

A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO RUNNING

BEFORE YOU GET STARTED

In this guide, we will offer you general advice on the ways to prepare your body for an endurance running event, but there's no need to follow it word for word...

We all have busy lives and other commitments, so this guide is designed to be flexible and tailored to your own needs. It is not a rigid and prescribed training plan, but a guide to get you ready for race day. If you can't make the time for your long weekend run, work around your own schedule and squeeze it in somewhere else – it's as simple as that! Some people find that they adapt to the demands of training far quicker than

others, so do not worry if you aren't making the same improvements as a friend or colleague. We are all different and the body reacts very differently to training from one person to another. Provided you train regularly, increase your mileage gradually and (most importantly) enjoy your running, then you're perfectly placed to get the most out of this training guide.

FINDING THE RIGHT PAIR OF RUNNING SHOES

Your running shoes are the most important part of your running equipment, and it's worth investing in them wisely.

Every year, runners make the mistake of underestimating the importance of good quality running shoes. A good pair of running shoes can help you avoid injury, so it's worth investing in the right pair for your style of running ('gait'). Your gait takes into account your stride distance, how your foot rotates upon impact with the ground (your

level of 'pronation') and the number of steps you take per minute ('cadence'). We strongly advise that you have your running gait analysed, so that you can be advised on which running shoes best suit your running needs. By choosing the right shoes for your specific running gait you can significantly reduce your chances of picking up unnecessary injuries, meaning you can focus on your training rather than sore feet or knees!

TOP TIP

Once you have the perfect pair of running shoes to suit your running style, you are ready to get going!

TOP TIP

It is strongly recommended that you have a check up with your GP before embarking on any distance running training. They will test your blood pressure and general health, to ensure there are no underlying conditions that could be aggravated by regular training. Even if you feel fit and healthy, it is worth getting a check up.

TIME TO GET TRAINING

Training for any running event, whatever the distance, can be quite an intimidating prospect, particularly if you have never entered a race before.

The good news is that there is absolutely nothing to worry about.

Despite what you may have read on the internet, training for a running event is actually very simple and not nearly as complicated as some websites or magazines make out.

Ultimately, you have to remember that **YOU** are in charge of your training and **YOU** are the one who decides when you're ready to run further, faster or harder. Keeping your training regime as simple as possible is the

best way to build up your confidence and ease into the routine of running regularly. Once you're familiar with regular training and you feel your fitness improve, then by all means incorporate more complex sessions that you may have read about in running magazines or websites, but in the early stages just keep it really simple.

By setting yourself the modest goal of running 3 times a week, with your weekend run being a little longer than the others, you'll be amazed at how quickly your fitness develops.

SET YOURSELF GOALS

Setting yourself mini goals is often the best way to help you progress with your training. For example, challenging yourself to be able to run 1 mile without stopping by the end of the first month, is a great way to kick start your training, and keeps you aiming for something realistic.

As you progress through the training plan, you may very well find that you automatically set yourself a goal for the race that you think is both challenging and realistic – or you may find that you simply want to get round the course and enjoy the experience. Either way, the important thing to remember is to enjoy your training and resist the temptation to strive for a goal which is beyond your capability.

TRACKING YOUR TRAINING

If you are keen to track your training progress, you may want to use one of the many apps available to download.

Popular options include Runkeeper, Runtastic and MapMyRun. They include built-in GPS technology in your phone to track the following:

- **RUNNING SPEED**
- **RUNNING PACE**
- **MILE SPLITS** (pace for a single mile)
- **CURRENT HEART RATE** (if used with a bluetooth heart rate strap)
- **DISTANCE COVERED**

It's always satisfying to be able to check your pace and ensure you're covering the right mileage. Most apps even "talk" to you during your run to save you from looking at your phone every few minutes.

Heart rate monitors are great gadgets that can be used to track your progress, keep you running at the right intensity, and stop you from under or over training. By keeping an eye on your heart rate, it's much easier to gauge if you are over-working or under-working during a training run. Good heart rate monitors are available for around £30 from good sport shops.

