RUN FOR LIFE.COM
"I'M A RUNNER!"

HELPING KIDS GET STARTED

OK, so here's the question: "I've got a daughter/ son who is age (10 to 19). How can I encourage her/ him to get into a running program?"

Well, as all parents know or soon will know, kids of these ages don't always respond well to "encouragement" from their parents. But with that disclaimer we'll offer some suggestions:

1. Give it a try. You'll never know unless you do. As like me, it might turn out to your best sport. As a kid I was never fast. In fact I was slow. After giving cross country a try, what I learned was being slow for a short distance doesn't necessarily mean you're slow for longer distances.
2. For kids getting started the coach is really important……let's say everything. Most coaches are really great people who are doing their best for these young kids. A few might overemphasize competitive results. Of course learning what it takes to succeed at any endeavor is part of the positive experience. Competition: YES. Burn out: NO. There is a difference between enjoying school age competition and going to extremes. Simply stated it's all about LIFE LONG RUNNING.

AGE 10 TO 14

There is a huge difference between kids age 10 or younger and age 19. At 10 their legs are short and it may take as many as two steps to go the distance of an adult. At age 19 they're nearly an adult in physical terms (if not mental or emotional).

At age 10 to about 14 there are two great ways for a child to begin what we hope will be a life long journey. The best may be to run with mom and/ or dad. Get them fitted with good shoes, lace them up and have at it. There are obvious training difference between a young child and experienced competitors, mom and dad. Do a short loop all together and drop off the aspiring runner at home and then go finish the workout. Hey, the short loop is a great warmup.

The second way is to join a local junior's running club. Most cities have them and they are usually staffed with great coaches.

AGE 15 TO 19

At age 15 to 19 a child's friends become very important in their ultimate choices…for good and for bad. For young runners this process works two ways. Friends may encourage them to get into running. But once there they will find mostly the type of influences we parents would want our kids to have.

At these ages, kids need an organized program such as exist at most high school cross country teams. I've seen them close-up. These programs and their influences are great for kids at these formative ages. At these ages, kids need an organized program such as exist at most high school cross country teams. I've seen them close-up. These programs and their influences are great for kids at these formative ages.

Kids of this age will benefit from an organized program such as exist at most high school cross country teams. I've seen them close-up. The positive influences provided can have lasting consequences for the better.

HERE IS ONE EXAMPLE OF HOW A HIGH SCHOOL COACH MOTIVATES HIS STUDENT ATHLETES:

"I hope you are enjoying your summer: reading, running, relaxing, running, resting, running and spending time with your family. As we begin the new season and start our workouts, I want to let you know what is going on with our team.

First a few random thoughts:

- Summer is an excellent time to prepare for our season. There is no pressure; plenty of time to relax and recover if necessary.
- We had a tremendous year last year and the prospect of another outstanding year is at hand.
- We lost 3 good runners to graduation. Everybody loses someone, every year.
- We have an outstanding group of runners coming back.
- Our philosophy is to build strength, speed and endurance from a base of gradual increases in training and proper mechanics.
- Every athlete is important to us.
- We compete to challenge ourselves against the clock and the courses we run.
- Working together and running together, we can achieve our goals through hard work and enjoy the experiences.

It isn't hard to conclude this coach has been successful developing good runners but also laying a base for life long running."

RUN FOR LIFE.COM
"I'M A RUNNER!"

CUB SCOUTS RUN

The following is a description of a Cub Scout running program and how it got started. I received this by asking if the leader would send me a summary of how the program began.

This is a great example of how we can help anyone, at any age, to begin and especially how we can "Help Kids Get Started". Thank you John for this great input.

"I have recently accepted the role of Cub Master for Pack 23 in Funkstown, MD. I've been running for a few years and my son recently got involved with running. Neither of us are particularly competitive. I spend a lot of my running time trying to catch up to him (he's 12). But when not entered in a race, he usually humors me and runs at my pace. Anyway, I have seen the benefits of running and how much other kids enjoy it, so I approached the director of the summer camp that our Pack attends to inquire about a running activity for the boys (you can find more information at mason-dixon-bsa.org under Camp Sinoquipe). He said it was a good idea and I was now in charge of the event.

The scouts has (or had) a program called 'run for life' and that's what we decided to call our event. We incorporated this activity with a Polar Bear plunge, where the boys would get up out of their sleeping bags early in the morning and go jump in the lake before breakfast. I scheduled the run before the plunge and we saw an increase in plunge participants. Our goal was to offer the boys some extra activities that weren't mandatory, but instead would give them the option of rising early to benefit their health.

I am in the process of developing a patch for the boys to earn for attending 3 events and a shirt for attending 6 events. Maybe jackets would be in order at some point too. Our council has a hike club and we meet immediately after the hikes. So I think we can expand our running club into the whole council instead of just one Pack. This would possibly reach 2300 boys instead of the 60+ that we currently have involved."

- Cub Master John

QUESTIONS RECEIVED FROM BEGINNERS AND OUR REPLIES:

HELLO. MY NAME IS CONNIE IN FLORIDA.

