I have this crazy obsession with training logs for runners. It all started back in college when I was competing for my school cross country and track teams. Most runners on the team would just track weekly mileage and that was about the only metric they really cared about. Then, if we wanted to share our training, we’d all just send around a spreadsheet to list our weekly mileage on. “Oh wow, Dylan ran 110 miles last week, he must be fit!” It was a conveniently simple way to look at fitness that often fell apart on race day when the guys who had been putting in the most mileage would show up injured or just slow and tired.

There must be a better way! My first attempt was [RhinoLog](http://rhino-log.herokuapp.com/). It tracked both your mileage and how you’re feeling. So it tried to emphasize the importance of listening to your body, not just mindlessly slogging through workouts. It even let you send a text message to record a run so you didn’t have to pull out your computer just to say you ran 5 miles. It all felt pretty innovative at the time.

Fast-forward 5 years and training log systems have evolved considerably. Most runners wear GPS watches and then upload their training to services like Garmin, Strava, RunKeeper, etc. This relieves some of the annoyance of having to manually record your training and provides you with a lot more details. All that data is a double-edged sword though. It’s hard to make sense of it, especially when aggregated over a long period. I often find myself falling back to my old ways of just tracking weekly mileage and not worrying too much about anything else. It seems like such a shame to be recording all this data, while not being able to produce many meaningful or actionable insights from it. At the very least I’d like to be able to easily identify patterns and trends in my training, beyond just the changes in weekly mileage.

So that’s where [Training Blocks](http://trainingblocks.co/) comes in. Its goal is to be a better way to visualize and understand your training. Forget scrolling through tables filled with numbers and logs filled with text. That makes it next to impossible to make much sense of your training on a larger scale. Instead, it uses a few simple visual elements that can be combined to really capture the trends and nuances in your training. A block represents both the duration and the pace of a run. By combining blocks you can put together complex workouts, and then zoom out to see how they fit into the broader scheme of things. An emoji represents how you’re feeling and is much easier to visually parse than a string of text. Additional icons can be used to indicate things like hill workouts, which skew the pace of your run, or cross training, which has no pace at all, only duration.

Going forward, I have many more ideas on how the platform can grow to incorporate more aspects of training. For example, one of the most important things to keep track of in training is what your goals are and how you’re stacking up against them. If you’re goals are too extreme, you’ll fall apart trying to chase them. Or if they’re too modest or non-existent, you can become disengaged or fail to meet your full potential. So Training Blocks uses colored blocks to help you calibrate. By setting goals using orange blocks, and comparing them to actual performances in blue, you can maximize the overlapping green. This allows you a lot more flexibility than just setting weekly mileage goals, while maintaining the simple visualization tools that make sense when viewing your training from a wider perspective.

And then there’s the social aspect of training. It’s a lot more enjoyable to be able to share your journey with other people, even when things aren’t going great. Gathering “likes” is fun, but can be disheartening if you start to notice how many more likes some else is getting. The same can be said about comparing your fitness levels with someone else’s. So that’s why Training Blocks will seek to hide the metrics that are commonly used for making comparisons when you share parts of your training with a wider audience. The focus will be on the general shape of your training and where you’re trying to go with it. Things like what sorts of workouts and races are you planning and how are you measuring up against your goals. The idea is to put more emphasis on the intrinsic aspects of training that provide sustainable joy and motivation over the long term. Training Blocks is intended to be a supportive platform so you can save your competitive instincts for race day.

So those are some of the ideas bouncing around in my head. I’d be curious to hear from other runners to see how I can adapt [Training Blocks](http://trainingblocks.co/) to better serve them. While Training Blocks was initially motivated by my own needs and ideas, the real goal is for it to evolve to be something that serves a wider audience of runners. If you have a moment to fill out [this survey](https://goo.gl/forms/nPLB2NZNfGoUXZvS2), that would be really helpful and greatly appreciated.