

2026 Cross Country

Classification — based on grades 9-12

6A	1,400 and over	3A	349-175
5A	1,399-700	2A	174 and below
4A	699-350		

2026 Cross Country Season

First Day of Practice	August 10
First Meet	After 10 days of practice
District Meet Completion	October 24
State Meet	October 31

Cross Country Sports Practice Model

The IHSA Board of Directors has adopted the fall sports practice model for cross country.

Rules

All meets shall be conducted according to National Federation rules. Cross country rules are included in the Track and Field Rules book that is provided to all member schools in the spring of the preceding school year.

Meet Limitations

Teams and individuals are limited to nine meets during the regular season, not to exceed two meets per week. A contestant who exceeds these limitations will become ineligible for district, state, or any further IHSA sponsored cross country competition.

Team Size/Coaches/Support Personnel

A full team consists of five runners. At the state meet, a maximum of seven runners per school will be permitted to participate. If fewer than five runners participate, it will be for individual honors only. District Boards of Control set numbers for district meets. All classifications will be allowed two coaches and two support personnel to be admitted without an IHSA card. Any coaches or support personnel exceeding that number must have an IHSA card.

Scoring

Team scores are determined by adding together the places of finish for a team's top five finishers. At least five finishers are required to compute a team score.

Length of Course

The race distance for both girls and boys at district and state meets shall be 5,000 meters.

Road Runs

Cross country runners are not permitted to participate in road races, fun runs, marathons or the running portion of triathlons during the August 11 to November 1 season. Spartan races are allowed.

2026 State Meet

Date	October 31
Site	Portneuf Wellness Center, Pocatello
Starting time	10:00 a.m.
Order of Races	4A/2A/5A Girls, 4A/2A/5A Boys, 6A/3A Girls, 6A/3A Boys

Qualifying for State Cross Country

Qualifying as a Team: The number of teams that qualify to the state meet shall be determined by the following procedure:

1. Teams that finish in the top one-half, or major portion thereof, of the full teams that complete the district meet shall qualify for the state meet. If a tie exists in the final qualifying position, it will be broken according to NFHS rule 8-2.
2. If a school is unable to compete as a full team in the district meet due to circumstances beyond its control (e.g., injury to the fifth runner, bus issues, etc.), it may still be counted toward the number of qualifying teams, provided the school competed with at least five runners in six regular season meets.
3. If only two full teams compete at the district meet, the second place team may be eligible for an at-large berth to the state meet by the following procedure:
 - a. The second place school submits an at-large qualifying request with the district tournament manager's approval to the IHSA by 8:00 a.m. Sunday prior to the state meet.
 - b. A panel, composed of representatives from each district, will determine which, if any, teams should qualify by evaluating: 1) head to head competition with teams from their district and surrounding districts; 2) time average for the team's top five runners from their final five meets of the regular season.
 - c. Teams that do not meet the district meet automatic qualification standards may appeal as an at-large by: 1) surpassing the average time for the state meet fourth place team over the past three years; 2) submitting the time average for the team for their final five meets of the regular season; 3) A panel, composed of representatives from each district, will determine if the team has met those standards.

Qualifying as an Individual: Runners whose team does not qualify, may qualify as individuals by finishing in the top one-third of the total number of competitors that complete the district meet. A maximum of seven runners per school shall be counted in determining the total number of competitors.

Hardship Qualifications: An individual may receive a hardship qualification to the state cross country meet if he/she meets #1 *and* #2 or #3 of the following criteria:

1. Finish in the top 1/3 at the last four meets prior to the district/regional meet.
2. Fail to finish in the top 1/3 at the district/regional meet because of a situation beyond their control (e.g., being fouled by a spectator).
3. Being unable to compete in the district/regional meet due to an injury or illness as certified by a licensed medical practitioner. The certification must specify that participation at the state meet is allowed.

Honest Effort: A runner who starts, but does not finish, the district meet, may be counted in determining the number of qualifying teams and individuals provided the meet manager determines that an honest effort was made and that the non-finish was due to circumstances beyond the runner's control.