

## **So you want to run!**

If you are interested in running and not sure where or how to start then the information below might answer some of those questions. The article finishes with an eight week plan to 3 miles / 5km designed to get you going.

### **How to start?**

If you are in the position that you have not exercised for a long time, a gentle increase in activity will be the first place to start.

Use the stairs not the lift, walk to the station or local shops, keep the pace brisk and try to notice how your body feels when you finish. You may have some aching muscles but this will pass in time as you become stronger and fitter. Try to notice what the effect is on your mood. I am sure you will enjoy the results. With each stride picture the sense of achievement you will have finishing a 5k run.

The first two weeks of this programme will get you into the exercise habit and once you make it a regular thing exercise will become a rich and varied addition to your weekly routine.

Plan your week. Set aside a regular time when you will exercise. An important part of any training program is to schedule regular rest days, without these your progress will be hindered. This is more important if you are a complete novice. The choice is yours. You know exactly what you are capable of and how you feel after exercising.

Once you have made the commitment to start running, it is a good idea to set your plan out. Workout when you want to run and experiment with different running times to see when you feel at your best. You might be the sort of person who likes to set aside your weekend for shopping. You may find you work best in the morning or alternatively in the evening after work. The time you choose to run needs to suit you.

**It is strongly advised that you speak to your GP if you have never exercised or if you have any medical condition prior to starting an exercise programme.**

### **What do I need to wear?**

#### **Trainers**

The most important thing you need for running is a pair of decent running shoes that suit you and your running style. Our feet have evolved over thousands of years into the ultimate design for moving us from one place to another and we all have slightly different ways of walking and running. As soon as we put on a pair of shoes we compromise our feet's efficiency and effectiveness so it is important to get shoes that match our running style as closely as possible.

Shoes are a common cause of injury, either from buying the wrong model or using a shoe beyond its effective life<sup>1</sup>. Simple things like buying a big enough shoe can prevent a host of toe and foot problems brought on by an ill-fitting model.

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<sup>1</sup> Stowmarket Striders

Everyone has different needs and all sorts of things - your biomechanics, your weight, the surfaces you run on, and obviously, the shape of your feet - mean that one person's ideal shoe can be terrible for another person.

There is no single 'best shoe' and they vary as much as prescription spectacles do. You can get cushioned shoes, stability shoes, motion control shoes, performance training shoes, racing shoes and off-road shoes. There are also over 150 different specialist running shoes to choose from so finding the right model can be a daunting task but you can make the task easier by shopping at specialist running store where you can get informed, relevant and practical advice.

It is also important that you do not run in worn out shoes. Most running shoes usually last between 400 to 500 miles before the cushioning inside no longer performs efficiently, although from the outside they may look fine. Your shoe's life expectancy varies depending on the type of shoe, your weight, your foot-strike pattern, and the surfaces you run on. Do not wait until your only pair is worn out. It is also a good idea to buy a new pair and rotate them for a while. When buying trainers it is a good idea to take your current trainers (or for your first pair take a pair of shoes) with you so the supplier can assess your needs.

## **Clothing**

There is no set running uniform: pick what you feel comfortable in. Depending upon your budget, you may prefer to purchase tops & shorts made from material that is breathable and takes the sweat away from your skin. It is worth spending a bit more on this so called technical kit as it means that you will stay drier and more comfortable when running. Cotton tee-shirts can be very heavy and cold when wet with sweat!

Women often choose Lycra shorts or tights; and non-cotton clothes help you stay drier. Women should buy a high-support sports bra (the more comfortable you are, the more you will run!). This one comes down to a personal choice as to which one suits you the best so again seek assistance at a specialist running shop or check out the internet sites.

Do not overdress in cold weather. If you pile on the clothes whenever it is chilly you will feel nice and warm in the first part of the run but then you will get too hot which will make the remainder of the run feel as if you are running in a sauna. Wear enough to keep yourself from freezing because within a mile you will soon warm up.

If you would normally wear sunglasses on a hot sunny day, wear them when you run as it is just as important to protect your eyes when you are running. Runners sun-block is also available which will allow you to sweat whilst protecting you from the rays.

As with anything, shop around, there are usually bargains to be found.

## **Do you need a special diet?**

The answer to this question really depends upon who you are talking to. However, it is important to have a good and well balanced diet. Training for long distance runs can take a lot out of your body and it is therefore important that you replenish your body's reserves.

