



# RUNNING TIPS

Essential Running Tips for Beginners

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# Essential Running Tips for Beginners

In the new year, many people will resolve to start running or start running again after some time off. Learning to run is a great goal to improve your fitness, health, and life.

I started running to lose a few pounds, but instead, I found myself. Through running, I learned to set and achieve goals. I learned what it means to work hard and push myself past my own perceived limits. I set out to change my body, but instead, I changed my whole life.

If you set running goals for the new year, I put together some running tips for beginners and those returning after some time off. These are tips I wish I knew when I started running. Avoid the common mistakes and pitfalls that many new (and experienced) runners make, and get it right the first time.

If you set your mind to achieving new goals and put in the hard work required, you will surely succeed. The benefit of being a beginner is that it allows you to train correctly from the start, instead of having to undo years of bad habits and ineffective training.

## RUNNING GEAR

### RUNNING SHOES

The most significant investment you will make in your running commitment is a pair of high-quality running-specific shoes. The number one consideration in buying shoes should be your comfort. There are a lot of misconceptions about running shoes. The amount of cushion, support, and structure are all personal preferences.

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Visit a specialty running store and try a variety of different pairs to find the most comfortable. Buy one-half size to one size bigger than your street shoes. Your feet swell and expand when you run, so to avoid blisters and to keep all your toenails, size up. Aim for a thumbnail of space between the end of your toe and the shoe.

Running shoes generally have a lifespan of 300-500 miles; then, they start to lose their shock-absorbing qualities. It's best to replace your shoes when you begin to see noticeable changes in the tread or inside in the midsoles.

[Run injury-free; It's not about the shoes.](#)

## RUNNING CLOTHING

Look for clothing made with performance fabrics that wick moisture away from the body, so when you sweat, it pulls the moisture away to help you stay cool, dry, and comfortable. It doesn't need to be expensive, many discount brands and sporting good stores offer performance fabrics at a reasonable cost.

## RUNNING TECHNOLOGY

While it may be tempting to drop a few hundred dollars on the latest GPS watch, you don't need a watch to get serious about running. Being able to track your mileage and pace can be beneficial, but there is merit in learning to run by how you feel, especially in the beginning.

I wear a watch when I run, and like to review the data, but relying too much on GPS running technology and not listening to your body, can be detrimental to your running performance.

[How to tell if you're in a bad relationship with your GPS watch.](#)

## RUNNING TRAINING SCHEDULE

[There's a difference between exercising and training.](#) If you don't have any particular goals in mind, there is nothing wrong with running for exercise, general health, mental health, or for fun.

If you want to reach a specific running goal, like finishing a particular distance, running a race, running at a specific pace, or running to lose weight, you must train towards that goal.

Every workout should have a purpose. Some runs are training to improve your endurance, some to improve speed, and some to promote recovery. Why do we need a goal for every workout? Because if we don't know what we're trying to achieve, we will never get there.

If we aimlessly hit the road every other day, running at a hard pace, we will probably improve a little at the beginning (the infamous newbie gains), then level off and never quite get anywhere. We don't grow if we keep running the same paces and distances over and over again forever.

Our body adapts to exercise. That is the reason the first time you ever tried to run to the end of the block, you were out of breath, and now you can run there with ease. To continue to progress in training (to get faster, run farther, get stronger), you must continue to increase the demands placed on the body as you adapt.

That is where a training schedule comes in. You slowly and systematically increase either distance, speed, reps, rest periods, etc. over time. A good training schedule has a mix of high-intensity, low-intensity, and rest days mixed in.

[Rules of the long run; How to build mileage for long distance training.](#)

## REST AND RECOVERY

We don't improve, get faster, build endurance, or get stronger during the workout. Our bodies adapt in the rest periods following the workout. That means if you never allow adequate rest and recovery, you may sacrifice the very results you are working to achieve. Do not neglect rest; it is an integral part of the training schedule.

How much rest you need depends on your experience, your age, your genetics, and your lifestyle. Someone with a high-stress lifestyle needs more rest and fewer high-intensity workouts. An older person likely needs more rest than a younger person, and an experienced athlete usually needs less rest than a new one. How do you know how much rest you need? You pay attention to the signals that your body sends.

## SIGNS OF OVER TRAINING (YOU'RE NOT RESTING OR SLEEPING ENOUGH FOR RECOVERY)

- Lingering aches, pains, joint or muscle soreness
- Elevated resting heart-rate for an extended period
- Continuous "heavy" legs while running
- Unable to sleep despite feeling tired
- Low energy
- Weakened immune system (you're getting sick a lot)

## PACING

Pacing is an essential skill for runners to master. Learning to run by feel instead of the number on a watch, will net you the best results. Learning to hold back the pace on endurance runs and recovery runs takes training and discipline.

Most new runners simply start by running too fast and tire themselves out too early. When you begin to run, slow your pace a bit, even if the current pace feels comfortable. There is plenty of time to train to run faster, but in the beginning, it's most important to build endurance, and you do that by slowing down.

