



USATF South Carolina Association Junior Olympic Cross-Country Championships Event Rules



All current USATF Competition Rules apply. Youth rules (Rule 300 – Rule 303) are also applicable.

The rules provided in this document are either rules the Games Committee has either defined parameters for, or are rules the Games Committee feels are particularly important. Relevant rules providing justification for the Games Committee's decisions are also included.

As usual, all Officials should have copy of the current USATF Competition Rules and should review those rules prior to competition.

I. Officials

Selection and Placement of Officials

Prior to the day of the meet, the Youth Chair and the Officials Chair will select the competition Officials and determine their assignments. Ideally, this should be completed at least 30 days prior to the meet, but modifications can and often do occur. On the days of competition, the Referee may assign or reassign Officials as warranted.

NOTE: The Chair of the Competition Committee (Youth Chair) is ultimately responsible for the Officials. However, the Chair should work with the Officials Chair whenever possible. In some instances, the Chair of the Competition Committee may delegate selection and assignment of Officials solely to the Officials Chair.

A. Referee

The primary responsibility of the Referee shall be to render a ruling on all perceived rules violations reported by meet officials or protests filed by coaches of competing teams once the competition starts until the protest period of the competition has ended. The referee shall not serve as any other official or as a member of the jury of appeals or games committee.

NOTE: Since the decision of the Starter regarding the start of a race is final and not protestable, the Referee may serve on the starting line as a Starter's Assistant to monitor the starting line. The Referee shall not function as a Recall Starter.

1. The Referee shall:
 - a. instruct Umpires as to the rules and violations in general, to special course conditions, and special regulations the meet management or Referee established for the meet.
 - b. place Umpires where they can best judge possible violations.
 - c. position Umpires at various points on the course to observe all areas, specifically at points where confusion may occur or where there are opportunities for competitors to cut the course.
 - d. secure and clarify from the Umpires the facts of all apparent violations of rules.
 - e. shall rule on any disputes, rules violations, or reported potential violations.



B. Umpires

Umpires observe the competitors on the course, ensuring all rules are followed and noting any rules violations.

1. The duties of the Umpires:

- a. to detect, document, and report all perceived violations of the rules to the Referee.
- b. violations, or suspected violations, must be directly observed by the Umpire.

NOTE 1: Umpires do not disqualify competitors; only the referee can make a disqualification.

NOTE 2: Reports of rules infractions are reviewed by the Referee and may lead to disqualification of one of more competitors.

2. When a possible rules infraction is observed, the Umpire will at a minimum, report the competitor's bib number, the type of infraction, the color of the competitor's shirt, time of the infraction, the race distance and division.

Course Umpires

3. Course Umpires are positioned along the course.

4. Umpires shall count and note the number of competitors that pass the Umpire's position for each race.

5. Each umpire shall use a yellow signal flag to indicate apparent violations and incidents of concern. As soon as the observation area of the Umpire is clear of competitors, the Umpire shall raise overhead for 15 seconds either a white flag or a yellow flag.

- a. A white flag shall be raised to indicate that a violation has not been observed.
- b. A yellow flag shall be raised to indicate a violation has been observed, or for incidents of concern, and the Referee shall be notified via meet-approved communication device.
- c. A red flag shall be raised in the event a competitor is down on the course, or if a competitor needs medical support.

6. In the event a competitor is down on the course, the Official shall stand approximate 3m (~10ft) away from the competitor between the competitor and oncoming competitors to prevent collisions with the downed competitor, and shall direct oncoming competitors around the downed competitor. The Official shall immediately call for medical assistance and shall raise a red flag so that medical assistance can readily spot the downed competitor. The Official shall not touch, move, or assist the down competitor unless the athlete is obvious cardiac distress and the Official is trained to render assistance. An Official, coach, parent or bystander physically touch the athlete in anyway immediately disqualifies that athlete.

Finish Line Umpires

7. The Finish Line Umpires shall be positioned at the finish line within the finish chute, just past the finish line and off to the side of the chute. The Finish Line Umpire shall have clear view of the competitors approaching the finish line while also not interfering with any competitors.

8. The Finish Line Umpires shall watch the race until the competitors are within 9 meters of the finish line and then should concentrate on the finish line.

9. The Finish Line Umpires shall be responsible for clearing competitors from the finish, and ensuring 4m past the finish line remain clear.