On the dietary side, minimise the amount of fat in your diet; drink water with every meal; do not skip breakfast; eat more often and do not overeat at any sitting. The fuel for runners is carbohydrates which are found in pasta, potatoes, and bread to name but a few. For some of the bigger races it is not uncommon for there to be a pre-race pasta party the night before!

You should wait for about two hours after a meal before running as this will allow the food to empty from the stomach, especially if it is high in carbohydrate. If you do not wait long enough, food will not be properly digested, raising the risk of abdominal cramps, bloating, and even vomiting. The best way to lose weight is through a combination of sensible eating and increased exercise. Running is the most efficient calorie burner around - A 12-stone man running at nine minutes/mile burns 500 calories in around 35 minutes.

Probably the most important thing is to drink lots, and I do not mean the alcoholic type. In normal conditions you can lose about 2 litres a day through the body's processes. So get in to the habit of drinking plenty of fluids, not just while you are running but all the time. Your body needs time to absorb and store the water that you need when running. Waiting to drink until you feel thirsty or until you start exercise is too late.

When running your muscles generate heat and in order for your body to maintain its constant temperature of 37°C it sweats to cool the body down. During prolonged running your body can lose between 1 to 2 litres of water an hour. It is therefore vital that you take on water during your run. If you suddenly slow you to a crawl or you have bad runs on some days and good runs on others it may be because you are not drinking enough. On all your long runs carry a water bottle, or plan your route through areas where you can find water.

### **Now you can run - what next?**

The answer to this one depends upon your own goals. Many people join a running club to maintain their fitness and to enjoy the social aspects with other similar minded people. You could revise your objectives by running longer and longer races until you finally go for the big one - the London Marathon or whatever target suits you.

However it is your choice as to how you progress your running. Do not forget that running is a sport and it is important that you enjoy yourself, have fun and feel good!

You need to enjoy the running experience if you want to continue and succeed at it, however this can take time. You need to be patient. Running does not always jump out at you as the greatest thing since sliced bread. Eventually though, you realise it is ;-)

Eight week plan starts on the next page.....

## **Eight Week Plan to Run 3 Miles / 5K**

This 8-week running programme is designed to help you complete a 5 k (3 mile) run. Use each week in order, do not skip any part of it and try to follow each day and week as closely as possible. The first two weeks will get you used to spending time on your feet. Slowly building your fitness levels and confidence<sup>2</sup>. If you feel that you want to use weeks 1 & 2 for a little longer that is fine. Be sure that you spend no longer than 4 weeks in this preparatory stage. Your 8 week program has just become 10 weeks and that is not a problem but be careful, distraction and boredom are some of the biggest reasons for anyone to stop their exercise programme.

### **Stretching**

It used to be that all runners stretched before they ran, and then there was a big debate. So now a lot of runners do not stretch. If you are a beginner, what is the answer: should you stretch before you run? No, if you are not going to stretch correctly. Improper stretching is the second leading cause of running injuries to both runners who do not stretch very much and to those who spend an inordinate amount of time.

Studies have shown that morning runners become injured more often than noontime and evening runners, which suggests that it is dangerous to stretch cold muscles. It is hard to stretch muscles that are not loosened and warmed up and you take the risk of tearing a muscle<sup>3</sup>.

A thorough warm-up before stretching, or postponing stretching till later in the day, may reduce the risk of injury. Be very gentle when stretching prior to a run. If you have had achilles tendonitis or tight calf muscles, you might find it helpful to stretch about 1/2 to 3/4 of a mile into your run. The muscles will have warmed up and will be better prepared to be stretched. You also have to be careful about how you stretch. You should never bounce while stretching because you could tear or pull the muscle you are trying to stretch. Also avoid stretching too quickly, as the muscle will respond with a strong contraction and increase tension. Do not stretch beyond the point where you begin to feel tightness in the muscle, do not push through muscle resistance, and never stretch to the point of discomfort or pain.

Stretching should be a relaxing end to your workout so do not be too aggressive when performing each stretch. There a whole host of stretches that you can do post-run, these are just a few:

#### **Lower leg (calf)**

Standing on the edge of a step. Let the heel of one leg drop until you feel pressure in the muscle on the back of your lower leg. Hold the stretch for 10 seconds or more.

(Roll up a towel to use as a sling to help you perform the next stretches.)

#### **Quadriceps**

Using a wall for balance, hook the towel around your leg like a sling. Pull the foot up behind you until you feel an easy pressure in the front of your lifted leg. Hold this for 10 secs or more. Repeat on the other side.

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<sup>2</sup> Blieu Earp, Personal Fitness Trainer

<sup>3</sup> RunnersRescue.Com

## Hamstrings

Laying on your back hook your foot into the towel held in a loop with both hands. Try to straighten the leg until you feel pressure in the back of the raised leg between the knee and hip.

