

TOP TEN WAYS TO IMPROVE YOUR LONG RUN

The long run is a key part of your training program, no matter what distance you are training for. 5K runners can benefit as well as marathon runners. The weekly long run is a workout that many look forward to while others dread.

Here are ten tips to make your long runs more enjoyable and more beneficial.

1. **RUN A LOOP** - Running a loop course offers many advantages over an out and back course. A loop course of any distance will work, but one that is between 1 and 2 miles is ideal. A loop around a park works well because there are usually bathrooms available. A loop course will allow you to keep your sports drink hidden at your car or behind a bush or tree. That way you do not have to carry the fluids with you. Running a loop is also safer. You are never a long way from your starting point. With an out and back course, if you become excessively fatigued or if the weather gets bad, you may be as much as 12 miles away from shelter. The loop is also ideal for gradually adding distance. If you have a 2-mile loop, you can add one loop when you are ready to increase your distance.

2. **RUN ON A TREADMILL** – Many runners do some of their long runs on a treadmill. This is especially convenient when training an area that has severe winter conditions. It is much easier to run on the treadmill than to fight icy streets and cold winds. Elevating the treadmill 1 or 2 percent will closely mimic running outside on flat streets. If you are training for a hilly race, but live in a flat area, the treadmill will provide valuable hill work. Put a television in front of your treadmill and watch a movie during your long run. It makes the time fly by.

3. **MAKE YOUR DISTANCE GOAL SPECIFIC** – You should adjust the distance of your long run according to the race distance you are training for. A marathon runner should gradually increase the distance of the long run up to about 22 to 24 miles. It is not necessary to go longer than that. A 5K runner should do about 8 to 10 miles, a 10K runner should go 11 to 13 miles and a half marathoner should work up to about 14 to 17 miles.

4. **RUN SOME MILES AT GOAL PACE** – All long runs are not run at the same pace. Make your pace specific to your goal. If your goal is simply to finish a marathon, your long run pace should remain easy throughout your workout. However, if you have a goal race pace, you must increase to goal pace for a portion of your workout. For the marathon distance run the first half of your workout at an easy pace. Speed up to goal pace for all but the last one or two miles of your run. Then, slow back down to an easy pace for the last mile or two. If you do not run a portion of your long runs at goal pace, you will not be physically or mentally prepared to run that pace in the marathon. Do not run more than half of your long run at goal pace. The same procedure may be followed for half marathon training. When training for a 5K, do a goal pace mile in the middle of your training run or at the end. 10K runners should do 2 miles at goal pace either in the middle or end of the long run.

5. **COUNT THE LONG RUN AS A HARD DAY** – Many runners believe that the long run is an easy day, because most of the workout is performed at an easy pace. The long run is actually a hard day. In many instances it is the hardest workout of the week. Plan on taking the day after a long run off. It is best to rest totally. If you must run, keep the workout after a long run very easy.

6. **RUN ALL YOUR MILES AT THE SAME TIME** – Many fitness professionals are trying to tell us that you get the same benefit from two 30 minute workouts as you get from one 60-minute workout. That is simply not true. The total calorie burn may be equal, but the fitness gains are not. Two 30-minute workouts will not prepare you for 60 minutes of continuous running.

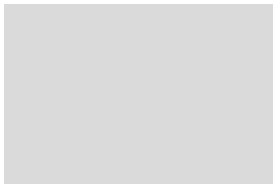
7. **RUN A FAMILIAR ROUTE** – Don't run a route that you are not familiar with when doing your long run. Save the adventures for your shorter runs. You need to have a good idea of the distance you are traveling when doing your long runs. If you want to add some variety and try a new course, try to measure it first with either your car or your bike.

8. **DRINK A LOT OF FLUID** – Dehydration and heat related illnesses are common problems when doing a long run. Drink a lot of fluid to avoid this. It is better to drink a sports drink rather than water. The sports drinks contain both carbohydrates and sodium, which will help your energy

level and the mineral levels in your blood.

9. TAKE A BREAK – If your long runs are 10 miles or less, you can do them every week without risking over training or injury. Long runs of between 11 and 17 miles should only be done every other week. Once you build up to 18 miles or more, you long runs should be done every second or third week. The break between long runs will allow your muscles and connective tissues to heal and will help you avoid burnout.

10. MAKE MILEAGE INCREASES GRADUALLY – Making large increases in mileage is a mistake. Don't increase more than 2 miles per long run. Making bigger jumps in mileage will increase the possibility of injury.



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