

RUNNING TIPS:

Training Basics:

Successful running requires you to find the delicate balance between the amount of stress followed by the right amount of rest or recovery. Stress followed by rest allows your body to recover and become stronger, fitter and faster.

Effective training combines weekly sessions of long endurance runs, strength training for both your cardiovascular and musculoskeletal systems, and speed training to develop your coordination.

Long Slow Distance runs are prolonged training runs at low intensity (50 to 70% of your maximum heart rate). Done at a conversation pace, these runs develop your endurance and stamina. Basically, they get you adapted to being on your feet for an extended period of time. Duration, not speed, is the focus.

Uphill training develops the upper leg muscles, which produce speed; downhill training forces you to run faster and improves your coordination. Tempo runs (done at a steady pace for about 20 minutes) and cruise intervals or accelerations challenge your coordination and leg turnover rate.

Recovery from hard training is important; it is the essence of all sound training programs. Long runs, hills and speed work (individually and together) place the runner on the edge. Rest allows the body to recover, become stronger and stay injury-free. My 10-and-1 training system of running for 10 minutes and walking for one minute is based on this "stress followed by rest" principle. The same idea applies to running hard hill repeats between easy recovery jogs, or doing intense bursts of speed followed by walk breaks. Rest is an important part of your training.

Hill Training:

Let's face it: running hills builds strength, power and speed while helping you become a better runner. The effort of running hills builds leg strength, improves overall stamina and increases efficiency—which translates into running faster. Hills are also a great way to prepare your body for the rigours of speed intervals. They offer an added challenge to your running routine and help you maintain quickness.

Running hard up short hills is like doing short repeats on a track—both are anaerobic workouts. You run hard and fast to develop explosive power and speed. Run hard up the hills, at about 80% of your maximum heart rate. Be careful to not run so fast that you lose your form. Look up the hill, run tall and stay light on your feet. The steeper the hill, the shorter your stride should be. If you try to maintain your regular stride length on an incline, you're going to double your workload. To compensate, shorten your stride and increase your leg turnover rate. Good posture will keep your breathing relaxed and efficient.

Do hill training once a week but take a break from it for at least a week prior to any races.

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Training Principles:

Overload

Improvement in physical fitness results will only occur when specific muscles and systems of the runner are stressed and challenged by a workload greater than normal.

Progressive

The overload of the system must occur through a gradual build up in duration and intensity. A safe increase for running is 10 per cent per week in additional overload.

Specificity

Adaptations to training of muscles and systems is best achieved when the runner adds quality running to the program. As an example, strength training is best done by running hills. Cycling or cross-training in the gym will help, but the best strength work comes from specifically overloading the muscles and systems used to run and to do the overload through running.

Recuperation

Exercise stress on the body of the runner dictates the need for rest. Rest is a good four letter word that allows our body systems and muscles to rebuild and get stronger. Failure to rest will result in overtraining, which can lead to fatigue and injury. Walking is a good way for the runner to rest.

Reversibility

Too much rest can result in a loss of running fitness. Loss of muscle strength is fairly slow. Loss of aerobic fitness is fast. It generally takes three times the amount of time to lose fitness as it does to gain. Therefore consistency of training is vital to the success of your running program.

Running Form:

Posture

Have a buddy videotape your running—both at the start of a run and near the end of a long run. You will end up with a valuable tool to assess any running posture problems. Here are some of the most common problems as well as some tips on how to improve them.

Overstriding

Increase the rhythm of your arm swing and concentrate on shortening your swing. Think of running on hot coals to shorten your reach with each foot stride forward.

Tightness in Shoulders

Learn to relax the palms of your hands by gently touching your thumb to the middle finger. Your fingers should be loose, so make sure you do not grip a fist as you run. Practice running with a couple of soda crackers held in your hands. Cup your hands with thumbs up top.

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Knee Lift

Your knees should be lifted just high enough to clear the ground. Too high a knee lift causes wasted energy—most runners are training for a forward-motion sport.

Arm Carriage

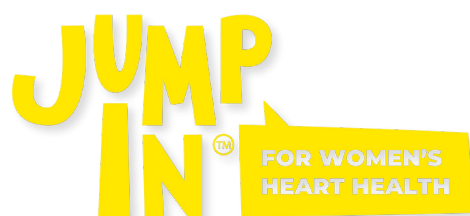
Holding the palms of your hands inward and slightly upward will keep your elbows near your sides. Think of your arm swing being in the general area of your heart. Too high an arm swing results in your heart having to pump uphill. Think of the words relaxed and rhythmic. An increase in your arm swing can help increase the turnover rate of tired legs.

Too much Bounce

Look at the horizon and concentrate on keeping the head in the same plane. Do some accelerations with an increased body lean, stressing lower knee lift and try to think of reaching with your arms rather than pumping them.

Perfect Form

There really is no perfect form. Check out the top finishers at some local races; you will see some gazelle-like form alongside some butt-ugly form. The important thing to remember is to stay relaxed, stay rhythmic and push hard. Much of your running form is a gift from your parents, but you can make the most of your gift with some attention to fine tuning your individual form.



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