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Proximity to pistol helps sprinters be first off the blocks, new study suggests

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In a sprint event, where the gap between a gold medal and heartbreak is often measured in hundredths of a second, even a slight advantage at the starting gun can pay big dividends down the track. University of Alberta scientists have found the sprinters who start closest to the starter's pistol tend to bolt out of their blocks ahead of competitors further away. In effect, the louder the noise in the ear, the quicker the start, said Dave Collins, a neuroscientist who served as one of the project leaders. "We have joked that we could give our Canadian runners an advantage by putting hearing aids in their ears and just cranking them up," he said. The study is published in this month's *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise*.

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