10. Never touch or assist a runner that has not yet crossed the finish line.



C. Head Umpire

At the USATF South Carolina Association Junior Olympic Cross-Country Championships, there is no designated Head Umpire. The Umpires shall report to the Referee.

D. Clerk / Clerk of Course

There shall be at least two Clerks: a Clerk of Course and at least one Assistant Clerk.

1. The Clerks shall be responsible for:

- a. obtaining the official start lists of teams that identifies team members, unattached runners and competitor bibs.
- b. using the official list of competitors, clear the starting area of everyone except the Officials (Starters, Clerks, Referee) and competitors on the official list for that specific race.
- c. The clerk of the course will begin in the middle of the starting line and line up the runners in consecutive order on either side of the middle, progressing to the outside starting position. Team members shall be grouped together. Unattached competitors shall be grouped together.

Note: To ensure a fair and equal start, every runner should be placed on the front line if at all possible.

- d. Enforcing uniform, bib, shoe and logo rules at the time of initial check-in through inspection, overseeing corrective action, and the issuing of a warning that repeated violation may result in disciplinary action. A report of uncorrected violations shall be made to the Meet Director, Referee, and the offending competitor's coach .

Note: It is not a protestable offense if a uniform non-compliance issue is identified after final clerking and after the race has begun.

- e. Related duties as requested by the Starter or Meet Director.

E. Starters / Recall Starters

There shall be at a minimum a Starter and at least one Assistant Starter (i.e., a Recall Starter).

Starter

The Starter shall have entire control of the competitors when on the start line and during the start; and, along with the Recall Starter, the Starter shall decide, without appeal, whether a start is fair and legal, or which competitor(s) shall be charged with a false start.

1. The Starter shall be responsible for:

- a. starting races promptly after the Clerk of the Course turns the athletes over to the Starter;
- b. answering questions on the rules and conditions governing the start of each race
- c. positively informing all competitors, officials, competition management and spectators of cancellations, warnings and/or disqualifications through the use of green, yellow or red cards and verbal communication. [NCAA Section9, Article 1](#)

Recall Starter



The Recall Starter is an Assistant Starter. The Recall Starter has the authority to recall for any observed infringement of the rules or any start that, in their opinion, is unfair. The reason for any recall shall be reported to the starter. [NCAA Section9, Article 2](#)

- 2. The Recall Starter shall:
 - a. have a complete view of the length of the starting line.
 - b. turn over the runners to the Starter by raising a white flag overhead when the runners are ready.
 - c. Initiate and/or affect a recall in case of a false start at the starting line.

Note: If more than one Recall Starter is used, they shall be stationed at each end of the starting line. However, the Starter is ultimately responsible for the placement of additional Recall Starters.

II. Competitors

A. Age Group

- 1. Athletes must compete in their own division. However, for races with 4 or fewer athletes, the Referee has the discretion to combine that race with a race of the same distance.
- 2. For competitors competing outside of their own division, The USATF South Carolina Association has established the following penalties:
 - a. For a single athlete competing outside of their own division, that athlete shall be disqualified and will be ineligible for placement or awards, and also ineligible for team scoring. This disqualified athlete shall be ineligible for advancement.
- 3. For two or more athletes of the same club competing outside of their own division, those athletes shall be disqualified and will be ineligible for placement or awards, and also ineligible for team scoring, and the entire team will be ineligible for scoring, placement, or awards in both the athlete’s own division and in the division in which those athletes competed. These disqualified athletes shall be ineligible for advancement.

“Competitors must compete in their own divisions only. No athlete may compete in younger or older divisions in individual, relay, or team events. USATF Club team members must be from the same Club and High School team members must be from the same High School.” [Rule 300.1\(e\)](#)

“Penalties may be considered by Associations and by the National Athletics Board of Review for participation by an athlete in an improper age division. These penalties may be applied to athletes, coaches, and clubs involved.” [Rule 300.1\(k\)](#)

B. Course Distances

Age Division	Distance *
8U	2km
9-10	3km
11-12	3km
13-14	4km
15-16	5km
17-18	5km

* All distances are approximate [Rule 304.2](#)