If you run too fast every workout, you may be sacrificing adequate recovery. Slower runs are not as hard on your body, and allow recovery while still putting in miles. Fast or high-intensity running puts a lot of stress on your body.

## Rate of Perceived Exertion (RPE) And Talk Test

I recommend pacing by the RPE (Rate of Perceived Exertion) and the talk test instead of striving to hit a particular pace to ensure you are working at the appropriate fitness level for your abilities.

10 - Extremely Difficult. If you are completely out of breath and can barely speak a single word during your run, you are working at a level 10 exertion. You would not be able to hold this pace for an extended period and would only likely run this pace during an interval workout.

9 - Difficult. If breathing is challenging, and can only get two to three words out before you would have to take a gasp of breath, you are working at a level 9.

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7-8 Hard Effort. If you are working hard, feeling a bit uncomfortable, and could speak a sentence or two at a time before having to gasp for breath, you are working at level 7-8. This pace is also called tempo, and the effort usually can be sustained for an extended period, from 15 minutes up to an hour with training.

4-6 Moderate Effort. This effort is a conversational pace and should be the baseline pace for most of your runs. The conversational pace is what it sounds like; if you were running alongside a partner, you could hold a casual conversation while running without gasping for breath between words or sentences. Perform most of your runs during the week at this effort level. Try singing the alphabet during your run, if you can get through all the letters without taking gasps of air, you are running at a conversational pace.

The beauty of RPE chart is that you may start at a nine-minute mile at a RPE level nine, but as you improve, a nine-minute mile will become a RPE level six. It's not the pace that matters; it's how much effort you need to exert to perform at that pace. It's the reason I recommend that you never follow arbitrary speeds from workouts from Pinterest or the internet. The person writing that running workout has no idea about your fitness level or abilities. You could hurt yourself attempting a pace that you are not ready to achieve. Always work according to your effort level

## NEGATIVE SPLIT

I teach my coaching clients to always aim for a negative split, which means you run the second half of the training run or race faster than the first. This forces you to slow a bit in the beginning, so you can give a little extra effort towards the end to finish strong. If you finish slower than you started, it's a good signal that you started too fast. You'll see an overall decrease in pace when you focus on running the second half more quickly than the first.

## BREATHING

If you are out of breath in the beginning, that is normal as your body adapts to the new exercise. Be patient and keep showing up to train and you'll notice that as your fitness improves, and you learn to control the pace, breathing will get easier.

Rhythmic breathing can help you control your breathing, your pace, and calm your mind. By focusing on the breath, you can take your mind off other potentially negative thoughts.

To start, time your breathing with your steps. For a slow to moderate pace, take three breaths in as you take three steps, then exhale for two breaths and the next two steps.

inhale-step-inhale-step-inhale-step

exhale-step-exhale-step

repeat

The reason that you take three breaths in and exhale two breathes is that it alternates the foot in which you are exhaling. When you exhale, you temporarily lose a bit of core stability, so if you always exhale on the same foot strike on the same side of the body, it could add more stress to one side of the body than the other.



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If you are running a bit faster, you may want to switch to two inhales per step and one exhale.

inhale-step-inhale-step

Exhale-step

repeat

I recommend leaving the music at home while you practice rhythmic breathing, as the tempo of the music can influence your steps. Practice this on your next run..

## DYNAMIC WARM-UP

A proper warm-up before you begin running will prep your body for the work you are about to do, potentially increase your performance, and reduce the chance of injuries.

I recommend a dynamic warm-up that moves your joints through the full range of motion and improves hip mobility. Some bodyweight exercises can help ready your body for the workout ahead.

Try this dynamic warm-up before your next run:

12 leg swings forward and backward on each leg

12 Leg swings side to side on each leg

Ankle circles 12 each direction, each foot

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8 bodyweight side lunges alternating legs

8 bodyweight back lunges alternating legs

8 bottoms up squats

Run your first 5-10 minutes at a slow pace, before attempting a faster pace or interval.

I don't recommend to hold static stretches for 30 seconds or more before a workout, save these types of stretches for after your workout to help minimize muscle soreness and aid in recovery.

## STRENGTH TRAINING

The type of strength training that runners need to improve their sports performance is different than the preparation of a bodybuilder or a powerlifter. We don't want to waste any time in the gym on exercises that won't help us improve our running. I'll give a brief overview of the types of activities that will benefit runners the most. Instead of a body part split for hypertrophy (muscle building), try some of these exercises to improve your performance and resistance to injury.

Muscles stabilize the joints, so strengthening the muscles can reduce the chance of joint injuries. A strength program that includes squats, deadlifts, rows, and planks is a great place to start.

## CORE TRAINING

Your core is more than those six-pack abs you covet. Your core is everything below your chest and above your thighs, including your hips, mid, and lower back. A strong core is essential for stability on the run. Try planks, side planks, bird dogs, supermans, hip bridges, and lift and chop to start. Remember, with any training program; it's always important to progress the exercise to continue to see results as your body adapts. Add weight, reps, or sets to continue to improve as you get stronger.

## SINGLE-LEG TRAINING

When you run, you repeatedly transfer your body weight from one leg to the other, so it's beneficial for runners to build independent hip and leg strength. I love single-leg deadlifts, single-leg hip bridges, lunges, and single-leg squats (for advanced trainees) for runners.

