



HOW TO MEASURE A LOOP

Having a regular loop to use for practice will not only save you time but breed familiarity and comfort among your Kilometer Kids. Routinely using the same course will expedite transitions, warmup activities, game instructions, and daily runs. In a perfect world, every team would have a track to use with a field in the center, but this is not feasible for every Kilometer Kids program. Designing a functional and practical loop based on your site's landscape may be a challenge based on your practice location, but here are some recommendations on how to optimize your loop.

Design It

- If you have a track, use it.
- Your loop should start and stop in the same location to give you a designated spot to coach from and to ease the scanning process when recording mileage. Positioning it near your team's water bottles, restroom facilities or gathering point is also helpful. It should be an open location to allow runners to gather easily.
- Optimal length is between 200m and 400m (0.125 and 0.25 miles) depending on the age of your Kilometer Kids. Avoid loops longer than 400m because it is difficult to observe all of your runners at that distance. Loops shorter than 200m may pose challenges in scanning your athletes while also being too repetitive.
- Make sure you can see your Kilometer Kids while they are on all parts of the loop.
- Ensure the surface is safe. Flat, soft surfaces are best and avoid curbs, roots, steep hills, sharp corners, low hanging branches and other potentially dangerous obstacles. A school parking lot, playground area, gymnasium or other areas are acceptable but a large field is best.
- Do NOT have your runners use a road or active parking lot.
- Use immovable objects such as rocks, benches or trees to mark your loop. Ultimately, this will save you time since you will not have to cone the loop every practice and the distance will remain the same.
- If you must use cones to mark your loop, make sure you can replicate it to ensure consistency. Consider taking photos of your cone placement as a reminder of their locations. After a few weeks, the loop will be visible for participants because of use, but still cone it to prevent athletes from shortening the loop accidentally or purposefully. If possible, use cones of only one color to denote the loop and use an alternate color for the games and runs for your practice session.

Measure It

- While most high school tracks are 400m in length, elementary and middle school tracks are usually based on the space available and are most often an unorthodox distance. No matter your loop, you need to measure it.
- Whichever method you use, make sure to measure your loop 2-4 times to ensure accuracy.
- You must also convert your distance, whether in feet, yards or meters, into miles for scanning. Your final distance should be between 0.125 and 0.25 miles per loop.
 - Don't forget to put this distance into EZ Tally® and name your loop.



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Continued

- The most accurate method to measure your track or loop is with a [surveyor's wheel](#) (available in both imperial and metric). Most cross country coaches will have one, so ask your local high school to borrow one and explain the goals of Kilometer Kids. Your local coach may even come out to help you measure! These wheels are also available online or at a local home improvement store.
 - If you find yourself wheeling your course, walk slowly and keep the wheel on the ground.
 - Keep a straight path whenever possible.
 - Stay 6" - 12" away from the cones or landmarks because this is where your participants will most likely be running.
 - Write down the distance upon completion and repeat as necessary.
- If a surveyor's wheel is not available, a [long measuring tape](#) is a good substitute. Your local track and field team likely has tapes ranging from 50' - 200' or more and they are also available online and at home improvement stores. You will need a partner to assist you.
 - Have Person A stand at the start holding the reel and holding the end of the tape. Person B walks out to the first turn or to when the reel stops. Person A records the distance and then walks to the location of Person B.
 - Person B walks to the next stopping point and Person A records the distance.
 - Repeat the process to the next turn or stopping point and eventually to the finish.
 - Add the distances together and the sum is the length of your loop. Repeat for accuracy.
- If both a wheel and long tape are unavailable, consider pacing the loop.
 - Stretch out a traditional 20' - 30' [measuring tape](#). Walk the length of the tape noting how many regular steps it takes you to cover the distance. Be careful not to alter your stride length!
 - Repeat this process 6 - 10 times; while tedious, it is the only way to get an accurate average for how many steps it will take you walk 30' as an example. (Trial #1 - 10 steps, #2 - 9 steps, #3 - 9.5 steps, #4 - 10.5 steps, #5 - 11 steps, #6 - 10 steps; total is 60 steps divided by 6 trials, so average is 10 steps for 30').
 - Now walk your loop at least three times using your regular stride. Apply your ratio to convert your average number of steps into feet.
- The easiest but least accurate way to measure your loop is with a GPS watch or phone. Given the short distance, the turns and the nature of the loop, and margins of error on GPS systems, it will likely report a distance much shorter than in reality. If this is the only method available to you because of resources or time, please use the following best practices:
 - Sync your device. Be patient, but allow the GPS to fully sync with the satellite.
 - Walk slowly allowing for additional pings between your device and the satellite.
 - Adjust the ping rate to be at least once per second and preferably more.
 - Avoid trees and tall buildings.
 - Repeat at least three times.