

READY TO RUN?

You're ready to start working out. But courts, balls, rackets and weights just aren't your style. How about running? Running is one of the most effective, time-efficient workouts around, but if you get off on the wrong foot, it's hard to stay motivated and it can be easy to get discouraged. Starting and sticking with a running program doesn't have to be difficult. It's simply a matter of doing the right things at the right time.

Step by Step

First things first: Consult with your doctor to determine whether running is appropriate for you. Individuals who should probably bypass running in favor of walking include those with orthopedic or heart problems, or those who are currently considered obese.

Nothing can derail a running program faster than sore feet or knee pain. Though they often carry a hefty price tag, properly fitting running shoes can help prevent shin splints, blisters, sore muscles and sore joints. Look for light-weight shoes that breathe well and offer good arch and ankle support. You may need to consider visiting a running store or talking to a qualified professional about choosing the right footwear for your foot.

Aside from comfortable clothing, little else is required. Once you're suited up, simply head out your front door or take a drive to a nearby park. Grass, running tracks or dirt surfaces are more forgiving on your joints than asphalt and concrete. If you run on trails, be aware of loose rocks, crevices and tree roots that could twist your ankle. Above all—safety first! Be sure to run where it is safe, well lit and out of the way of traffic.

Get in Motion

Running may seem like a natural motion. Everyone has their own style, but there are a few things you can do to run more efficiently and comfortably:

- **Squeeze**—Bend your elbows to about 90 degrees and squeeze them to your sides while keeping your hands relaxed. Keep that bend in your elbows as you run and avoid twisting your upper body or driving your arms across your body.
- **Drive**—Drive your arms from the shoulders and not from the elbows. This will increase

Week	Time*	Intensity†
1	20 minutes	Moderate-pace walk
2	22 minutes	Moderate-to-brisk pace walk
3	22 minutes	30–45 sec jog, 5 min walk (repeat 3x)
4	24 minutes	45–60 sec jog, 5 min walk (repeat 3x)
5	24 minutes	30–45 sec jog, 4 min walk (repeat 4x)
6	26 minutes	45–60 sec jog, 4 min walk (repeat 4x)
7	26 minutes	30–45 sec jog, 3 min walk (repeat 5x)
8	28 minutes	45–60 sec jog, 3 min walk (repeat 5x)
9	28 minutes	30–45 sec jog, 2 min walk (repeat 6x)
10	30 minutes	45–60 sec jog, 2 min walk (repeat 6x)
11	30 minutes	2 min jog, 1 min walk (repeat 6x)
12+	30 minutes	Gradually progress to continuous jogging

* Total time includes 3-minute warm-up and 3-minute cool-down

† Individuals who are in good shape may progress at a faster rate by increasing time and intensity simultaneously, while those who are less fit may opt to progress more gradually.

your power and running efficiency. Keep your shoulders down and relaxed.

- **Lift**—Lean forward slightly from the ankles, not from the waist. Attempt to lift your knees a little higher as they swing forward.
- Keep your head level and avoid excessive bouncing as you run.
- Strike the ground first with your heel, and then roll toward the ball of the foot, pushing off with the front of your foot.

F.I.T.T.e. Tip

Frequency, intensity, time, type and enjoyment (FITTe) are the elements that you need to put together an effective beginning running program. The best way to halt a running program in its tracks is to do too much too soon. A minimum of 20 to 30 minutes, three days per week (with days off in between) at an intensity of 50 to 85% of maximal effort is the standard recommendation, but should be manipulated to suit individual needs or goals. Here are a few more things to keep in mind:

- Take time to warm up and cool down.
- Spend additional time stretching after your

cool-down to minimize injury and muscle soreness.

- Select an intensity at which conversing continuously out loud for 30 seconds proves challenging, but not too difficult.
 - Listen to your body. Reduce your intensity, duration and/or exercise frequency when experiencing muscle soreness.
 - Follow a strength-training program on alternate days to balance your training program.
 - Increase mileage by no more than 10% per week.

Like any activity, running isn't for everybody. If you don't enjoy it, don't do it. But if you do, take your time, progress slowly and allow your muscles to adapt to the rigors of running.

The accompanying table offers a sample program for those who are less fit, and may be adapted for those who have been exercising aerobically for some time.

Additional Resources

Runner's World—The Very First Step: www.runnersworld.com/article/0,7120,s6-243-297--12836-0,00.html

Cool Running—The Couch-to-5K Running Program: www.coolrunning.com/engine/2/2_3/181.shtm

If you are interested in information on other health and fitness topics, contact: American Council on Exercise, 4851 Paramount Drive, San Diego, CA 92123, 800-825-3636; or, go online at www.acefitness.org/GetFit and access the complete list of ACE Fit Facts™



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