## FRONTAL PLANE TRAINING

When you run, you only move in one plane of motion, the Sagittal plane, which is a forward and back movement. If you only run and don't do exercises to strengthen the muscles you use to move side-to-side in the frontal plane, those muscles will get weak compared to the muscles you use to run and can cause imbalances that can lead to injuries. Runners should perform side lunges, lying leg abduction (leg lifts), lying leg adduction (inner thigh exercises), and side-step squats.

## UPPER BODY TRAINING

Don't neglect your upper body. A stronger upper back and shoulders provide stability on the run, and your lats and arms power your stride. Instead of doing bench presses to strengthen your chest, do push-ups that strengthen your chest but also increases the strength in your core, so you get the most running benefit out of your strength training.

The key to strength training for runners is to not pack on a lot of muscle but to build the kind of runner specific strength that will benefit your running performance and longevity.

You don't need a lot of equipment to get started, invest in some dumbbells, some resistance bands, and maybe a kettlebell. This is an affiliate link: [Prosource Fit offers a 15% off discount for my clients and readers on their site when you use code ALEA15.](#)

## RUNNING FORM AND TECHNIQUE

Most people start running, but very few people learn how to run, so they end up increasing the duration of their runs using an inefficient running form or improper technique, and increase risk of pain, injury, and setbacks.

Running is a skill that takes a lifetime to master. If you think you know how to run, but haven't put much thought into it other than hitting the pavement according to your running schedule, you likely aren't running in the most efficient way possible.

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Some people may have a natural running form and technique with superior genetics, but most of us mere mortals need to put focused work in on the skill of running. I know that I do.

I follow the Pose Method of running: The running pose, the fall (gravity to move forward), and quick pulls of your foot to change support. I recommend looking into Dr. Romonav's teachings to learn more directly from the source or my coach, Valerie Hunt, who is a master Pose trainer.

It has changed the way I run. If you are a beginner runner, you have the advantage of learning the correct running technique from the start. Most of us have to unlearn years of bad running habits, which makes learning a new mind and movement connection more challenging.

## Here are a few simple running form and technique changes you can think about on your next run to improve.

1. Keep your ears, shoulders, and hips in a straight line and lead from your hips. If your head and shoulders fall forward, or hips drag behind, it leads to inefficient running.
2. Keep your knees bent at all times, no reaching out in front.
3. Keep your arms bent at your sides for balance; don't allow your arms to cross over the front of your body.
4. Keep your shoulders relaxed and away from your ears.

## MENTAL TRAINING

I include mental training in the top essential running tips for beginners because your mindset has a substantial influence on your performance. You have to believe that with proper training you can achieve your goals, then you have to put in the hard work, and overcome obstacles.

Sometimes new runners give up when it gets hard. Spoiler alert: it will get hard. You will have bad days along with the good. Injuries, aches, pains, lack of motivation, bad weather, and busy schedules can all threaten to derail your progress if you are not careful. Expect running won't be perfect all the time, because it won't. It's called life. If you're not shocked and surprised by setbacks, you're better able to tackle them.

There are two major mindset mantras that I follow to keep me on track, despite the circumstances.

### **"If nothing else, I am consistent."**

It means I keep going: After I have a terrible workout when I don't perform as well as I think I should or when I'm tired. It may mean having to cut back the intensity or the duration of a workout, but I do it. It means consistency is my number one focus, and everything else is a side effect of that consistency.

Bad workouts don't matter; at least I am consistent. In the end, regular exercises over a long period will yield better results than occasional or irregular workouts. If you place consistency as your top value, then everything else will fall into place because you'll get plenty of practice towards your goal.

## "Problems are an opportunity."

You get hurt, now what? You get creative and figure out a way to keep moving forward while you take care of your injury. You focus on what you can do and not on what you can't do. When things go wrong, look for solutions rather than dwelling on the problem.

When you have a problem, it allows you the opportunity to learn and grow. I never did much stretching, mobility, or strength work until I had injuries. That injury problem led me to a solution that makes me a stronger runner today than I was when I ignored all that.

Maybe you have a scheduling problem, or a weather problem, or a motivation problem.

If you don't quit when you have a problem, but instead look for creative solutions and have the drive to keep moving forward in some small way, you will continue to progress despite setbacks.

You build mental strength and resilience by overcoming problems, they help make you a stronger runner. Seven ways to train your mental muscle to run stronger.

Are you ready to become a great runner in the new year? Do you have any questions? I am here to help.

[www.leagendersfitness.com](http://www.leagendersfitness.com)

# Lea Genders Fitness

Coach Lea

I am a NASM personal trainer and RRCA adult distance running coach that specializes in strength training for runners. I offer in-person training in the Shredshed, and online running coaching. If you are interested in a more in-depth running or strength training plan, please contact me.

Have questions? I'd love to help. While I am a certified personal trainer, I am not your personal trainer. Since I don't know your exercise abilities, injury background or medical history, please see your doctor before beginning any new exercise program.

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