



**The WaterAid and
RunningwithUs Guide to
Better Running**





The Guide to Better Running

Part One - Introduction



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Dear Runner,

Welcome to the WaterAid running team and thank you for choosing to run your next race with us.

We are delighted to be working in partnership with the UK's leading coaching team to help you on your running journey in the months ahead. You may have seen Nick, Tom and Phoebe from RunningwithUs writing and coaching in Men's & Women's Running magazines or come across their work with brands such as Saucony, High5 and Just Giving or at events such as the Brighton Marathon. They have over 25 years of coaching experience between them and have helped thousands of beginners to train for, and run, their first ever race.

They also work with lots of experienced runners to help them get quicker and train in the most effective way to whilst helping them balance their lifestyle around the challenges of work and family. Nick & Phoebe have coached and have worked with some of the best known Olympians in the UK and we are very excited to have them in our running team at WaterAid to support our runners.

We have comprehensive training schedules available for beginners, improvers and experienced runners at all distances which Nick, Tom & Phoebe have supplied. Once you are registered with us we will make sure you are able to choose the right plan for your level.

They are easy to follow and are perfectly complimented by our WaterAid Running Guide also compiled by the RunningwithUs guys.

There will also be regular newsletters throughout the year from Nick & Phoebe focusing on topical top tips and answering some of your key questions about training, nutrition, injury prevention and most importantly, how to make this all fun!

If you have an important training or racing question we want to help you and find the answer quickly so Nick, Tom & Phoebe have an emergency email hotline with us and we will pass any running questions onto them: please email questions to info@runningwithus.com. They will advise on what to do if you are ill, injured or struggling with the training we have sent, although you will find many of the answers also contained within this running guide.

We wish you the best of luck and look forward to working with you.



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Ten top tips for getting started

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Tip one - You're a runner now so call yourself one

That's right, you are now a real runner. You have entered the race and want to train to cover the distance perhaps even get quicker.

Tip two - Have a routine and think like a runner

Your body likes to work hard. Give it a routine and it will adapt and start to become fitter. Get used to being an athlete in training and being organised with sleep, food, fitting in the training, stretching and exercises. Plan each day and fit in your training.

"Here are our top ten tips for getting started"

Tip five - Run to time not miles

It is hard to measure miles & kilometres. You can also find yourself clocking up miles rather than training sensibly. We suggest you run to time & effort. Give every run a purpose! Run to time and follow the plan. Some runs are easy to allow you to recover or build endurance. Some runs are harder building a stronger heart and pace.

Tip four - Have a plan & training schedule

Choose one of our training plans and try to follow the schedule. There will be days you can't follow due to work or tiredness. This doesn't matter, but use the plan as a guide for what to aim for each week.

Tip three - Set small & achievable targets

Your training plan may contain many weeks of training. Set some targets that are realistic within this journey to race day. These targets will motivate you and help you check your progress. Maybe it could be a PB for a 5k or your fastest time around your local running route.

Ten top tips for getting started

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Tip six - Listen to your body

Your body is an amazing piece of kit. It tells you how it feels and what it needs. Listen to it and watch the signs. If you are sore you might be about to get injured, so rest, stretch more, have a massage or run at an easy pace. If you are tired you might need more rest and sleep. Eat well as the body wants to recover and replace its energy. So follow the training plan but always listen to your body and the warning signs. A smart runner will do this and remain fitter, faster and healthier for longer.

Tip seven - Don't just run

Try to use other forms of exercise to keep you strong and compliment your running. You need to be strong so try to include circuit training in the weekly plan. Have a look at the exercises we have shown which can be completed using your own body weight at home or in the park. A strong runner is less likely to tire and pick up injuries.

“Here are our top ten tips for getting started”

Tip eight - Treat rest and nutrition seriously

Most runners worry about their daily and weekly training but don't focus as much on their sleep and nutrition. The body needs to recover from any training completed to become fitter and stronger. Clever athletes sleep up to 8-9 hours a night and eat lots of carbohydrate, correct levels of protein and plenty of fruit & vegetables. They are always snacking and eating between meals to keep their blood sugar levels balanced and energy high. A clever athlete is never hungry but also never over full. Treat rest and nutrition seriously while training well and you will improve.

Tip ten - Keep it social and have fun

This is the most important part to being a successful runner and achieving your goal. Make it fun and share the journey with other people by running with friends or a local club or group. Running makes you feel good and gives you energy for everything else in your life. Being a runner is a healthy choice, and we want you to run and have fun for many years!

Tip nine - Surround yourself with positive people

Training regularly can be tough and runners find it easier if they train together. You can share your journey and help to keep each other motivated. Some people may not believe you can run a 5k, 10k, half or full marathon but you can and will. Surround yourself with people who believe in you and who are interested in your journey and training. Positive people make you feel good and help you to train well.



