Here Are a Few Key Points About Our Training Plans

Our plans are written in terms of time/duration rather than mileage and there are some very good reasons why we do this. Running 10K has a world of difference in meaning for a 32-minute 10K runner compared to a 70-minute 10K runner. If we were to set plans in terms of mileage, therefore, and asked you to run for 18 miles, say, this could take many of you a long time to complete, and for what benefit? We want you to be training for an effective amount of time for your ability level and your goal finish time. By setting runs to a specific duration of time, we're reducing the chance of you over-training, getting injured or picking up an illness.

They're also written in terms of effort levels rather than noting a particular pre- determined pace. If we were to ask you to run at a particular pace for your sessions, the chances are that you will be working too hard, especially when you take into consideration that the weather might be terrible with a strong wind, you might be running over a hilly or undulating route, you might not have slept well the night before or be feeling stressed through work, or you may not be properly hydrated or have eaten properly. By running to a perceived effort level, you will always be working at the right level.

There will be days when you are happy with the resulting pace and days when you are not BUT the important thing to remember is that you will be training your body at the right level for you and, over time, you will become more efficient and economical and for the same effort you will see your pace increase.

Remember, training is all about consistency and patience. Think about the bigger picture and tick as many boxes as possible in your plan each week, not just a few good sessions or long runs. Running well demands time and preparation!

We're here to help you train smart, stay injury free and be ready to run your best on race day!

Measuring your effort

It's important that you run at the right effort level and intensity to ensure you're training to reach your full potential. Most of us think that running "harder is better" so we end up running too quickly, which can result in feeling tired, illness or injury. Understanding what each run is trying to achieve and how it should feel is the way to train smart, so here's our guide to the running sessions and a note of how they should feel as a 'talk test'

TYPE OF RUN	PERCEIVED EFFORT LEVEL (1-10)*	HEART RATE	HOW IT SHOULD FEEL - "THE TALK TEST"
Easy/Recovery Runs	6-6.5	65-70%	You can speak in complete sentences, totally conversational, you're running relaxed, enjoying it and not worrying about the watch
Long runs	6.5-7	65-70%	You're in control, running fluidly and very much at a conversational level but you'll feel slightly flushed with a gradual build-up of muscular fatigue
Steady effort running	7-8	70-80%	You can speak in short sentences but have a slight pause on your breath. This can often be 'no man's land' in training terms if this is all you do
Marathon Pace	7.5-8	78%	You can speak in short sentences, you have a slight pause on your breath but are not out of breath, relaxed and in control
Threshold runs / Kenyan hills	8-8.5	80-85%	You could speak 4-5 words if somebody asked you a question. Your breathing is more laboured and you know you're working, we call this 'controlled discomfort'
10 Km / Speed work	9-9.5	90-92%	You can say only 2-3 words maximum and are out of breath but still know that you could do more if you had to

*Perceived effort = where 1 is easy and represents minimum effort and 10 is hard and represents maximum effort

Understanding Key Sessions

There's a lot of different terminology used in training plans, however we want you to make sure you understand each session noted in our plans, so when you get out running you know exactly what you should be aiming to achieve.

The Long Run

The long run is an important element of training but we can often get obsessed with it, especially when training for the marathon. At first, your aim should simply be to concentrate

on increasing the time you spend on your feet rather than worrying about the pace or distance. The key is working at a conversational pace that is at a perceived effort level of 6.5-7 out of 10 (65-70% of range of your HRR). This may be a brisk walk, a run/walk or a run depending on your current fitness and level of experience and you shouldn't worry if you need to walk. These runs improve your muscular endurance, running efficiency and your ability to burn fat as its primary fuel source. Some of you may see some walking as part of your long run, we do this for a number of reasons:

- to manage your effort level
- to reduce impact forces
- to allow you to be on your feet for longer

There are many different ways to run/walk, you can do big blocks of running (20 minutes) followed by blocks of walking (5 minutes) or do smaller blocks of each (4 minutes running, 1-minute walking). Each of us are different and it's important to follow a method that works for you. Walking isn't cheating, indeed one of our athletes has run a 3.30 marathon using the above methods.

Threshold Runs

This is where you're running at an effort level of between 8-8.5 out of 10, where you're able to utter 4-5 words if someone asked you a question - so you're running hard but not so hard that you've nothing left. Try to think of this as an effort level that is 'controlled discomfort'! This type of session improves your running efficiency and running economy. You may not get it right first time round but keep trying and after a few weeks or so, you'll notice a huge difference. Not only will your easy runs feel easier and faster, but you'll be finding the threshold sessions themselves more manageable too.