VARYING YOUR TRAINING

Keeping your training simple, as already mentioned, is absolutely essential in the early stages of training but once you have been running for a few weeks, adding a little bit of variety to your weekly regime can really help to boost your fitness levels and keep you interested in your challenge. When you feel you are ready to "add a little spice" to your weekly training runs, why not try one or two of the following?

FARTLEK

These training sessions are just as much fun as they are to say. They simply involve you running a little bit faster every now and again throughout your run. You can run as fast or as far as you like, provided it is quicker than your usual pace. Upping your pace to a specific landmark such as a tree, building or street can give you something to aim for and make these sessions a bit more fun than just timing yourself.

HILL RUNNING

Although inclines should be introduced gradually, making your runs tougher by running uphill is really effective at building your heart and leg strength. Just a few inclines per run, although pretty tough work, will help your heart, legs and lungs and help you make really impressive fitness gains.

TEMPO

These runs are simply performed at a slightly quicker pace than your usual "comfortable" and "steady" pace. By increasing your speed a notch you will help your legs to become accustomed to running at a quicker pace and help them to become more resistant to fatigue.

INTERVALS

These sessions are very similar to fartlek runs, the main difference being that they are that much more structured. An example of a good interval session is to run fast for 2 minutes, then walk or jog slowly for 3 minutes – then repeat 4-6 times. These sessions are very good at improving your fitness and you should be aiming to include them in your training plan at least once a week once your training progresses.

Provided you stick to these 3 simple training guidelines, you will find that your upcoming weeks of training will be both enjoyable and productive.

1 PROGRESSIVELY

Increase your 'long run' distance every week, even if only by 300 metres.

2 SLOWLY

Resist the temptation to increase your long run by any more than 10-15 per cent of your previous maximum (injury is the most likely outcome if you do).

3 REGULARLY

By training regularly throughout the week, even if they are short runs, your body will adapt to running faster than you might think.

WARMING UP FOR A RUN

Once you've got your training kit on and your shoes laced up, it is really important that you don't simply head out for a run without first preparing your joints and muscles for exercise, particularly if you are running first thing in the morning.

The muscles and joints both need warming up and lubricating before they are ready to run and failure to do so may well end up causing an injury.

Just 5 minutes of joint mobility exercises and stretches will wake up your muscles and get them prepared for training.

The following warm up exercises should be performed every time you head out for a run:

WALK OR VERY LIGHT JOG

Just a simple 3-5 minute walk or very light jog will help to lubricate your joints and stimulate blood flow to your muscles.

STRETCHES

Putting your thighs, hamstrings, calves and inner thigh muscles into a gentle stretch will help to elongate the muscle fibres and make sure they are well prepared for physical activity.

ANKLE CIRCLES

By rotating each ankle clockwise and anticlockwise a few times will help to ensure they are nice and loose and ready to run.

Hip flexor stretch

Hamstring stretch

Adductor stretch

WHAT TO EAT

Food is your fuel, so it's important that you get it right. What you consume needs to provide a good supply of vitamins and minerals to help maintain your

energy levels, repairs and rejuvenate muscles and prevent injury. When available, opt for fresh ingredients – get back to basics and eat foods as close to their natural state as possible.

We are all unique and the energy we use each day varies according to our body size, muscle mass and activity levels. As a result, our food intake requirements vary too, but typically, a healthy balanced diet consists of:

FRUIT AND VEGETABLES

Fruit and vegetables are brimming with fibre, vitamins and minerals and, because they are low in calories, they provide a healthy and essential component to any diet. Along with all the great chemical compounds these contain to help stave off a variety of illnesses they are packed with high-quality carbohydrates – an essential fuel for your muscles.

BREADS, CEREALS AND POTATOES

This group also contains pasta, rice and noodles and is full of carbohydrates. These make up the body's major currency for energy and it is this food type that needs to be eaten regularly to keep the 'living engine' fully fuelled. Especially for runners who are burning carbohydrates frequently, it makes sense that their diet is primarily made up of foods containing large amounts of food from this group.