C. Uniforms

1. The jersey or singlet worn by the members of a team in cross country shall be basically identical for each member in color and style, and must be clearly visible throughout the race, i.e., worn as the outer garment if other apparel items are worn underneath by one or more team members. Because of the nature of cross country running, the preferences of individual athletes in certain weather situations will allow other apparel items to vary widely without penalty. Individuals not complying may be disqualified from scoring for a team. [Rule 251.3](#)

D. Shoes

1. A competitor may compete in bare feet or with footwear on one or both feet. [Rule 143.3\(b\)](#)
2. For Youth Athletics competitions there are no limitations on shoes. [Rule 143.3\(m\)](#)

E. Bibs

1. Competition Bib Numbers: All competitors must wear their assigned bib numbers during competition, chest-high on the front of their jerseys. Where athletes compete in warm-up suits, the bibs must be worn on that suit as set forth herein. [Rule 143.8](#)
2. The bib(s) shall be visible at all times during the competition. Failure to do so may result in disqualification from the event. [Rule 143.7](#)
3. No athlete shall be permitted to participate in any competition without the appropriate bib ... Bibs are to be worn as issued (cutting or folding numbers is not permitted). ... Not wearing an assigned bib may be grounds for disqualification under Rule 145.2. [Rule 143.5\(c\)](#)

F. Check-In

1. All competitors must report to Clerking no later than 45 minutes prior to the scheduled start of the competitor's race.
2. All competitors are expected to be on the starting line and race-ready at the appointed time.

G. Awards

1. "In Regional and Association Championships gold, silver, and bronze medals may be awarded for first, second, and third places, respectively." [Rule 5.1.c](#)
2. In the **USATF South Carolina Junior Olympic Cross-Country Championships**, medals and ribbons will be awarded to the top three finishers (1st place: gold, 2nd place: silver, 3rd place: bronze) in each division, and ribbons shall be awarded to fourth thru fifteenth (4th – 15th) finishers in each division.
3. Awards will be available beyond the finish line. Also note that awards are not available until after the results have been posted for the event and after the 10-minute protest has ended.



III . Pre-Start

A. Pre-Start

1. All competitors are responsible for knowing the starting time of the event(s), for knowing the registration or check-in method utilized at the start (for some or all of the competitors), and for being at the start line at the appointed time for instructions and the start of the race. [Rule 242.1](#)
2. The start of a race shall not be delayed to wait for a competitor.
3. All competitors are expected to be on the starting line and race-ready at the appointed time. The start of a race shall not be delayed to wait for a competitor to become race-ready. *NOTE: Race-ready means the athlete is wearing the bib, shoes, uniform, and clothing that shall be worn during the race and is void of anything that will not be used during the race.*
4. Fifteen minutes (or as otherwise specified) before the start of the race, all entries should be closed and the athletes directed to the start line for final instructions and the start of the race. [Rule 242.2](#)
5. Runners should be seeded according to ability in any race when all of the runners cannot be placed on the start line. [Rule 242.4](#)
6. The commands and procedures for races longer than 400m, Rule 162.8, shall be used. The method of starting to be used must be explained prior to the start in such a manner that all participants will receive and understand the information. The athletes shall assemble on the start line in the manner determined by the organizers. In races which include a large number of competitors, a five-minute, three-minute and one-minute warning before the start of the race should be given. [Rule 242.5](#)
7. The Starter shall report to the Referee any misconduct by any competitor(s) at the start. The Referee shall have the authority to disqualify such competitors. [Rule 242.6](#)
8. All run-outs must end 5 minutes before the start of the race.
9. Five minutes prior to the start of the race, and after the Clerk as assigned competitors to starting positions, the Starter shall at the starting line provide starting instructions and describe the starting procedure to all competitors.

B. Starting Line

1. All races have a common starting line and will be marked by banners (2k, 3k, 4k, and 5k)
2. All coaches, spectators, and athletes not competing in the race, must stand behind the barriers. and event shall indicate by verbal and visual signal to the competitor that all is ready for the trial to begin, and the period allowed for that trial shall commence from that moment. [Rule 182.12\(a\)](#)

C. Starting Boxes

1. Starting boxes should be used and randomly assigned by the Games Committee or the Meet Director for each team in team races and the members of each team shall line up in an order of their own choosing within their assigned position. In non-team races, the competitors shall be lined up in the manner determined by the Games Committee. [Rule 251.8](#)
2. When starting boxes are used, an individual box shall be assigned to all unattached athletes.

