



The Fundamentals of Speedwork

Looking to lower finish times? Adding speedwork to weekly workouts is a fundamental way to improve speed during races.

Speedwork consists of any training done at race pace or faster. Speedwork helps train your system to utilize the muscle fibers necessary to be able to run fast.

Always warmup properly before starting any speedwork sessions, this is essential to prevent injury. Some easy ways to warm up include:

- **Walking** 5-10 minutes
- **Running slowly** for 10-20 minutes
- **Dynamic stretching** to promote blood flow, help prevent injury and muscle soreness, and improve overall performance. Visit this [Support Hub](#) feature for 9 dynamic stretches recommended by experts at Hartford HealthCare Rehabilitation Network.

There are many different ways that speedwork can be added to your weekly running schedule.

- ❖ **Repeats** – a workout in which you run very fast, usually over a very short distance, and take a relatively long period of time to recover before repeating the distance again.

For example:

3 x 300 meters – run 300 meters flat out and walk until fully recovered (about one lap around a track). Repeat the 300 meters two more times with the walk break in between. The rest period is about 5 times as long as it takes you to run each fast repeat.

Tips:

- You should finish a repeat workout refreshed, feeling positive about running hard with good form.
- Runners new to speedwork should not begin by running repeats flat out. Start easily and gradually build your intensity.
- A good beginning speed for repeats is your race pace for the full length of the repeat.
- Gradually improve your total time by accelerating toward the end of each repeat.



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- ❖ **Interval Training** – a series of repeated rounds of exercise, ranging from several minutes to just a few seconds. During each interval, you work at a set intensity for a specific period of time or distance (work interval) and follow this with a low intensity recovery period (recovery interval).

Tips:

- Distance: each run should not exceed 90 seconds.
 - Interval: not to exceed 90 seconds.
 - Repetitions: how many times you run the distance.
 - Rest: What you do during the interval.
- ❖ **Fartlek** – a Swedish term that translates to “speed play”. During your workout, pick a landmark in the distance – a tree, bush, or sign for example – and sprint to it, then jog until you’ve recovered. Select another landmark, a shorter or longer distance away, and run to it at a faster or slower pace. Unlike interval training, the distance of a fartlek is not measured. The distance and pace are up to you. Listen to your body. Fartleks can be worked into almost any training.
- ❖ **Hill training** – enables you to run better on all types of terrain. It strengthens lower leg muscles and quadriceps. Hill training can be added to one day of your weekly training.

Tips:

- Choose a hill with a 10-15% grade, 150-200 yards. Run uphill at 80-85% effort. Jog easy in between to recover. Start with 4 hill repeats and build up to 8-12.
- Keep your posture erect by keeping your chest out and up.
- Don’t try to keep up the same pace on the hills as your pace on flat terrain.
- Shorten your stride and let yourself slow down gradually as you climb.
- Run over the top by cresting the hill and resume your previous pace from the flat terrain.

Always cool down after a speedwork session to help prevent stiffness. Keep moving until your breathing returns to its regular rate.

Adapted from Run Fast How to Train for a 5K or 10K Race by Hal Higdon and Galloway’s Book on Running by Jeff Galloway.