FATS AND SUGARY FOODS

Unlike the other four main food groups, it is not necessary to consume food and drink from this group every day. However these foods do add variety and, if you are active, they will provide a useful form of energy in the form of sugar (a refined carbohydrate).

MEAT, FISH AND ALTERNATIVES

This group also includes poultry, pulses, beans, nuts, seeds, soya products and vegetable protein foods such as quorn. They're all grouped together because they're rich in protein. Protein is essential for muscle growth and immune-system development.

FATS CAN BE GOOD TOO!

Don't read that, cheer and head off for celebratory fish and chips every night of the week for a month. Yes, it has some truth in it, but it's important to

understand the broader picture.

Fat actually provides twice the amount of calories per gram as carbohydrates, but that energy is far more difficult for your body to utilise. While all fats are equivalent in calories, polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats are preferable wherever possible.

HYDRATION, HYDRATION, HYDRATION

As well as adequately fuelling your body from the various food groups, you need to make sure you get enough fluids. Water has many uses in the human body, many of which are absolutely vital to survival – like digestion and regulating temperature. It's recommended that you take on around 2 to 3 litres per day – half of which you'll get from drinking, the other half from the food you eat.

When out running, a lot of the energy you use will be converted into heat. In order to keep a healthy body temperature, you will then start to sweat. This means that you lose fluids, and these need to be replaced.

Therefore, on running days, you will need to take on more than the normal 2 to 3 litres.

People vary dramatically in the amount of fluid that they lose due to sweat when exercising, so it's difficult to say how much to drink whilst out for a run. The accepted guidelines at the moment, however, state that you should 'drink to thirst'. This means that if you feel thirsty, have a few sips of your water or sports drink. For some people this could be just a few times an hour, for others, it could be every 10 minutes. Either is fine, as long as you feel thirsty each time.

10 NUTRITION AND HYDRATION TIPS TO RUN BETTER

1. **Everything in moderation:** try to have a balanced diet consisting of carbohydrates (starchy foods), fruit and vegetables, fish and shellfish, meat, fat, milk and dairy.
2. **Five-a-day keeps the doctor away:** try to eat five pieces of fruit a day to provide the body with essential vitamins and minerals.
3. **Stay hydrated:** try to drink six to eight glasses of water per day. Increase your fluid intake on your running days.

4. **Fuel up:** carbohydrate is the predominant source of fuel for running. Aim to have at least 70g of carbohydrates three or four hours before running. For example, a bagel and a banana.
5. **Stay cool:** aim to drink one or two sips of fluid for every 10-15 minutes of running.
6. **Eating out:** on your longer runs (longer than 60 minutes) aim to eat 30-60g of carbohydrate every hour.
7. **Revitalise the body:** eating 10-20g of protein immediately after running will aid the recovery process. Nuts, dairy, meat, beans and pulses are all sources of protein.
8. **Not all fats are bad:** the two main fat categories are saturated and unsaturated fat. Try to limit your intake of saturated fat as it can increase your cholesterol level. 1/3 of your fat intake should be saturated fat and 2/3 unsaturated.
9. **Eat throughout the day:** try to spread your daily diet into smaller, more frequent meals. Rather than having three large meals a day, have five smaller ones throughout the day.
10. **Take a drink to bed:** drinking a glass of water in the night or first thing in the morning will help limit dehydration.

USING TRAINING PLANS

It's important to realise that the sample training plans below are written to give a guide of how a typical training week could be structured - but there is plenty of room for flexibility.

Due to the huge variety in the times you have available to train and, most importantly, how your body responds to the demands of training, you must never feel that you have to follow the training plans to the letter week in and week out. These guides are there to give you an idea of the sort of mileage you should be aiming for but you should never feel pressured into running a distance that you don't yet feel ready to take on.

Always listen to your body and if you feel that that suggested training run is a little unrealistic for your ability, then there is no shame in amending it slightly to a distance that you feel more comfortable with.