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"I'M A RUNNER!"

TRAINING

TRAINING FOR FITNESS MADE SIMPLE

The most important element in fitness improvement is consistency. Train at a comfortable speed about one hour per day most days. Use good shoes; run on good surfaces; keep to safe places; when available run with good friends. Training for fitness should not be made unduly complicated. Lace up the shoes and get out the door on a regular basis.

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When you are adding miles to each week, my single best advice is to ask yourself this question. Am I building up? Or am I breaking down? If you are building up keep the pressure on. But if you are breaking down, simply cut back and come back.

Mileage levels can be divided into 3 categories: A base of about 35 miles (56 km) per week should let most people complete races up to 13.1 miles (21.1 km) 1/2 marathon. Increasing that base to about 50 miles (80 km) per week will have competitive benefits especially in the later phases of a race. Mileage above 50 miles (80 km) per week is better left to elites with coaches and other unique competitors.

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The proper training pace is about 60 seconds per mile slower than your race goals. Said differently, your race goals should be about 1 minute less than your average training pace.

Speed work and other fast running is most beneficial at shorter target race distances such as 5 and 10 km. It is important at all distances because it helps runners learn pacing and relaxation with good leg turn over. But be very careful. Speed work can cause injury and muscle pulls can happen very quickly without warning.

Remember, the overriding goal is to bring your best prepared body to the starting line. By definition that means avoiding injury.

MORE ON TRAINING FOR MAXIMUM RESULTS

To give this section some context, readers should understand the author is an old man born in 1938. Much of this should apply to runners of all ages and all ability levels as long as they're serious about the sport. Some points may not. Every runner is a unique biomechanical machine. Each person will have to learn what works best for themselves. There are no absolutes and no shortcuts.

1. Develop an annual race plan. Decide which races you will target each year and train achieve your best against that plan. While I may run up to 8 races per year, my plan has only two or three "Serious Targets". It takes me about 10 weeks of training to achieve my best results. And that's beginning with a base of 30 to 35 miles (50 to 55 km) per week. If you race during that training period, do so only to improve your training. Race for training. Don't train by racing. Said another way, almost all races should have a purpose within the context of an annual race plan. Or said yet another way, DON'T OVER-RACE. One final point on "training" races: I usually run these using negative splits or running each mile at an increasingly faster pace with the race average being somewhat slow.

2. Train for the event you intend to run. Proper training is different depending on the race distance. My experience says there are three different race distances: 5k; 15k to 1/2 M; and the full marathon. The difference is not so much mileage required where a good base is helpful at any distance, rather it's the amount of speed work. To run my best 5k, I need one or even two days of solid intervals each week. For the 1/2 M I need almost none. (Note: 10k can be considered either a long 5k or short 15k. Adjust speed work accordingly).

3. Now, let's discuss the best race distance to use as your target. I believe that is 15 to 21.1 km or 9.3 to 13.1 miles. Why do I believe that? If your target is that distance range you must have a good fitness level or it will be very difficult to run successfully. Therefore, by training to run that distance you will have met the real reason to run….being fit. If you choose targeting a 5 km distance, you will not be forced to be all that fit. Many, if not most people running 5 km are not particularly fit. If you choose to target the marathon, the training levels are such it will be difficult to run consistently year round. And finally, being well trained for races of 15 to 21.1 km will permit you to race any distance with minor changes.

4. I train best by building up every day vs. the suggested long runs, days off and cross training. My favored plan is to work up to a 12-8-10 mile (19-13-16 km) sequence three days in a row. I add one day of track work mostly to get the target pace beat into my brain. My mileage goal is a trailing 10 week average of about 50 miles (80 km) per week just before beginning the taper. I try to get several weeks at the training peak of 60+ miles (96+ km). In the aftermath of Hurricane Wilma which caused significant damage in SW Florida, I experimented with the training approach best described as "reducing quantity but maintaining quality". It didn't work for me. Unfortunately, there are no shortcuts to logging the distance.

5. Ok, what is the difference between a training schedule which logs about 35 miles (56 km) per week vs. one which averages closer to 50 (80)? The answer (for me) is maybe 3 to 5% with longer distances, harder courses

and tougher weather conditions all adding to longer race times. Now that might not seem like much but it's about 3 to 4 minutes in a 10 mile race. Unfortunately, there's a whole lot of people crossing that finish line in that 3 to 4 minutes. Now for the "running techno-geek" here's actual data from several years of running one half marathon on the same certified course. Average miles per week for ten weeks prior to the taper:

Avg. Miles	Avg. km	% WAVA	Adj. Time	Adj. Pace
56.4	90.2	80.3	1:14:18	5:40
51.4	82.2	79.6	1:14:55	5:43
48.4	77.4	78.7	1:15:50	5:47
46.3	74.1	78.3	1:16:11	5:49
42.4	67.8	76.2	1:18:28	5:59
32.4	51.8	73.4	1:21:14	6:12

Now you know!

6. Train as much as possible on dirt. I can get 30-40% more miles without overuse injuries.

7. Train slow and easy about 45 to 60 sec slower than the race goal. Long slow builds up while short fast breaks down.

8. Do not train on concrete or any surface that is sloped side to side.

9. Some discomfort and soreness comes with hard training. I follow this rule: if it gets better as I run it's PROBABLY ok to continue. If it gets worse it's almost certainly not ok.

10. If the race will have hills, you need to train on hills. I add these in the last weeks before the taper. Hill work can really beat you up so be careful with the amount. You need to train going up but also train going down. The up part builds those muscles but the down part is necessary for good technique.

11. I do not try to stay in peak racing condition the entire year. I can't stand it either physically or mentally. I have two primary racing periods: mid-January to March 1st and one race the first Sunday in October. Thus, my all-out training periods are November and December as well as July to September 15. The rest of the year I try to maintain a base of about 35 miles (56 km) per week and I am not afraid to take a day off here and there. Come serious time it's 7 days, no excuses.

12. Now having said "no excuses", I do not add mileage and hard workouts without passing this simple test: am I building up or breaking down? I've run long enough to have done both several times so I know the difference. If I'm breaking down I cut back for a day or two. If I'm building up, I keep the pressure on.

13. For training runs I do very little stretching and never before warming up. I begin training runs very easy and with some side to side strides and let the run "come to me". Before faster pace work (and races) and after a good warm up, I do some stretches but never risking a stretching injury. Regarding stretching, I

recently read a summary which had some points worth considering. It reiterated stretching can cause injury. It also, said there are two types of stretching: dynamic and static. This article advocated using dynamic stretching at the beginning of a run and static stretching only when the runner is warmed up completely.

14. Now, in my late 70s of old age, actually I begin every run with a walk of about ½ mile or 800 meters. I have found this very light warm-up helps avoid muscle-tendon injuries.

15. I don't do marathons. While I believe my peak training is not so far from what would be required to run the full marathon, I do not race that distance. I can't imagine (or maybe I can) the beating from racing for 3 hours, 4 hours or more. I take the advice I once read: "if you want to be in the best shape, train for a marathon but don't run it". Now having said that there is a guide specifically devoted to the full marathon.

Running Shoes, Socks, Tops, Shorts, Tights, Gloves, Cap etc.:

Be sure to have proper shoes. Buy them at specialty running stores where you can be fitted properly. Actually, they have or can get all the items needed to run safely and comfortably.