### Week 1

Start slowly. As previously mentioned, if you do too much too soon you may struggle and that sense of enjoyment could be easily lost.

#### Monday

Begin with a brisk walk, remember it is all about making a habit so this is a good place to start. If you cannot manage the time to have a brisk walk, how are you going to set aside time to run? The next two weeks will give you a chance to organise your time.

#### Tuesday

Rest

#### Wednesday

Brisk walk for 15 mins. How do you feel?

#### Thursday

Rest

#### Friday

Brisk Walk for 20 mins. I am sure you have noticed that we are building the time on your feet. If you found this week was manageable then move on to week 2. Starting Monday.

#### Saturday

Rest

#### Sunday

Rest

Week 1	Duration	How? Fast or slow
Monday	10 minutes	Brisk Walk
Tuesday	Rest	
Wednesday	15 minutes	Brisk Walk
Thursday	Rest	
Friday	20 minutes	Brisk Walk
Saturday	Rest	
Sunday	Rest	

### Week 2

Front loading the week gets the longer walks completed on Monday and Wednesday. This will give you a chance to recover before commencing to week three.

#### Monday

30 minutes brisk walk. Maintain your concentration and keep a brisk pace. It would be a good idea to find a park or area you enjoy visiting to complete your longer journeys. The distraction of seeing new places will make the exercise time go a lot quicker.

#### Tuesday

Rest day

#### Wednesday

30 minute brisk walk.

#### Thursday

Rest day

#### Friday

Next week is going to get busier. Take your walking time down to 20 mins. Try to move a little faster. Take longer strides and experiment with the speed your legs move at.

## **Saturday**

Rest day

## **Sunday**

20 minutes walking. Tomorrow you will do the same so do not go mad but make sure you do go out walking today.

<b>Week 2</b>	<b>Duration</b>	<b>How? Fast or slow</b>
Monday	30 minutes	Brisk Walk
Tuesday	Rest	
Wednesday	30 minutes	Brisk Walk
Thursday	Rest	
Friday	20 minutes	Brisk Walk
Saturday	Rest	
Sunday	20 minutes	Brisk Walk

## **Week 3**

This week we introduce a change of pace and start jogging. Small jogging intervals will get you on the road to 5k.

### **Monday**

Begin with a brisk walk.

### **Tuesday**

Scheduled as a rest day when the programme is in full swing. If you are keen to get going then week 3 can be a chance to experiment with your jogging.

### **Wednesday**

20 minutes in total. Walk for 1 minute then ease into a gentle jog for 1 minute. Experiment with the length of your stride, where your hands feel most comfortable and concentrate on taking nice deep breaths.

### **Thursday**

Rest day.

### **Friday**

Try to increase your jogging time. Walk for 1 minute then jog for 2 minutes repeating the cycle for 20 minutes.

### **Saturday**

Rest day

### **Sunday**

A brisk walk lasting 20 minutes, you have had a busy week so stride out but do not run. Your body will enjoy the lower level activity.

<b>Week 3</b>	<b>Duration</b>	<b>How? Fast or slow</b>
Monday	20 minutes	Brisk Walk
Tuesday	10 minutes	1 min walk 1 min jog
Wednesday	20 minutes	1 min walk 1 min Jog
Thursday	Rest	
Friday	20 minutes	1 min walk 2 min jog
Saturday	Rest	
Sunday	20 minutes	Brisk Walk

## **Week 4**

### **Monday**

At the end of week 3 you managed to build your jogging time up to 2 mins with walking intervals of 1 min. Well done. The first training run of week 4 is exactly the same 20 minutes walking for 1 minute jogging for 2 minutes.

### **Tuesday**

Rest day

### **Wednesday**

Jogging for two minutes might have been a challenge last week. Today we increase the time, 1 minute walking with 3 minutes jogging. Good luck.

### **Thursday**

A well earned rest day

### **Friday**

Repeat Wednesdays workout 1 minute walking with 3 minutes running.

### **Saturday**

Rest day

### **Sunday**

Go for a walk, keep the pace brisk and try to complete at least half an hour.

<b>Week 4</b>	<b>Duration</b>	<b>How? Fast or slow</b>
Monday	20 minutes	1 min walk 2 min Jog
Tuesday	Rest	
Wednesday	20 minutes	1 min walk 3 min Jog
Thursday	Rest	
Friday	20 minutes	1 min walk 3 min jog
Saturday	Rest	
Sunday	30 mins	Long Brisk Walk

## **Week 5**

### **Monday**

Maintaining the good work from last week complete 1 minute 3 minute repetitions for 20 minutes.