I started running about 3 years ago. I do mostly 5k races and a couple of 1/2 marathons. My problem is I cannot seem to get faster at my 5ks. I usually run alone and I have two jobs so getting the time to train is hard. I do run at least 5 km daily and hit the gym. My neighborhood is not too safe to run in the dark, so most of my running is at the gym or sometimes trail runs. I want to do the LA marathon in March so I need help. My ultimate goal is to run one of those awesome 100 endurance races. I'd appreciate any advice that might help me. My finances are very limited so I don't have running stuff like a timing wrist watch or even the best shoes. But I make do with what I have.

REPLY:

Hello Connie. I have read your e-mail several times and it seems there are several questions contained in one e-mail.

First, please understand I am not an experienced coach and not trained in sports medicine. Rather I'm just one old guy who has dealt with many of the questions you have sent us.

Let's start with the most important points: First, you must have a safe place to run. And second, I believe you should have good shoes properly fitted. You mentioned you run alone. It would be nice if you could find other runners to join you as often as possible. That would help you find safe places to run. The other point is about shoes. I have found most running stores have last year's models on sale, often at 50% off or so. They are usually good quality but maybe limited in size selections

You also mentioned you don't have a watch. Generally speaking a watch is not necessary but may be helpful if improving your times becomes important to you. I never run by what the

watch says. I only record the results to see how I'm running over a longer period of time. Some days I feel fresh and run faster; some days I feel very tired and my running pace is slow. The watch only records what I already know.

You said you wanted to run faster 5ks and also a marathon in March. I have found these to be very different objectives, maybe as different as running and biking. To run faster 5ks you need some volume of training but mostly you need train you body to run faster. During your runs you could accelerate for 100 meters or so; followed by a slow jog; followed by an acceleration etc. Another way is to run a measured distance of 1/4 mile; 1/2 mile or even 1 mile repeatedly at the pace you want to run your 5k or slightly faster. Here a watch would be helpful.

The marathon is mostly about training miles (and miles and miles and miles). The more you can log the better. I'm not a marathon runner. Based on my substantial half marathon experience, I believe it's necessary to have a good base of at least 50 miles per week with one run each week as close to 20 miles as possible. I'm very happy to say I do not run marathons. The human body may be designed to run but not for 26.2 miles continuously unless it is highly trained.

Finally, you mentioned work/ life/ running compromises and balances. If there is any way you can incorporate running into your life on a consistent basis and at a manageable level, you should be rewarded with improved health both physical and mental.

HELLO. MY NAME IS NIRAV IN INDIA.
My son is 11 years old and he wants me to help him train for long distance running. He has never been good at team sports such as soccer and basketball due to coordination issues. But now he really wants to excel in some sporting activity. He always has been good at in-line skating. His frame is lanky and has long legs. Please advise how I can help him train. We live close to the beach and I have been taking him for a jog a couple of time per week.

REPLY:
Hello Nirav. I hope my response to your question is helpful.

On the issue of coordination, I know from experience good coordination is not required to be a good distance runner, at least in the sense of good hand-eye or foot-eye coordination. I have several friends who are very good distance runners but rather poor golfers, for example.

I see very good young runners at most races. We have one nearby 5 km race each February that attracts many good young runners. Last year, Age 9 and under had 27 boys (best time 23:04)

and 17 girls (best time 26:56). Age 10 to 12 had 51 boys (best time 19:15) and 34 girls (best time 22:15). Age 13 to 15 had 66 boys (best time 16:37) and 60 girls (best time 18:50).

There are two ways kids of these ages learn to run. First, they are members of their school teams. There they receive good coaching, appropriate for their ages. Second, they run with one or both of their parents. At age 11 kids generally welcome help from their parents. Later they may be less so inclined.

Age 11 is early to begin competitive running but not too early if done carefully. Please remember we are promoting life-long running. Early competitive running can lead to positive experiences. By running in high school and college I received many benefits, especially in college where I got some financial help. I also learned the rewards for hard work.

Regarding your questions I suggest you do some research. Does his current school have a distance running program? Does the next age level school have a program? Does the 16 to 18 age school have a program? If any of these schools have a program, they will be very helpful in telling you how to get him involved. From my experience, these school programs willingly take everyone who wants to join regardless of their ability. Running is an all inclusive sport. And generally, they have wonderfully caring coaches.

Another suggestion is to visit a nearby college or university, if there is one nearby. Seeing these older kids compete against other schools can be very motivational.

I believe joining a school running program is the best way to learn how to run.

You can certainly run with your son. Indeed it will be good for both of you. But having the help of trained coaches experienced with his age level would be very helpful even if he runs mostly with you for now.

If there are no school programs another option is a local running club. Included in these clubs are many beginning runners and they will surely be helpful in getting you and your son started correctly. They always welcome runners of all ages and all abilities.
Our website has many articles suggesting various training and competitive racing plans. A young man of 11 will need some help but with good motivation he will soon learn what his capabilities might be. It can be a wonderful sport….a life-long sport.