

RUNNING TIPS by Adam Walton

The purpose of this plan is to give you some ideas about how to train effectively for the Collingham Crawl & Canter on May 18th. It is based on edited extracts from the Runner's World website (www.runnersworld.co.uk), a useful source of running information e.g. training tips, injury advice, shoe reviews etc .

All running programmes for beginners are the same: they move you from walking, which anyone can do, to running, which anyone can do if they have the determination. The difference between walking and running isn't speed or biomechanics. It's determination. If you have the determination to stick with a simple programme, you'll soon be a runner.

More than a few training programmes – especially the New Year's-resolution variety – are doomed almost before they start. Why? Because the schedules are overly ambitious and complex. Or, in direct contrast, they are completely lacking in a goal. The assumed goal for this plan is that you want to be able to **enjoy** getting around the 3 mile course on May 18th. It's important that you ask yourself: *what's realistic for me?*

The suggested training plan we have provided is based on running 3 times per week over a 14 week period starting 10th Feb. The sessions don't have to be completed on the suggested days, fit them around your schedule but try to allow a rest day between each session.

(Before any new exercise programme you should seek the appropriate medical advice to ensure that you can safely complete the plan.)

1 Build Up Slowly

This might be your first try at running, or a return visit, or an attempt to improve on what you already do. The less running you've done recently, the more you can expect to improve your distances and speeds. On the other hand, the less you've run lately, the more likely you are to hurt yourself by doing too much, too soon. That's why it's so important to set two related goals as you start or restart your running programme – to maximise improvements, and to minimise injuries. You win by improving. You lose by getting hurt.

2 Buy the right shoes

Shoes are the biggest equipment expense for runners, so it's important to get this right. Spend wisely by buying well-made shoes from a serious brand. Search out a model that fits you properly, and is designed for your running gait (a podiatrist or specialist running shop [not JJB Sports or similar!] can quickly tell you which of the major types of shoes is most likely to keep you injury-free). After you buy your shoes, remember that even the best have a limited lifespan. Plan to replace them after about 350-500 miles of wear.

3 Make a plan

The two basic raw materials for a running routine are time and space. And the two main reasons given by those who don't run? 'I don't have time for it', and, 'I don't have anywhere to do it'. Let's dissect those excuses. You can run well and get in great shape with as little as a 30-minute session every other day. Think of it as the time you won't waste by watching TV. As for finding places to run, anywhere that's safe for walking is also fine for running. Off-road routes (parks, bike paths, playing fields) are better than busy streets, and soft surfaces (grass and dirt) are better than

paved ones, but any choice is better than staying at home. Map out the best courses in your immediate neighbourhood. That saves time, solves the 'place' issue and makes it much more likely that you'll actually do your planned runs.

4 Find your pace

We've told you to make it easy and comfortable, which sounds simple. The problem is that most novice runners don't know what a comfortable pace feels like, so they push too hard. As a result, they get overly fatigued and discouraged, or even injured. Here are some more guidelines. Listen to your breathing, if you aren't gasping for air, and you can talk while you're running, your pace is about right.

5 Remember to warm up and cool down

Don't confuse a little stretching with a good warm-up. Stretching exercises generally don't make you sweat or raise your heart rate, which is what you really want from a warm-up. A proper warm-up begins with walking or running very slowly to ease your body into the session. Try walking briskly for five minutes (about a quarter of a mile), and then break into your comfortable running pace. (Don't count the warm-up as part of your run time or distance.) When you finish your run, resist the urge to stop. Instead, walk another five minutes to cool down more gradually. After this is the best time for stretching – when your muscles are warm and ready to be stretched a little.

6 Don't hesitate to walk

Walk is not a four-letter word for runners. Pausing to walk during a run is not a form of cheating, but a common practice among experienced runners. It is a form of interval training that breaks a big piece of work into smaller pieces, making it more manageable. Mix running and walking in these cases: when you're starting to run for the first time; to regain fitness after a long lay-off, injury or illness; to warm up before a run, and to cool down afterwards; to make your fast running faster, which is the classic use in interval training; to make long runs longer; and to make easy runs easier. You'll find that walk breaks work best when you walk for at least one minute but no longer than five minutes.

7 Run safely at all times

The biggest threat you'll face as a runner on the road, by far, is the car. Traffic zips past you. A moment's lapse in attention from either you or the driver can bring disaster, and you'll be the one to suffer – not them. The best way to lower this risk is to avoid running near roads. But for many of us, this is a near impossibility, or it's an approach that adds time and complexity to our routine (if we have to drive to a park, for example). So most of us just learn to be extremely cautious on the roads. Try to find quiet roads with wide pavements; run on the right side of the road, facing traffic; wear bright reflective clothing in the dusk or dark; obey traffic signs and signals; and follow every road rule your parents taught you. Run as if every car is a lethal weapon.

8 Use pain as your guide

Runners get hurt. We rarely hurt ourselves as seriously as skiers or rugby players, but injuries do happen. Most are musculoskeletal, meaning that we recover rapidly when we take days off or other appropriate action (like ice treatment). And most are self-inflicted – we bring them on by running too far, too fast, too soon or too often. Prevention is often as simple as a change of routine. If you can't run steadily without pain, mix walking and running. If you can't run-walk, simply walk. If you can't walk, cycle. If you can't cycle, swim. As you recover, climb back up this fitness ladder.

9 Pay attention to your form

Running form is as individual as a fingerprint and is too inborn to change very much.

But, with practice, you can improve your efficiency. Run upright, not with a pronounced forward lean. Look toward the horizon, not at your feet. Run faster by increasing your stride turnover, not by overreaching with each stride. On uphill, shorten your stride and drive more with the arms. Try to maintain even effort, not pace. When running downhill, let gravity work for you by leaning forward slightly.

10 Eat and drink the right foods

Sports nutrition is a big topic. But, in general, the rules for good nutrition and fluid consumption are the same for runners as for everyone else. Three areas of special interest to runners: (1) control your weight, as extra pounds will slow you down; (2) eat lightly after training and racing; (3) drink 250-500ml of water or energy drink an hour before running, as dehydration can be dangerous.

11 Stretching and strengthening

Running is a specialised activity, working mainly the legs. If you're seeking total-body fitness, you need to supplement your running with other exercises. These should aim to strengthen the muscles that running neglects, and stretch those that running tightens, which means strengthening the upper body and stretching the legs. Add a few minutes of strengthening and stretching after your runs, because that's when these exercises tend to do the most good.

12 Follow the hard day/easy day training system

Most runs need to be easy. This is true whether you're a beginner or an elite athlete. (Of course, the definition of easy varies hugely; an easy mile for an elite runner would be impossible for many beginners or even experienced runners.) As a new runner, make sure you limit yourself to one hard day a week. Run longer and slower than normal, or shorter and faster than normal, or enter a short (5K) race and maintain your best pace for the entire distance.

13 Congratulate yourself

One of the great beauties of running is that it gives everyone a chance to win. Winning isn't automatic; you still have to work for success and risk failure. But in running, unlike in other sports, there's no need to beat an opponent or an arbitrary standard (such as 'par' in golf). Runners measure themselves against their own standards. When you improve a time or increase a distance, or set a personal best in a race, you win – no matter what anyone else has done on the same day. You can win even more simply by keeping at it for the long haul, for years and decades. You don't have to run very far or fast to outrun people who have dropped out. It's the Tortoise and the Hare all over again. **Patience and persistence always prevails in the end.**