The Guide to Better Running

Part Two - The Right Shoes

Picking the right shoes

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Before you embark upon your running journey check you have the correct shoes!

Why are the right trainers important?

A pair of trainers that are correctly fitted and sized for you is a sensible investment. Wearing the correct running trainers that are suited to your feet and running gait will play a huge part in **preventing injury**.

The wet foot test

How to choose the right shoes

Step in some water and then stand on a dry floor, bathmat or piece of paper. This test works on the basis that it roughly translates into the amount of stability you will need from your trainer. This simple test will give you a indication of the type of foot strike you have, and will equip you with some basic knowledge to help show you what features to look for in your running shoe.

Understand your feet!

Your running gait is simply the way in which your foot strikes the floor as it lands and then pushes off into the next stride. Depending upon the type of foot plant you have your trainers can aid in making each step as efficient and safe as possible.

The normal foot- The neutral runner-

A slight curve in the footprint shows a normal arch. It shows the forefoot and heel connected by a narrower section (but not as narrow as the high arch to the far right). This indicates a very efficient 'neutral' foot strike where the foot transitions nicely through the arch to the ball of the foot before take off.

Trainers needed- A neutral shoe or a stability shoe with moderate control features.



The flat foot- The over pronator – 60-

70% of people over pronate. The whole shape of the foot being printed on the floor suggests this. It suggests a flat foot, which means the arch has collapsed and sits very low to the ground. The foot strikes the floor with the outside of the heel and then rolls inwards drastically taking off from the inside of the foot.

Trainers needed- A stability shoe with motion control. The trainer has a firmer section on the inner/mid section of the shoe.



The high arched foot - The supinator

The footprint shows a very narrow section or no section at all between the forefoot and the heel. The foot strikes on the outside of the foot and doesn't pronate enough. It is a lighter foot strike.

Trainers needed - Cushioned (or 'neutral') shoes with plenty of flexibility to encourage foot motion. Stay away from motion control or stability shoes, which reduce foot mobility.



A man in athletic wear is running on a path through a forest. He is wearing a red and orange tank top, black shorts, and sunglasses. The background is filled with tall, thin trees and green foliage.

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Part Three - How Running Should Feel & glossary

How should each run feel?

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There are a number of different paces that you should aim to master that will make up your training:

Easy run – fully conversational at the speed of chat and about 6/10 effort.

Steady run – conversational, controlled but working at about 7/10 effort.

Threshold running – controlled discomfort, 3-4 word answer pace 8/10 effort.

Interval running
5k-10k effort - 9/10
and working hard.



In detail:

The feeling of not being sure how fast you should be running for any particular session is common, from beginners to elite international athletes. For beginners it never feels as though running is easy, but we can assure you that running doesn't need to be hard all the time.

At the beginning all you are trying to do is get out and run. That should be at **easy pace** or 'the speed of chat' – if you can't talk as you are running, you're going too fast, simple as that. For the more experienced runner, 'the speed of chat' is how your easy and recovery runs should feel - totally in control, relaxed and slow enough to talk. If you are combining walking and running, the effort level remains the same – you should be able to hold a conversation on both the walking and running segments.

Faster than easy, conversational running is **steady running**. This is the backbone of training for more experienced runners. This is where you must be honest and not push too hard or you might ruin your faster sessions, so conversation should still be possible, but a little strained.

Incorporating **threshold running** is how the elites train and you can train like this too. This is where you are running at a controlled discomfort level: you can still talk between breaths, but only 3 or 4 word phrases. This is not running to exhaustion or sprinting. You may already feel able to include some 3 minute blocks into a run each week which will grow in volume throughout your training.

Interval training and 3k/5k/10k pace is top-end training. This is often called the "hurt locker" and is used in training to replicate the feeling at the end of a hard race. The effort levels here should be almost at maximum.

Rest (R)

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, find yourself thinking up excuses not to run or start suffering a series of minor injuries; you probably need more time off. Taking enough rest allows physical and mental recovery and gives your body the time to adapt to your workload. Remember: on rest days, that is exactly what you should be doing!

Recovery Run (RR)

Training for endurance requires your body to work harder than it has ever done. To see improvement without breaking down, you'll need some recovery runs. These should be nice and easy and you should feel relaxed. Enjoy the scenery. You should be breathing easily and be capable of holding a conversation throughout the run. This will mean that you are running in the 60–65% range of your Maximum Heart Rate (MHR) and it should be no more than 45 minutes in duration. This allows your body to adapt to the training workload and therefore improve. It also helps with the removal of the waste products, which accumulate in your muscles after harder efforts.