Kenyan Hills

To run a good marathon, you need to be strong and therefore running over hills at the same effort level as your threshold sessions is going to build really good body strength. The Kenyan Hill session is a form of continuous hills, where you run up and down a hill continuously for a period of time. Choose a hill that has about a 6-7% gradient, run up for about 30-45 seconds (put down a marker) then turn around immediately and run back down the hill in a rolling running fashion to where you started from and then continue to run up and down for the amount of time noted in your plan.

This type of session is fantastic because it offers three distinct benefits:

- Leg strength from running uphill
- Endurance from running at threshold effort
- Speed from the leg turnover of running fast down hill

We suggest that you take a look at the following video which helps explain how to run the hill sessions in your plan: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xok8fFSPO_A

This really is an excellent training session and has so many benefits to your running, so why not try to learn to love those hills!

Steady Runs

Steady effort running is carried out a perceived effort level of 7.5-8 out of 10 (75-80% HRR) and is where you are running at a level of some discomfort. A lot of runners do most of their running at this effort level because they feel they are working but, in reality, it is not focused enough to be of real benefit and neither is it easy enough to be recovery. We do however sometimes use this level of training when trying to develop your training towards Threshold effort or increasing general workload.

Race Pace Practice

Understanding the pace you are able to run your race at is very important, particularly in a marathon. Pace judgment is crucial to running your best race. Race Pace Practice allows your body and mind to get used to what will be required on the big day so we recommend that you do need to practice this during your training.

Warming Up

When you're going to do any faster running, such as Hills, Threshold Runs, Intervals or a race, it's important to warm up gradually. A 10-15-minute jog allows your muscles to gradually warm up and improve their range of movement. It also allows your cardiovascular system to prepare for the harder work to be carried out.

Cooling Down

A period of at least 10-15 minutes easy jogging and light stretching allows your body to adjust back to a steady state. Cooling down stops blood pooling in your legs and helps remove some of the waste products from the muscle cells, which helps to avoid undue muscle soreness.

Recovery Run or Easy Effort Runs

Training for endurance requires your body to work hard but to see improvement, this has to be done without you getting ill or injured. You therefore need some recovery runs and these should be run at a very easy and relaxed effort. You should be breathing easily and be capable of holding a conversation throughout the run.

Your effort level should be at around 6-6.5 out of 10 (60–65% HRR) and your run should be no more than 45 minutes in duration. This allows your body to adapt to the training and improve.

10k and 5k Specific Intervals

As your Threshold effort starts to become manageable for the length of a 10K race, your training should start to introduce some 10K specific speed work to help create another gear for your running speed. When running at 10K effort, you should be looking at a heart rate of around 90% of maximum or at a perceived effort level of 9 out of 10, around a 2-word answer pace. Make sure that your 10K effort level is realistic and that you aren't running at a pace that you couldn't sustain for the whole of a 10K race. Your training may include some 5K effort level running and

perhaps even quicker. This sort of work is done in short intervals, with short recoveries. It teaches your body to run at a pace that would be uncomfortable to maintain for an extended period of time. This type of work teaches your body to work at a faster pace

Cross-Training

Cross training is one of the sessions you'll see each week but we wanted to give it its own section because it's that important!

Cross training refers to the action of training in a sport that is not the one that the athlete competes in. If you have made your way this far into our document, you will consider yourself, or at least thinking of calling yourself, a runner. So, for any runner, cross training refers to training that is not running.

The goal of cross training is to improve your overall performance. Fortunately, or unfortunately (depending on how you want to look at it), it's not possible to run every day. That isn't strictly true but you increase your chance of injury by just performing one action i.e. only running. If you're able to spread the cumulative level of orthopaedic stress over a range of different muscles and joints, you will be able to exercise more frequently and for longer durations cumulatively during each week.

It's important to remember that when you train, you heart doesn't know what you're doing. Whether you're cycling, lifting weights, swimming, walking or skipping, the heart muscle reacts the same way. In that respect, cross training is great and it will keep you fit.

As a runner, there are certain forms of cross training that are more applicable to running than others and in a list of decreasing importance you have:

- Aqua jogging
- Cross trainer / Elliptical machine
- Rowing machine
- Cycling

The closer we are able to mimic the running action, the more useful the session will be in improving your running.

