

6 HELPFUL RUNNING TIPS

Long runs are a staple of almost all training plans for runners, whether you're training for a 5K or a marathon. They improve your stamina and aerobic endurance, which are the building blocks for a runner who wants to learn to run faster over longer distances.

1. START WITH YOUR MIND

Preparation for a long run begins in your head. It's okay to be anxious when you see a distance you've never run before, or just a really long distance, on your training plan. You can make it easier by preparing mentally for the distance you're going to cover.

Visualize the route you will run and picture yourself running well and finishing strong. Trust your training: take it slow and tell yourself you can do it. A positive mindset will go a long way when the going gets tough. If you tell yourself it's hard and you can't do it, then you'll only make it harder for yourself and you'll actually find it harder.

And this works the other way around, too — the mental toughness you get from running can help you fight stress in your daily life.

2. FOCUS ON HYDRATION & NUTRITION

You need to carbo-load for your long run, as carbs provide your body with energy — so make sure to get enough carbs before your long run!

Oatmeal is a great choice of carbs, as it's easy on the stomach and you can increase portion sizes as your workout demands. Check out other great foods for runners.

The carb requirements of someone running for 30 minutes will vary greatly from someone running for 3 hours. It's best to play around here and see what works for you.

As long as your stomach feels okay during the run and you can complete it, you're on the right track. If you feel like you can't finish your run feeling strong, then start increasing how much you eat. If you're struggling to perfect your "long run" meal, use 7-10 g of carbs per kg of body weight as a daily guideline and work from there. If you're training for a race, then the nutrition and hydration on your long run should reflect what you plan to do on race day.



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3. IT'S NOT A RACE, PACE YOURSELF

Your long run pace should be a slow pace you can hold for the duration of the run. You should run your long run at a slow and conversational pace.

Long runs are more about the effort and simply covering the distance. If you have a specific race and goal in mind for a half marathon or marathon, then this is when you can begin to think about hitting certain paces.

Aim for 1 minute to 90 seconds slower than your planned race pace. It's easy to overdo it in training and run too hard when you're feeling good. Then you give everything you've got in training and having nothing left for the race. It's better to arrive at the start slightly undertrained than even as little as 1% overtrained.

4. BREAK IT INTO SECTIONS

A long run can seem scary, but it can help if you break up the distance mentally.

Instead of telling yourself you have to run 15 km (for example), tell yourself it's 3 slow 5 km runs or 2 x 7 km with 1 km more added on — go with whatever combination works best for you. It's also ok to take a break during a long run! If you're doing 15 km and feel the need to walk or take a couple of minutes break between 5 kilometer stretches, then go for it.

However, try to reduce breaks in your long runs as your fitness level increases. It can also help to visualize a post-long run treat to help you get through the distance, whether this is a meal you're looking forward to, a glass of wine, or simply watching Netflix for the rest of the day on the sofa.

5. CONSIDER REFUELING MID-RUN

If you're running over an hour, then it may be time to start taking on calories during your run in the form of gels, chews, powders you can add to water, or nuts and dried fruit if you prefer a more "real food" approach.

Taking on food during a run isn't easy and everyone's stomach has different preferences, so you'll need to experiment with different types of food. What works for one person won't work

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for another. Every runner has their “go to” foods and strategy — so start building yours!

Hydration during a long run is also necessary as you start to cover longer distances. You may need to take water with you during a run either in a bottle or in a hydration backpack, or plan your route so you pass water fountains along the way. Hydration and fueling during a long run requires a lot of experimentation, but a rough guide would be to drink roughly every 20 minutes and take on calories every 40 minutes.

6. DON'T SKIP POST-RUN RECOVERY

It's also important to eat soon after your long run to provide your body with the energy it needs to recover. It's easy to skip this step and forget about recovery, but you just ran a long way, so be sure to recover and give your body what it needs!

Your post-workout meal should consist of a good mix of proteins, fats, and carbs to ensure good recovery. If it was particularly warm out or if you generally sweat a lot, you may need to consume electrolytes and believe it or not, non-alcoholic beer is a good source!

If beer isn't your thing, then adding a little salt to your post-run meal will work just as well. Also, dust off your foam roller to give yourself a deep tissue massage with a foam roller, loosen up your legs, and recover quicker. A good recovery strategy helps you recover faster and prepares you for your next run.

