

Coaching Tips for New Runners and Walkers

What to Wear?

One of the best things about running is that it does not cost much. All you need is a good pair of shoes and some suitable clothing.

Choosing a Running Shoe

- Choose a shoe that is made specifically for running. It does not need to be the most expensive shoe available.
- Purchase your shoe from a [running specialty retailer](#) where knowledgeable staff ensures you get the right shoes for your feet and running style. The sales person will analyze your gait and in-step to make sure that the recommended shoes will provide the needed support and fit to ward off discomfort and injury.
- Try on several different brands. Different people have different feet and needs.
- Test run the shoes at the store, and compare them with other brands. Be aware of the store's return policy when you purchase the shoes.
- Don't pick a shoe based on the look; Pick a shoe based on the fit. Pretty is not always comfortable.
- Replace your shoes every 300-500 miles to keep yourself from getting hurt and keep your feet, back and body in working order.

Clothing

Clothing choice depends more on your own personal needs. Remember the importance of weather appropriate clothing. Also, make sure that your clothing is breathable. Cotton clothing (including socks) often causes discomfort and chaffing. A warm-up suit does not do a very good job of letting air in or out. Here are some tips on what to wear:

Cold Weather Running

The onset of winter needn't bring a seasonal halt to a runner's enthusiasm or routines. Outdoor exercise in the winter can be a pleasurable experience. The major risk posed by running in subfreezing air is frostbite and minor irritations to the respiratory tract. With some minor precautions these risks can be eliminated.

Wear clothing in layers so that warm air can be trapped between the layers. Depending on the weather conditions, two to four layers on the trunk and one to two layers on the legs are appropriate. It is helpful if the outer layers have vents and zippers to allow excess heat to escape as you become warm. On windy days the outer layer should be of wind resistant material.

Clothing made of material, which carries the sweat away from the body, is best, like wool, silk, or "space age" synthetics like polypropylene or polyester. Avoid cotton as it tends to hold the sweat.

Hat and gloves are crucial as these regions of the body have a substantial role in the regulation of body temperature. Mittens tend to be warmer than gloves. On very cold days mittens worn over gloves are very effective. Stocking caps or ski masks are desirable. On very windy days goggles or eye glasses can provide additional protection. The outer layer should be light-colored and have reflective material if you are running during darker hours. Reflective material works only if there is a light source. Blaze orange becomes poorly visible brown at night. Light-colored material is visible even without a strong light source. During snowy days dark colors provide visible contrast and attract solar energy.

Avoid overdressing. Feel a bit underdressed and chilly as you start, knowing that later as you

run in your layered environment the temperature will rise about 20 degrees.

Warm Weather Running

Running in the heat can be dangerous if the proper precautions and preparations are not followed. Make sure to follow the [RRCA recommendations for running in a hot environment](#)

Wear breathable clothing that will keep you cool and wick away the sweat.

- **Do** wear light-colored breathable clothing that allows you to be visible to others.
- **Do not** wear long sleeves, long pants or sweatsuits. Purposefully running in sweatsuits on hot days to lose water weight is dangerous!

Wear a hat to avoid having the sun on your face. You might also want to wear sunglasses as extra protection for your eyes.

Make sure to wear sunscreen, even when protected by hats and clothes. Wear or carry some sort of water bottle or water storage sack in order to maintain hydration in the heat and/or on long runs.

Staying Safe

Safety is one of the most important things to focus on when running. Review all of the [RRCA safety tips](#).

Taking the First Steps

When you first start running you might not be able to run that far or for too long without taking a break to walk a bit. Don't let that discourage you! The more you run, the better you get. So how do you get started?

Find a Running Club

The great thing about running is you can almost always find someone to run with and somewhere to run. The RRCA maintains a [database of clubs](#) around the country. Many local running clubs offer beginning running programs that teach you the beginning fundamentals of running as both a sport and a habit.

If running with a group seems intimidating consider working with a running coach one on one until you feel more confident in your running endurance to join a group. Learn more about [finding a coach](#).

Start with the Run/Walk Method

Now that you have the support to get you going, you need to make sure you don't overdo it when you first set out. You should start out with an initial goal that gives you something to look forward to and something you can accomplish.

Is there an upcoming 5k race that you might want to run by yourself or with friends/family?

Running a 5k is a great goal for a new runner. You should plan to build up your running for 10-15 weeks before running the 5k. Remember, you want to give yourself enough time to build a base of miles so that you don't risk injury. [Find an event](#). If you have not been running it is discouraged to go "from couch to marathon". Instead be realistic and build up from "couch to 5K" then progress to a 10 K or 10 mile event followed by a half marathon then determine if you are ready to tackle the marathon distance. By building up to the marathon distance over the course of a year or more will help ensure a more positive experience, reduce your chance of injury, and will help establish running as a lifestyle as opposed to being a one-off goal.

The best way to build your base if you are not in the best of shape or have not incorporated any running into your life in a while is to use the run/walk method. If you have not run in years, start with walking and continue the activity until you can walk for ten to twenty minutes consistently. Then switch between running and walking. This method allows you to run for a bit and then walk for a bit and then repeat. You might only get in a few minutes of running the first few times, but don't let that get you down. It takes time to build up.

You should not run more than three to four days per week (including a long run, which may only be one mile at first) when you first start out. You should not be working out everyday since your body needs at least one to two days to recover. Building up to be able to run a 5k or more is a journey not an immediate activity.

When you structure your workout, you need to include your warm-up, which might include walking a bit just to loosen up. However, as your running progresses you'll probably just start off by running a bit slower than your normal pace to make sure you don't injure yourself by going too hard too soon. Your warm-up will be followed by your run. When you finish your run, remember you still need to cool down and stretch before you can call it a day. Cooling down should consist of slowing your run to an eventual walk so that you can get your heart rate back down to below 100 bpm. You don't want to just stop running and sit down because your body needs to be eased out of an exercise state.

Train, don't strain

You do not have to work "all out" to benefit from running. In fact, doing may bring your running to a quick end. Getting in shape is not effortless, but it shouldn't be exhausting either. Here's how you can train, not strain:

- Take the "talk test". Runners should be able to talk (but not sing or whistle) while running at training pace. When running faster, such as during a race or a speed session, talking should be an effort but you should not be totally winded.
- Walk when needed. Many beginners feel that walking is "giving up". Not so! Remind them that the key is to keep moving, even if you walk 90% of the time at first. Consistency is much, much more important than intensity.
- Take water breaks. Especially in the summer, but all year long, it's vital to stay hydrated before, during and after running workouts.
- Take a day off when needed. Beginners should NOT run every day. Every other day (three or four runs a week) is plenty. A day off gives muscles a chance to rest, and encourages runners to try other activities to keep their program varied and interesting.
- Don't give up.