### **Tuesday**

Rest day

### **Wednesday**

A new challenge! Increase the jogging interval to 4 minutes. This might seem difficult. Try to ease into a steady rhythm. Do not go too fast. Remember at the moment we are working to time not distance or speed.

### **Thursday**

Rest day

### **Friday**

Repeat the Wednesday workout. Does it feel easier? If not try to look at what you are doing differently. Be as comfortable as you can.

### **Saturday**

Rest day

### **Sunday**

The longest workout you are asked to do, a brisk walk for 45 minutes. Well done.

<b>Week 5</b>	<b>Duration</b>	<b>How? Fast or slow</b>
Monday	20 minutes	1 min walk 3 min Jog
Tuesday	Rest	
Wednesday	20 minutes	1 min walk 4 min Jog
Thursday	Rest	
Friday	20 minutes	1 min walk 4 min jog
Saturday	Rest	
Sunday	45 min	Long Brisk Walk

## **Week 6**

### **Monday**

Continue the pattern of repeating last weeks improvement. 1 Minute walk followed by 4 minutes jogging repeat for 20 minutes.

### **Tuesday**

Rest day

### **Wednesday**

A change in running time will give you a further challenge. You can do it. You have succeeded this far and you are over half way. 2 minutes walking followed by 5 minutes jogging for 20 minutes.

### **Thursday**

Rest day.

### **Friday**

A 5 minute brisk walk to start followed by 10 minutes jogging. See how you feel. Try not to stop.

### **Saturday**

Rest day

### **Sunday**

30 minutes mixed pace walking and jogging. There is no time limit to how long you jog for. Do your best and walk when you need to. Try to keep your jogging constant and if you do walk get back to jogging as soon as you can.

<b>Week 6</b>	<b>Duration</b>	<b>How? Fast or slow</b>
Monday	20 minutes	1 min walk 4 min Jog
Tuesday	Rest	
Wednesday	20 minutes	2 min walk 5 min Jog
Thursday	Rest	
Friday	20 minutes	5 min walk 10 min jog
Saturday	Rest	
Sunday	30 minutes	Mixed pace jog and walk*

\*No time limit to how long you jog or walk for.

## **Week 7**

### **Monday**

You had a hard day yesterday. Today's training run is 20 minutes. Walk for 1 minute and alternate with 4 minutes jogging.

### **Tuesday**

Rest day

### **Wednesday**

5 minutes walking and 10 minutes jogging for 20 minutes in total

### **Thursday**

Rest

**Friday**

15 minutes steady jogging

**Saturday**

Rest day

**Sunday**

40 minutes at a mixed pace. Try to run for 10 minute intervals. If you can do more that is great.

<b>Week 7</b>	<b>Duration</b>	<b>How? Fast or slow</b>
Monday	20 minutes	1 min walk 4 min Jog
Tuesday	Rest	
Wednesday	20 minutes	5 min walk 10 min Jog
Thursday	Rest	
Friday	15 minutes	15 min jog
Saturday	Rest	
Sunday	40 minutes	Mixed pace jog and walk*

\*Try to spend more time jogging at least 10 mins constantly.

**Week 8****Monday**

Yesterday was a difficult run. At the end of this week you will attempt your first three mile (5 kilometres). Today is a rest day.

**Tuesday**

Rest Day

**Wednesday**

20 minutes at a constant jog. Do your best. If you get tired, keep the walking to 1 minute intervals.

**Thursday**

Rest day

**Friday**

25 minute constant jog same rules as Wednesday.

**Saturday**

Rest day

**Sunday**

30 – 35 minutes constant jogging.

That is it! You can now run 3 miles. WELL DONE.

<b>Week 8</b>	<b>Duration</b>	<b>How? Fast or slow</b>
Monday	Rest	
Tuesday	Rest	
Wednesday	20 minutes	Constant jog
Thursday	Rest	
Friday	25 minutes	Constant jog
Saturday	Rest	
Sunday	30-35 minutes	Approximately 3 miles

I believe running is the most versatile, rewarding and challenging activity you can undertake. As well as improving your fitness, controlling weight and enhancing your well-being, you will also experience a tremendous sense of achievement when you complete your first one mile run. What is more, this sensation is repeated with every new milestone you pass!

Contact me if you would like any more information: [dottyallan@hotmail.com](mailto:dottyallan@hotmail.com)