Background:

There are three primary relays in Indoor Track: the 4 x 200m, the 4 x 400m, and the 4 x 800m. **The handoff technique is exactly the same in all three relays (and in any other relays you might run with the exception of the Outdoor 4 x 100m). The only difference is the speed at which the handoff is made.**

The baton must be passed within a twenty-meter exchange zone which extends ten meters in either direction from the finish line. The official will line you up at the start of the exchange zone in the order of the incoming runners, with the first place team on the inside of the track. As each team passes the baton, the remaining teams will slide towards the inside of the track. In the event that multiple teams are handing off nearly simultaneously, the outgoing runner should hold his/her position and the incoming runner should adjust course accordingly.

The Approach:

The incoming runner (runner A for the remainder of this description) holds the baton in his/her right hand. The outgoing runner (runner B for the remainder of this description) waits with his/her left side turned towards runner A. As runner A approaches the start of the exchange zone, runner B begins to run (you usually want to start running when runner A is about 5 meters away). If runner B is experienced, he/she may choose to turn completely away from runner A, take 3 or 4 strong strides, and then turn back towards runner A. Runner B can also choose to remain turned towards runner A the entire time. **Most teams—including many top collegiate and professional relay teams—choose the second option because it eliminates the possibility of runner B accelerating too quickly and having to wait for runner A to catch up.**

The Hand-off:

The hand-off has three phases. First, runner A extends his/her arm straight with the baton pointed directly vertically. Next, runner B—using his/her left hand—takes the baton from runner A. **When receiving the baton, your index finger and thumb should form a ‘V’! No underhand passes!** Finally, runner B turns away from runner A and transfers the baton to his/her right hand in one smooth and continuous motion. A successful hand-off should include those three phases in that order. **The responsibility for the hand-off lies with runner B because runner A—assuming he/she has run a proper race—does not have any energy to spare towards guiding the baton into runner B’s hand. Runner A’s only job is to hold the baton up nice and high to give runner B an easy target to grab.**

As mentioned earlier, all three relays use the same technique for the hand-off. **There are no blind hand-offs in Indoor Track!**

Aftermath:

After the hand-off has been completed, runner B continues running as normal. Runner A needs to get off of the track as quickly as possible without impeding the other teams. As most hand-offs occur in lane 1, the easiest escape route tends to be towards the inside of the track. **In the event that your hand-off occurs in the middle of the track because multiple teams are handing off at once, runner A should stop and wait for the other teams to pass before making his/her way to the inside of the track.**