IV. Start

A. Starters Positions

1. The designated Starter shall take a position in the center of the course and at least 50m in front of the starting line. There shall be a large orange cone positioned at the 50m mark, and the Starter shall stand behind this cone. Upon firing the gun, the Starter shall exit the course in a straight line parallel to the starting line, and opposite the direction of the nearest break, turn or natural funneling point in the course.

NOTE: A natural funneling point is the point in first 100m where the competitors on the course naturally funnel (from a horizontal line at the start to a more vertical line of runners on the course. Funneling usually occurs a competitors move to the side of the course where the first turn will occur. Natural funneling also often occurs if there is a large sweeping gradual turn in the beginning of the course.

2. If the designated Starter shall not be able to exit the course in a timely manner, then a starting box shall be constructed, and upon firing the gun, the Starter shall remain in the box until the last runner in the race has passed the both the Starter and the end of the recall zone.

B. Starter's Box

1. The starter's box shall be a triangle, consisting of three plastic fence posts.
 - a. The front post shall be position at the 50m mark (a mark 50m from the starting line, and in the center of the course).
 - b. Each rear post shall be 1m away from the front post, and each rear post shall be 0.8m away from each other.
 - c. Flagging shall comprise the sides extending from the front post to the two rear posts.
 - d. The back side, the side parallel to the starting line shall remain open.
 - e. An orange cone shall be positioned directly in front of the front post of the starter's box.



Figure 1 – Starter's Box

C. Starting Procedure

All races shall be started as the result of the starter activating a signal. The signal shall be the report of a pistol that can be cocked. The pistol shall not be less than .32-caliber (8.22mm). A simultaneous flash/smoke generated by the pistol shall be clearly visible. When possible, a flare adapter should be used. A misfire shall not be a start. A visual signal shall be incorporated for the hearing impaired.

NOTE: If local ordinances or laws prohibit the use of a pistol, then the use of an air horn shall be used to start a race and either an air horn or multiple whistle blasts shall be used to recall a race, provided all of the other starting procedures are followed.

1. All run-outs must end 5 minutes before the start of the race.

2. The Starter shall at the starting line provide starting instructions to all competitors at five minutes before the race start time.
3. The Starter shall then turn the competitors over to the Recall Starter, and the Starter shall proceed to the starter's position at the 50m mark.
4. One minute prior to the start of the race, the Starter shall give one long (~ 2 seconds) whistle blast and assume the "Runners to the line" position. Both arms of the starter, with a pistol in one hand and a red flag in the other, shall be held straight out from the shoulder at shoulder height. This position is to be held until all runners are on the line and steady. *See Figure 2, Pane 1 - Runners to the Line*
5. The Recall Starter shall walk the length of the start line and ensure all runners are behind the starting line. The Recall starter shall then raise a white flag indicating all runners are behind the line.
6. The Starter shall give one quick (~1 second) whistle blast and assume the "On Your Marks" position. In the "On Your Marks" position, the pistol and flag are raised slowly to straight overhead. *See Figure 2, Pane 1 - On You Marks*
7. The Recall Starter upon ensuring all competitors are behind the starting line shall again raise a white flag indicating all runners are behind the line.
8. Within two seconds of the Recall Starter raising the white flag, the Starter shall start the race. The start is a simultaneous act of firing the pistol and pulling the flag down, providing both visual and auditory starting commands. *See Figure 2, Pane 3 - Start*
9. For any reason, either before or after the command "On Your Marks", a member of the Start Team may cancel a start by directing all runners to stand up. After allowing the runners a brief time for adjustments, a new start shall be made.
10. A recall is indicated with the Starter or Recall Starter firing the pistol and the Starter waving the flag up and down vigorously. *See Figure 2, Pane 4 - Recall*

