

## **Top Ten 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 for your first 5K!

### **1. Set an attainable goal.**

The first step in any new challenge is setting an attainable goal. Running is no exception. (In other words, don't set a goal of running a marathon if you have not yet run a 5K!) Once you have your goal, setting smaller, manageable goals—those that are challenging, but not impossible—will inspire you to stick with it. Follow a training plan that eases you into a running program, one that focuses 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 recovery/rest between sessions.

**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 may feel a little breathy and may speak in choppy sentences, but you 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. As time goes on, make the running bouts longer until you are running for continuous 30 minutes.)

### **3. Prepare your body for work and recovery.**

Before each session begin with a five minute warm up of dynamic stretching and walking. End each session 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 necessary come naturally to you, so consciously focus on it during every run.

- Relax and run lightly. Tense muscles force you to work harder. Focus on smooth, straight-ahead 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 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 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. To ensure you are properly hydrated for a run, drink about 8 ounces every hour before running. Continue to sip while running (about 5-12 ounces every 15 to 20 minutes). Follow with water afterward. Drink past feelings of thirst, until urine is a pale yellow.

## **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. Love your shoes.**

Visit a specialty store to purchase a quality pair of running shoes that are right for you. After a run, loosen the laces and pull out the tongue to let them dry thoroughly. 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.

## **8. Run safe.**

Use common sense when running. Investigate safety suggestions for running on roadways, trails, or wherever you may roam. For specific information on running safety, visit the Road Runners Club of America web site: [www.rrca.org](http://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. Enjoy the fruits of your labors.**

The benefits of running go far beyond fitness and physical well-being. Appreciate your new, healthy lifestyle and be sure to share the joy! Enter road races that benefit charitable organizations. Promote the sport and help put others on the path to a healthier lifestyle.