What we're doing when we're cross training is completely eliminating the impact that your joints receive when you're running but importantly, you're still training to maintain fitness.

Aqua jogging is exactly what it sounds like, running in water. It's a really undervalued and underused training tool, but hopefully our handy guide will encourage you to get off the road and into the water. It's the ultimate form of cross training, perfect for those getting back from injury or if you're looking for a bit of a recovery session.

Aqua jogging is best done in deep-water and the action closely mimics the movement of actual jogging. Your feet don't touch the floor of the pool so there is zero impact and it's a perfect way to train hard if you have any sort of injury (except a hip flexor injury, which may be aggravated by the increased resistance of the water when you bring your leg up).

Aqua jogging is the only form of cross training that provides a neuromuscular workout that keeps your running-specific muscles active. Think of biking, swimming or rowing, they use some

muscles in a similar way as you do when running, but not all of them. The cross trainer/elliptical machine that you see in gyms is the next closest thing to running, but if you want to run without the impact of running outside, then you need to go into a pool and aqua jog.

If you want to learn a bit more about aqua jogging please take a look on www.fullpotential.co.uk

Strength and Conditioning

Endurance running, especially for the Marathon distance, requires whole body conditioning. The additional work that you do doesn't have to take a lot of time but the principle here is that you start to condition your body so that it can handle all the miles that you will be running both in training and on race day. Each week you should aim to do 1–2 sessions of conditioning work, which should each take around 20-minutes.

Our muscles, joints, tendons and ligaments are all moving as we run so it's important to choose dynamic exercises over static ones. We need to train our muscles to be stronger for longer during movement.

As an example, whilst a plank is fair exercise for general fitness, for runners it's not the best or most relevant exercise as our core muscles are not moving. When we run, our core muscles are moving and working under load so exercises such as those listed below, are far more beneficial to us.

Here's a very basic and short conditioning circuit for you to follow, which is designed to make you a better runner. The idea is to get you used to standing on one leg and get your buttock/glute muscles stronger.

Conditioning Circuit

1. Standing on one leg with thigh neutral and knee flexed
2. Single leg balance with thigh and knee flexed at 90 degrees
3. Quarter wall squat
4. Calf raises
5. Core strength endurance with mobility
6. Front support with hip extensions
7. Jumping
8. Single leg bend and reach (advanced)
9. Parallel step ups (advanced)

It's very important that you take your time when doing all of these exercises and concentrate on achieving proper form.

An important point to remember is that it is about quality of movement rather than quantity.

You'll probably not be out of breath after you do the circuit and this is perfectly normal. What we're looking for is to stress the running specific muscles.

Strength & Conditioning Exercises

1. Standing on one leg with thigh neutral and knee flexed

Stand on one leg and lift you heel up behind you. Try and balance for at least 30 seconds. This exercise is good to do barefoot if it's safe. Once you have mastered this, try closing your eyes or standing on a wobble cushion to make it harder.

2. Single leg balance with thigh and knee flexed 90 degrees

Stand on one leg and lift you knee up in front of you and flexed at 90 degrees. Try and balance for at least 30 seconds. This exercise is good to do barefoot if it's safe. Once you have mastered this, try closing your eyes or standing on a wobble cushion to make it harder

3.Quarter wall squat

Stand next to a wall, turn in, slightly raise and push the side of your inside leg into the wall (the outside of the calf). You should to feel an ache in your standing leg glute muscle. When ready, squat down on your standing leg, making sure to keep your inside leg pushed against the wall. Work up to complete 2-3 sets of 10 repetitions on each side.

4.Calf raises

Stand on the edge of a step. Raise your heel until you are on your tiptoes, then slowly lower yourself down past the bottom of the step. Work up to performing x30 on each leg. Start with doing raises on 2 legs and then progress to one leg.

5.Core strength endurance with mobility

Start in a good plank position (picture 1). From your starting position, bring your left knee forward to the outside of your left elbow (picture 2). Return to the starting position and repeat on the other side. As a progression, try to develop your ability to take your knee across your body towards the opposite knee (picture 3).



