time and a moderate amount of patience. I have included a diagram on the second page that will be a guide. I would encourage you to map out the approach in a place other than where the HJ pit is set up. If you do use the HJ apron make sure you are not running at the pit. Athletes tend to bring their bias from previous experiences to their approach. This process is designed to be “fresh start”.

An important thing to note is that I come from the school of thought that athletes should be a running as tight a turn as they can handle. For instance at my peak I ran a turn that was no wider than 13ft from the near standard. Keep in mind that I was running at the bar at take off at about 8 meters a second. Thats at about a 12.5 second 100 meter speed.

1. Run 10 steps in a straight line. Accelerate gradually from slow to fast. Find the average mid mark on the 5th step from the take off point. You'll need to make about 5-10 attempts in order to find an accurate average. Note that the mark isn't necessarily at the middle of the approach. If you have a jumper using an 8 step approach the mark would be on their third step.
2. Have the athlete run a curve that feels tight yet comfortable to them. The athlete should be initiating the curve on the fifth step from the take off. Locate the takeoff point from an average of 5 - 7 trials.
3. Measure from the takeoff point (“T”), approximately 3 to 4 feet. (See point “M” on the diagram) This mark represents where the bar would be. You'll notice that the take off point is inside of where the standard would be.
4. Now measure from point “M” to point “S” and write down.
5. Measure from “S” to “X”. Notice that “X”, “Y” and “Z” are all in a straight line.
6. Now that you have gathered all of the measurements you can begin to transfer them to the high jump apron.
7. Although you've done all the measurements the approach will probably require a few adjustments. Make the adjustments needed and remeasure your points.

High Jump Pit



“T” to “M”	
“M” to “S”	
“S” to “X”	
“X” to “Y”	
“Y” to “Z”	

TIP: I recommend that once you have dialed in the approach you have the athlete measure the approach using their competition shoes. You do this by walking heel to toe. My experience has been that athletes forget or lose tape measures more frequently than losing or forgetting their shoes.

When the athlete gets to the meet the marks that they will need to measure will be “S” to “X”, “X” to “Y”, and “Y” to “Z”. Do not be afraid to make minor adjustments throughout the season or even at a competition. Athlete fitness, apron surfaces, wind, weather can all impact the athletes ability to execute the approach.