



VCLLI Beginning Nordic Pole Walking

The Hand Release

In Nordic walking, the hand is released (opened) during the downswing (backward push phase) for several key reasons related to **proper technique, muscle engagement, efficiency, and comfort.**

Reasons for Hand Release

Full Arm Extension and Propulsion: Releasing the hand at the end of the backward swing allows for the arm to fully extend behind the body, creating a straight line from the shoulder to the pole tip. This full extension is crucial for effectively pushing off the ground and generating forward propulsion.

Maximizing Muscle Workout: The action of pushing the pole backward with an open hand engages a wider range of upper body muscles, including the triceps, shoulders, and back, which is a primary benefit of Nordic walking over regular walking.

Relying on the Strap: The specialized glove-like hand straps are designed to hold the pole securely even when the hand is relaxed or open. This allows the walker to push their weight through the strap, rather than constantly gripping the handle, which prevents forearm fatigue and muscle pain in the neck and shoulders.

Natural and Relaxed Movement: The open-hand technique facilitates a fluid, natural arm swing that starts from the shoulder, similar to regular walking but more active. Gripping the pole tightly throughout the motion can lead to a bent-arm action (hinging at the elbow) which is less efficient and prevents proper upper body rotation.

Rhythmic "Catch and Release": The movement is described as a "squeeze and release" or "throw and catch" action, where the hand squeezes the grip as the pole lands to stabilize it, and then immediately relaxes/releases as the arm swings back. This rhythm ensures smooth transitions and maintains power and consistent pressure through the push phase.