



Top Tips for Beginning Runners

Whether you are just beginning to run or are a routined runner, you measure yourself against your own standards. When you increase a distance, improve a time, or set a personal record, you succeed. But no doubt about it, running is hard work and you have to work for your success. Use the time-tested tips below to help you get up and running.



1. Set attainable goals. Goals are an important part of what keeps us committed to becoming (and staying) runners. Goals inspire, give focus, and set a course before us. No goal is too "small" and it's important to begin with the achievable. Many beginning runners unfortunately find themselves feeling defeated for one simple reason: they start out too hard and too fast. You should ease into your running program, focusing on gradually increasing your workout time and distance. Don't feel pressured (self-imposed or otherwise) to do more than you can.

2. Follow the F-I-T formula.

Frequency: Running three to four days a week is optimal for safely increasing your strength and endurance. Run every other day (1 day on and 1 day off) to allow for appropriate rest & recovery between workouts.

Intensity: While you are building your running base, every workout should be completed at a pace you can *sustain*. A good rule of thumb is to follow the "Talk Test." You should be a little breathy and may speak in choppy sentences, but can carry on a conversation with someone. If you cannot, slow down, concentrate on breathing deep from within your belly, and resume a more appropriate pace when ready.

Time: Work toward running for a minimum of 30 minutes. (If needed, start out by walking for a time that feels comfortable. Once you can easily walk for 30

minutes, you can begin mixing in running bouts with walking. As time goes on, make the running bouts longer until you are running for 30 minutes straight.)

3. Prepare your body for work and recovery. Before each workout, begin with a five-to-ten minute warm up of dynamic stretching and walking. End with a cool down walk and appropriate stretches.

4. Run using proper form. Although running form is as individual as you are, there are certain guidelines that promote effective and injury-free running. Proper form may not necessarily come naturally to you, so consciously focus on it with every run.

- Relax and run lightly. Tense muscles force you to work harder. Focus on smooth, straight movements.
- Remain tall and upright. Keep your torso erect so you can breathe deeply from your diaphragm. Hips should be pressed slightly forward and butt tucked in. Look forward to the road in front of you, not at your feet.
- Keep your shoulders square, level, and relaxed.
- Bend your elbows at 90°, keeping forearms parallel to the ground. Easily drive the elbows backward as you run.
- Allow your arms to lightly swing to help propel you forward and to provide balance and coordination with legs. But avoid excessive movements. Hold your hands with relaxed fists. (Imagine you are lightly holding a cracker in each hand. Don't crush the cracker!)
- Use pendulum-like leg movements with moderate knee lift. (Do not try to "overstrike," or force a long length, with leg movements. This causes you to reach out too far in front of your body.) Push off powerfully with the rear foot and reach out with your forward foot. Use the forward momentum to center your body over the foot at touchdown.
- Plant your foot in the most natural and efficient way. Research states that a natural foot plant most often involves landing on the back to middle

portion of the foot with the heel striking a second later, rolling forward, then pushing off the inside of the foot when toeing off.

5. Hydrate! Be sure to drink plenty of water. The average person needs 8-12 eight-ounce glasses of water a day. Runners need more (and not just while training or racing) and thirst is *not* a good indicator of hydration. Active women & men who are not careful to drink regularly can develop chronic dehydration which lessens endurance, lowers running performance, and fosters overall fatigue. To ensure you are properly hydrated for a run, drink about 8 ounces of water every hour before running. Continue to sip while running (about 4-8 ounces every 15 to 20 minutes). Follow up with plenty of water afterward. Drink 16-24 ounces, or past feelings of thirst, until urine is a pale yellow. **Note:** If you run for more than an hour, a sports drink will help replenish lost fluids, carbohydrates, and electrolytes (such as sodium and potassium), and will help speed recovery after running.

6. Eat to run. Treat your body right while you are asking it to perform. Make sure you fuel your body with carbohydrates (whole grains, fruits and vegetables) and protein. Keep sugary snacks to a minimum. This is a great time to examine your eating habits!

7. Invest in the right equipment. The selection of running apparel is now better than ever. Visit a specialty store to purchase quality running gear. First, find the running shoe right for *you*. Keep a record of how much mileage you put on them by noting your start date on the sole of a shoe or in a log. And, no matter how great they feel, resist the urge to wear them when you are not running. After they are retired, recycle them for use with other activities. Second, women, seek support! All active women, regardless of their bust size, should wear a quality sports bra. Sports bras, like most bras, are made for varying sizes. Find a bra that is comfortable, but also offers the appropriate support. Finally, choose "technical clothing" that keeps you comfortable. Avoid all

cotton fabrics; cotton gets heavy & dries slowly when wet, and is not a good insulator. Stick with synthetic "wicking" fabrics that move moisture away from the body to the outer surface of the fabric where it can evaporate. (Ladies, this includes your sports bra!)

8. Run safe. Use common sense when running. Investigate safety suggestions for running on roadways, trails, or wherever you may roam. Pay attention to and prepare for seasonal weather conditions. (For more information on safety, visit the Road Runners Club of America web site at www.rrca.org.)

9. Keep a log. Whether you use an official running log, computer document, or a notebook, keep track of your training. It is a great way to document your experience. Record information such as date, time and location of your run, how long you ran, weather conditions, and special notes such as how you felt and who you ran with.

10. Keep it motivating. Now that you've got it going, maintain your motivation and keep "the fun in the run"!

- Track your progress and reflect on your accomplishments
- Reward yourself along the way
- Seek support through family, friends, colleagues, and "fellow" runners
- Vary running locations and running partners, and music,
- Participate in running
- Acknowledge your new-found fitness, realizing that the benefits of running go far beyond physical well-being