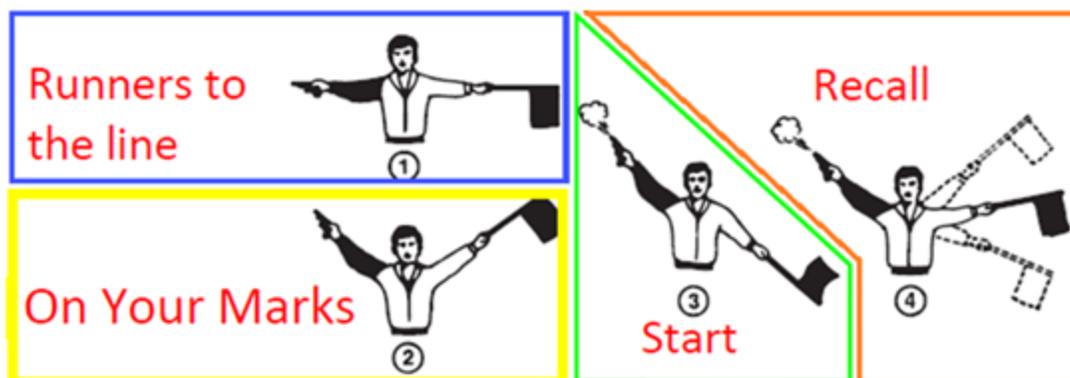


Figure 3 – The Start

Adapted from *NCAA Rule 21, SECTION 1, ARTICLE 4*, and *NFHS Rule 6, SECTION 4, ART. 4*

D. Recall

1. A Cross-Country race may be recalled upon a starting line violation, a false start, or a fall which impacts the field within the first 100m. Two large orange cones shall be placed outside



each side of the course and at a point 100m from the start line. These cones shall mark the end of the recall zone. [Rule 242.5](#)

2. If a member of the start team judges the start as unfair, they shall recall the competitors with a second pistol shot.
 - a. If the starter judges the unfair start was due to one or more competitors “beating the pistol”, it shall be considered a false start and the starter must charge the offender(s), who shall be disqualified.
 - b. If the unfair start is not due to any competitor, a false start shall not be charged.

E. Starting Violations

1. Violations and resulting procedures at the start of a race include:
 - a. If a competitor at the start of a race uses tactics obviously intended to disconcert an opponent, the competitor shall be warned by the starter and, if such action is repeated, shall be disqualified.
 - b. A false start may be charged to a runner who fails to comply promptly with the command “On Your Marks” or with the various requirements of the command “Runners to the Line” after being warned.
 - c. If a competitor commences the starting motion after assuming a full and final set position and before the report of the pistol/starting device, it shall be considered a false start and competitor shall be disqualified unless the Start Team has cancelled the start.
 - d. If a member of the Start Team judges the start as unfair, they shall recall the competitors with a second pistol shot. If the starter judges the unfair start was due to one or more competitors “beating the pistol” it shall be considered a false start and the starter must charge the offender(s), who shall be disqualified. [NCAA Rules SECTION 2](#)

V. Competition

A. Legal Running

1. A competitor may run anywhere on the course at any pace or any change of pace as long as they do not use any body part or arm action to impede another runner’s progress.
2. A competitor may not intentionally trip another competitor.
3. A competitor may pass another runner legally on either the right or left side.
4. A competitor may cut in front of another runner, provided that the overtaking runner has one full stride. This also applies to the curved-line start. [NCAA Rules SECTION 4](#)

B. Running Violations

1. Each competitor must remain on the course for the entirety of the race. Any competitor that voluntarily leaves the course shall be disqualified.
2. Any competitor that “cuts the course” (does not run the prescribed course) shall be disqualified.
3. Any competitor or participant responsible for jostling, running across, or obstructing another competitor or participant so as to impede his/her progress shall be liable to



disqualification in that event. The Referee shall have the authority to order the race be re-held, excluding any disqualified competitor(s), for one, some or all competitors seriously affected by jostling or obstruction [Rule 163.4](#)

NOTE: *Jostling should be understood as physical contact on one or more occasions with another competitor(s) that results in an unfair advantage or causes injury or harm to those competitors, or consequently, to another athlete(s).*

4. The Referee shall have the authority to order the race be re-held or advance one, some or all competitors seriously affected by jostling or obstruction that is unintentional or caused otherwise than by a competitor if it is just and reasonable to do so. [Rule 163.4](#)
5. "... during the progress of an event a competitor who has received any assistance whatsoever may be disqualified by the Referee. "Assistance" is the conveying of advice, information or direct help to a competitor by any means, including a technical device." [Rule 144.2](#) The following constitute assistance and therefore are not allowed ([Rule 143.3](#)):
 - (a) Pacing in races by persons not participating in the race, by lapped competitors or those about to be lapped.
 - (b) Athletes possessing or using audio, video, or communication devices in competition area
 - (c) Using any technology, appliance, or device that provides the athlete with an unfair advantage
 - (d) using mechanical aids that might provide a competitive advantage
 - (e) receiving advice or other support by any competition official not related to the official's specific role
 - (f) Receiving physical support that assists the athlete in making forward progress
6. Coaches, athletes, or Officials are not allowed to physically assist an athlete in the competition area. Coaches, athletes, or Officials physically assisting an athlete in the competition area shall cause that athlete to immediately be disqualified.

