

Whether you are thinking of taking on a marathon or starting with a 10km challenge training is the key. The more you prepare for your event the more you will get out of it. Lets hope the top tips below will help you reach your goal:

Keep a Running Journal. The best way to know where you're going with your training is to see where you've been. Keeping a personal journal of your runs helps you track your progress, avoid past pitfalls and even inspire you to new accomplishments. Your journal can be as simple as a few dashed notes of the distance and time you ran each day, or more detailed with lengthier entries about your route, the way you feel, and the stuff you thought about on the run.

Fun with Fartlek. As fun to run as it is to say, a fartlek workout is a kind of informal interval session and a great way to incorporate speedwork into your routine when you want a change from the track. "Fartlek" is Swedish for "speed play" and consists of bursts of speed in the middle of a training run. After warming up, run at an easy training pace, throwing in bursts of speed for various distances throughout the run. Vary the speed and times of the speed sections, from as short as 15 seconds to as long as two or three minutes. Between these bursts, allow yourself enough recovery time to match roughly 2/3 of the effort time. The recovery pace, though, should be faster than the recovery jog you might do during intervals on the track; keep it moving at an easy training pace.

On the Surface. Treat your feet by avoiding rock-hard surfaces like concrete sidewalks; aim instead for grass or dirt trails. Find surfaces where the ground will absorb more shock, instead of passing it along to your legs, but try to be consistent. A sudden change to a new running surface can itself be a cause of injury.

RICE Is the Key Ingredient. Most running injuries respond well to the "RICE" treatment: Rest, Ice, Compression, and Elevation. Ice the trouble spot for ten minutes on, then ten minutes off, repeating as necessary. You should ice as soon as possible after you have been injured, and immediately after a run if you are running with an injury. Combined with compression (with a cold pack, for example) and elevation, icing goes far to reduce pain and swelling. Heat should only be applied to an injury after the inflammation is gone, probably after about 72 hours. If your swelling has gone down quite a bit, but there's still a little bit of inflammation, try alternating heat and ice after a few days of ice-only treatment.

The Runner's Recovery. Returning to running after a brief layoff? A general rule of thumb is that it takes about two weeks of "retraining" to come back from every week in which you do no exercise. Go easy on yourself during this period. Don't let your ego convince you that you should immediately be able to run as you did before. If you've been off the roads for only a week or two, start at about half the distance you were running before the injury. You should be able to build back to your former level in two to four weeks.

Ditch the Stitch. Every runner has experienced the dreaded side stitch, a sudden sharp pain in the side of the upper abdomen at the base of the ribs. The pain is caused by a spasm of the diaphragm, the muscle that controls your breathing. A stitch will usually go away quickly after slowing down or stopping, but even on the run, you can often make it go away by bringing your breathing into careful control. Concentrate on belly breathing, pushing your belly out when you breathe in and relaxing it as you breathe out. Take deep breaths on the intake, and exhale suddenly, even noisily. To get the diaphragm to contract in rhythm with your steps, try to inhale and exhale as you land on your left foot.

Nighttime running. When running at night always wear reflective clothing. You should also run facing traffic so that you can react if a motorist comes close. Try to stay off of busy streets and never assume that the motorist can see you.

Boring is good. Get into a routine. Like anything else, a running program is easier if it becomes routine. Set aside a certain time each day that is designated as your running time.

Expect some soreness. You may experience some soreness. This is normal. However, if you experience sharp pain it is best to stop and see a coach or doctor before continuing your training program.

Hills are your friends. Incorporating hillwork into your weekly training will help strengthen your legs and ankles. If you live in an area without hills, consider using a treadmill or stadium stairs to simulate uphill running

Don't Break the Speed Limit. Weekly speedwork should be between 5 and 10-percent of your weekly mileage. For example if you are running 25 miles per week, you should not exceed 2.5 miles of speedwork. When using this formula, factor in all high intensity runs for the week as speedwork.

Too much, too soon. Don't over do it! This is the classic mistake made by most new runners. Stick to a progressive schedule, even if it seems a bit easy at first.

Run with company. Find a running partner. Running is easier when done with a friend.

Smart recovery. Use your days off wisely. These days are meant for recovery, therefore it is important to spread them out. If your schedule calls for two off days, don't take them on consecutive days -- spread them out.

Warming Up. Stretching is important, but never stretch cold muscles. Before you begin your stretching routine jog lightly to warm-up your muscles