



Training Tips for Runners of All Distances

Winter is coming to an end and time to get off the “dreadmill” and back out on the roads. Considering the air temps in February, winter was just that really cold Saturday at the start of the month. As you get ready for the 2023 running season, whether your goal this year is to do your first 5K race, to move up to a longer distance or to make the age group podium, here are some tips that all runners should consider incorporating into their training.

Train All Three of Your Energy Systems. Any race distance from 800m and longer is an endurance event. While the percent contribution of the three energy systems to meet the total energy needs of your working muscles will be different for each race distance, even Marathoners use the anaerobic glycolic energy system in a race. Runners of all race distances should be doing speedwork on the track. The best all-around track workout is repeat miles or repeat kilometers at 110% - 120% of race pace. Be sure to do some Lactate Threshold runs, these will make you a more economic runner with the oxygen you take in with every breath. Keep your EZ runs at “Conversational Pace” – a pace where you can recite out loud the words to a favorite song without huffing and puffing between words and stanzas or carry on a conversation with your running partner.

Specificity is Critical to Your Racing Success. To some extent, training for a race is like the phrase about practice making perfect. When training for your race, try to replicate on your running route the terrain and course that is like what you will encounter on your race. It need not be every workout, but you should do it regularly. If your race is on a course with lots of elevation changes, find a route that replicates those changes. Even if you can’t do your entire run over those hills, you can do hill repeats on it to get your body ready for race day. If the race route has lots of turns, then practice training with lots of turns. It will certainly develop your ability to “run the tangent” and the straighter the line you take on the course, the shorter your path from start to finish.

Training On A Treadmill Is The Same As Running Outdoors. If you are not able to run outside, training on a treadmill instead is not as bad as many think. At an Endurance Coaching Clinic several years ago, I heard Jay Dicharry speak. He holds a Masters in Physical Therapy, is a Board Certified Sports Clinical Analyst and recognized as an expert in biomechanical analysis. He stated that the believe that on a treadmill we stand and the tread pulls us backwards is not a truthful statement. His data collection supports that you are actually running. And I heard world renowned coach Dr. Jack Daniels state that running on a treadmill is the same as running outside, as long as you have a tailwind. Even if there is no wind, you create air resistance when you run outside. There is no forward motion on a treadmill so no self-created air resistance. So, training on a treadmill is the same as training outside with a tailwind that is at the same speed as your running pace.

A Rest Day is a Workout Day. “All work and no play” applies as much to running as it does in all areas of our lives. The stress from runs causes micro-damage to your muscles. The muscles repair that damage during the rest time. The repairs make you better able to take on more stress, improve your running speed and endurance. You are not going to lose fitness by taking a day off from training.



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Actually you will improve your fitness. A rest day is just another component of your training, just as is a speedwork day or a long run day.

Run Without the Wearable Technology Periodically. It is easy to get locked in to assessing the workout based upon data that has been collected by the running watch. As a remote coach, the data from the device is what I need to see to help me assess the run. But, I still advocate for my athletes to run without their device every now and then (it's known as "running naked"). Learn to get a feel for how hard you are training by listening to your breathing. If you need to know how far and fast you ran, check the clock on the wall as you head out the door and again when you get back. Check your distance using MapMyRun.com.

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