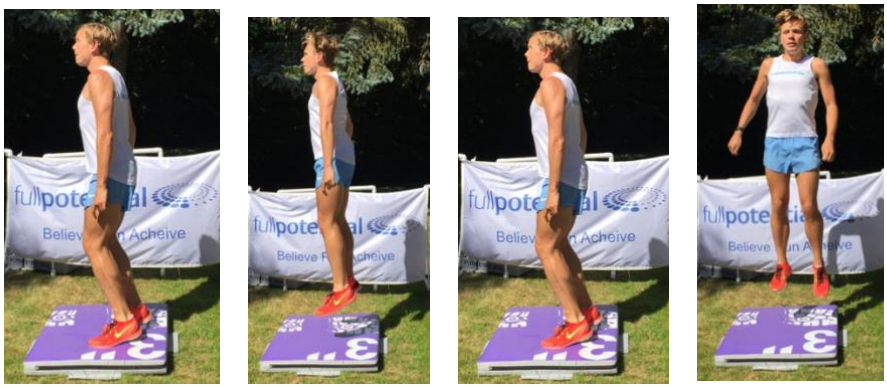
Keep your spine long, your shoulders and hips level with your neck in neutral. Don't force the movement or your range of motion. Your range of motion will develop with repetition. Aim to perform to perform 2-3 sets of 10 repetitions on each side (5 of each movement). If you can't get in the original plank position, start with both your knees on the floor

6.Front support with hip extensions

Get into a kneeling position on your hands and knees (picture 1). Lift your right leg out behind you (picture 2). Hold this position for a count of 5 and then lower. Really work on keeping the spine long, staying stable and squeeze your glutes as you lift the leg. Aim to perform to perform 2-3 sets of 10 repetitions on each side


7.Jumping

Draw or create a box with sides of 60 cms. Stand in the box and bounce up and down 5 times. Work on keeping the arms by your side and don't bend the knees too much, make the bounces high and quick. Turn 90 degrees after 5 bounces and continue to turn until you get back to where you started.



The idea of the box is to make sure you don't move around too much. Complete 4 x sets, moving to the right for the first two, and left for the second two. Really look for height with the jumps. This is a high impact exercise so if you feel any twinges in your Achilles or calf muscles, stop immediately.

NOTE: these exercises replace exercises 1 & 2 and are to be done once you are comfortable standing on one leg.

8.Single leg bend and reach (advanced)

Place a cone or tennis ball about two to three feet in front of you and balance on your left leg, bending from the hip as you reach toward the object. Make sure you keep the back as flat as possible, don't tip from the hips. Repeat 1-2 sets of 10-15 reps for each leg.

9.Parallel step-ups (advanced)

At the bottom of a set of stairs or box, stand parallel to them. Step up onto the first step with the left foot, lift the right knee until your thigh is parallel with the ground. To make the exercise a bit harder - while keeping your hips facing the stairs, turn your torso 90 degrees to the left or right on every other leg raise. Aim for 2 sets of 10 - 15 reps.

Rest and Recovery – How You Get Better

Recovery is probably the most forgotten about and underrated training principles. After training, you'll naturally feel fatigued. A period of recovery is required to allow the body to repair muscle damage, which occurs naturally after training, as well as helping to improve performance. This is how you get better!

To help your body cope with the workload, rest is going to be as important a part of your training schedule as the running. Listen to your body and take heed of any warning signs. If you feel fatigued even before you've run a step, if you find yourself thinking up excuses not to run or start suffering a series of minor injuries, then you probably need more time off from training.

Taking enough rest allows physical and mental recovery and gives your body the time to adapt to your workload.

However, remember, on rest days, that's exactly what you should be doing!

What can you do to maximise your recovery?

After each run, especially a big session (and by this we mean any Threshold, Kenyan Hill session, speed work or a long run) you should have a good recovery protocol that you aim to follow as closely as possible.

Here are our top tips for recovery:

1. Sleep is king; make sure you're getting a good number of hours each night
2. Have a well-balanced and timely nutrition strategy
3. Have an effective warm up and active recovery
4. Have a regular sports massage or include some self-massage
5. Maintain flexibility

Stretching and Foam Rolling

How often do you turn up to a race and see people doing all sorts of weird and wonderful things to trees, each other and their bodies in the name of stretching! Too many times in our opinion, yet after the race, there's not a stretch in sight!

Warm Up: Pre-Workout

The idea of a warm-up is that you are preparing the muscles and body for the activity that you are about to undertake. We want to increase the range of motion and warm the body up.

To achieve this we need to do some dynamic movements, to increase power, flexibility and range of motion and these movements need to be running specific.