NOTE: Medical examination/treatment deemed necessary, within the competition area, to enable a competitor to participate or continue participation without assistance. Such examination/treatment shall be administered by those authorized by the games committee for such purpose, including team medical personnel, and may occur outside the competition area. Such intervention shall not delay the conduct of the race.

7. Finish

1. All scoring is and placement is via FAT.
2. Competitors shall be placed at the finish in the order in which any part of their bodies (i.e., the "torso," as distinguished from the head, neck, arms, hands, legs, or feet) reaches the finish line. [Rule 163.1](#)
3. Team Scoring
 - a. A team shall be composed of from five to a maximum of eight members. Only the top 5 teams members are eligible for scoring, and only the 5 scoring team athletes are eligible for awards.
 - b. Team scoring shall be by place. [Rule 304.5](#)
4. All competitor must fully cross the finish line and must be properly wearing the proper competition bib in order to be scored



5. All competitors must continue running after cross the finish line and until exiting the finish chute.
6. Any competitor observed jostling, running across, or obstructing another competitor or participant so as to impede his/her progress shall be liable to disqualification in that event. Finish line video may be reviewed by the Referee.

8. Protests

1. Protests must be submitted in writing to the Protest Table (at once and) not later than 10 minutes after results for the race have been posted.
2. All protest fees must be paid either in cash or by check at the time the protest is filed. The protest fee will be refunded only if the protest is upheld.
3. The Referee shall rule on the protest within 10 minutes of the protest being filed in accordance with the rules.
4. The Referee's ruling may be appealed to the Protest Committee.
5. The appeal must be made verbally to the Referee within 5 minutes of the Referee's ruling.
6. The ruling of the Protest Committee is final.
7. If no Protest Committee is established, then the ruling of the Referee is final.
8. An immediate oral protest regarding a decision by the Starter to charge a false start, made by the competitor being charged, shall be accepted by the Start Referee. The protest may be made only by, or on behalf of, an athlete who should normally have completed the race with bona fide effort. The athlete may be allowed to compete under protest. A red and white (diagonally halved) card shall be raised in front of the athlete. The Referee shall have the authority to declare the event or part of the event void and that it or part of it shall be held again if in his/ her opinion justice demands it. [Rule 146.4](#), [Rule 146.5](#)



Appendix

The following are not considered assistance (*Rule 143.4*)

- (a) Verbal or other communication, without the use of any technical device, from an individual who is not in the competition area to a competitor who is in the competition area.
- (b) Physiotherapy and/or medical treatment necessary to enable an athlete to participate, or continue participation once in the competition area, may be provided by members of the official medical staff appointed by the Games Committee and clearly identified as such. Accredited team medical personnel approved by the Meet Doctor specifically for this purpose may be permitted in the medical treatment area outside the competition area. In neither case shall the intervention delay the conduct of the competition. Receiving physical support from an official or other person designated by the Games Committee to recover to a standing position or to access medical assistance.
- (c) Medical personnel authorized by the Games Committee or Referee to do so may perform a hands-on medical examination during the progress of an event for any competitor who appears in distress.
- (d) Receiving physical support from an official or other person designated by the Games Committee to recover to a standing position or to access medical assistance.
- (e) Any kind of personal safeguard (i.e., bandage, tape, belt, support, wrist cooler, breathing aid, etc.) for medical purposes. The Referee shall have the authority to verify any case should that be desired.
- (f) Pace setting by an officially designated person is not considered assistance. However, pace setting is not allowed in the USATF South Carolina Association Junior Olympic Cross Country Championships.
- (g) Personally carrying or wearing articles of equipment such as wrist chronometers, heart rate monitors, speed distance monitors, stride sensors or similar devices during a race provided that such device cannot be used to communicate with any other person.