10-minute Warm Up

0 – 1 minute – Easy to Brisk Walk
Minutes 2 – 6 – Easy Jog
Minutes 6 – 8 – Dynamic Mobility Exercises (see below)
Minutes 8 – 10 Easy jog, include a few 20-second bursts at goal pace

Dynamic Mobility Exercises

Forward Leg Swings

Brace the body against a wall or other support by holding one arm out to the side.
Start with both feet directly under the hips and then swing the inside leg forward and backward.

Gradually increase the range of motion until the leg swings as high as it will comfortably go. Do 10-15 swings on each leg.

Side Leg Swings

Facing a wall or other support, brace the body with both arms outstretched. Swing one leg to the side of the body, extending to a comfortable height. Swing the leg back crossing in front of the body. Do 10–15 swings on each leg.

Increase the range of motion gradually until reaching the maximum comfortable height – but be careful not to push too hard and risk injury.

Post Workout

Post workout, as mentioned above, is the ideal time to stretch. After a workout, it's the ideal time to take a hyper-contracted muscle (one that has worked really hard and is close to spasm) into a relaxed collection of fibres, which will then be able to handle the activities that occur post exercise. These stretches should be held for at most 15-seconds and what you're trying to achieve is to return the muscles to a pre-exercise state.

Stretches to do:

Glute stretch
Sit on the floor with both legs straight out in front of you. Take one leg and take it across your other leg, bringing your knee to your chest and hug.

Hamstring – Lying down
Place a band around your upper leg (or undo shoelaces . Draw your upper leg towards the body until a stretch is felt behind it. To change the stretch into the belly of the hamstring, gently bend your knee. You can do this stretch seated if you don't have somewhere dry to stretch.

Calf stretch – gastrocnemius
Adopt a split stance in front of a wall with both feet facing forward. Drive forward through the hips. Keep your heels down throughout the stretch

Calf stretch – Soleus
Adopt a split stance in front of a wall with both knees bent. Place your hands on the wall at shoulder height with your head upright and looking forward Drop your bodyweight down to lever the posterior (rear) ankle into increased dorsiflexion

Stretching to Increase Mobility

If you want to see increased levels of flexibility, you need to do some 'TV stretching'! This involves holding each stretch for 30-seconds and returning to that stretch two or even three times. If possible, have a bath or warm shower before this and your body will be in better shape to stretch. A warmer muscle is a more supple one.

Here are our key stretches to do:

Hip flexor stretch

Kneel down on the floor. Keeping the trunk upright push the hips forward to feel a stretch through your hip flexor.

Quadriceps stretch

Flex the leg you want to stretch at the knee but keep both knees together. Using your arm on the same side as the leg you want to stretch, gently hold your leg at the ankle area lower limb. Draw your leg towards your buttock. This can be done standing but you can get better control lying down.

Foam Roller Exercises for Runners

A foam roller should be an invaluable part of every runner's arsenal. It's great as a warm-up tool but also helps to break down knots, increase blood flow and release muscle tightness.

Here are some key exercises you can do. You should aim to spend a good couple of minutes on each exercise (don't forget to stretch both legs!) but for some, you may want to spend a bit longer, especially if you find a sore point. Try and do some foam rolling at least once a week, but if you have sore points then consider doing it a bit more regularly

Calves

Place the roller under your calf and rest your other foot on the floor. Roll from the ankle to just below the knee. Rotate the leg around to get to the inside and outside of the calf. Stack the ankles to add more pressure.

Hamstrings

Place the roller under your thighs and roll from the knee to the buttocks. Increase the pressure by just doing one leg at a time. Rotate the leg as you roll to get all the muscles in your hamstring

Quadriceps

Lie on your stomach with a roller placed under the font of your thigh muscles. Slowly roll up and down from the bottom of your hip to the top of your thigh.


Adductors

Lie on your stomach with one leg slightly extended to the side, knee bent. Place the roller in the groin area of the extended leg and roll the inner thigh.


Middle Back

Lie on your back on the foam roller. Cross your arms across the front of your chest and exhale deeply as you roll the middle of your back against the roller.

Thoracic Area

While lying on the floor face up, place the foam roller perpendicular to your upper back. Put both feet flat on the floor and bend your knees to 90 degrees. Cross your arms behind your head like you're going to do a sit-up. Raise your hips off the floor and roll back and forth over your shoulder blades and mid-back.