Threshold Runs (THR)

After the long endurance runs, tempo runs are probably your most valuable workouts. You will find them slightly uncomfortable and they'll require concentration, but they are well worth the effort. As they're run at a controlled brisk pace, about 80–85% of your MHR, you'll only be capable of uttering a couple of words to your training partners. Tempo/threshold runs improve your lactate threshold (the speed above which your body struggles to cope with the lactic acid created by burning energy without oxygen), your running efficiency and aerobic capacity (your body's ability to utilise oxygen). All this helps to improve your endurance performance.

Long Runs (LR)

Long runs are vital in your plan and key to racing well in long distance races from 5km – marathon. At first, concentrate on increasing the time on your feet rather than worrying about distance. Start off by heading out for at least an hour and run at 65% of MHR (conversational pace). Gradually this will build to 75% of MHR as you start to practice periods of marathon pace (MP) running. These runs improve your muscular endurance and condition your body to burn fat as its primary fuel source.

Continuous Hills (CH)

Hill running develops strength in your muscles and tendons without putting them under the type of stress they are exposed to during faster running. Run up a 5-10% gradient for 45-90 seconds at a steady-threshold effort. Turn immediately at the top and run down the hill at the same effort, then turn at the bottom and repeat without any recovery until the rep time ends. Like a tempo/threshold run, a hill session is time to concentrate, as you should be working at about 80–85% of MHR and be able to utter just a word or two.

Fartlek (F)

This is a Swedish term that literally means “speed play”. It involves a number of bursts of effort over a variety of distances with a variable recovery. Originally the length of effort was based on the terrain, for example, pushing harder every time you came to a climb, no matter how long it was. But you can adapt it for your needs.

Interval Training (IT)

Intervals help to boost specific race pace speed and involve running timed efforts with a controlled recovery. The effort level is around 85–100% of MHR, depending on the duration of the event you are training for and the length and volume of intervals used. A typical example might be 6 x 3 minutes @ 5km race pace with a 90 second jog recovery.

Marathon Pace (MP)

Understanding the pace & effort you intend on running your marathon at is very important. Pace judgment and patience on the big day will be crucial to running your best marathon. Marathon Pace Practice, at about 75-80% of MHR, allows your body and mind to get used to what will be required on race day, and builds endurance quickly.

Warming Up/Warm down (WU)

When you are going to do any faster running such as Hills, Threshold Runs, Intervals or a race, it is important to warm up gradually. A 10-15 minute jog lets your muscles warm up and improve their range of movement. It also allows your cardiovascular system to prepare. You should also jog easily for 10-15 mins after any hard work out. This reduces muscle soreness; flushes away lactic build up and will make you feel better over the next few days.

Cross Training & Core Conditioning (XT)

It is important that your training is balanced with some non-impact activities such as swimming, cycling, rowing, aerobics, etc, otherwise you are more likely to pick up an annoying injury that will set back your training. But more experienced runners should also add cross training to their regime. Endurance running, especially the marathon, requires whole body-conditioning. To achieve this you should aim to work a variety of muscle groups and not just your legs. Remember, though, that you are a runner, so just be careful not to make the cross-training, whether it is core conditioning, lifting weights, using an elliptical trainer or practicing Pilates, so intense that you are left too tired for your running.



The Guide to Better Running

Part Four - Posture

Perfect Running & Everyday Posture

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Good running posture is very important in helping you to maintain good form for the whole run and therefore adding to efficient running style, injury prevention and aiding good breathing

- ▶ Carry out the **perfect posture test** (see opposite)
- ▶ Think about your form any time you are running
- ▶ Try to be upright and tall
- ▶ Feel as though you're falling forward into every stride
- ▶ Practice perfect posture in every day situations to ensure muscles don't tighten up



In detail:

You can all check your posture and get an idea of a good running posture by doing the following exercise which DOESN'T involve going for a run.

Perfect Posture Check

Get onto your feet and stand with your feet hip width apart. Now imagine there is a piece of string pulling you through the centre right through the top of your head and towards the sky. This will create your 'running tall' posture, a feeling of your upper body being lifted up and out of your hips. At this point your shoulders may have risen, so relax your shoulders by rolling them back and down making sure there is no tension through the shoulders and neck but that your upper body is still being pulled up towards the sky. Without lifting your heels lean forwards ever so slightly, your whole body should lean not just the top half, this is a very small movement but should give you a slight feeling of falling forwards. You certainly shouldn't be leaning so far forwards that you look like you are about to fall over!

It is important to remember at this point that your leg speed is determined by your arm speed. In your 'perfect posture check' position begin to swing your arms as if you are running. Remember to drive the hands forwards and the elbows backwards.

If you imagine you are wearing a running jacket with a zip down the middle, your hands should not be crossing the line of that zip as this will cause your elbows to shoot out to the sides. This is a lateral (side to side) movement and running is a linear (straight forwards) sport so we want all of our energy going forwards towards that finish line! At this point whilst you drive your arms (remember that slight forward lean) you should feel as though your legs want to start running thus proving that arm speed determines leg speed and is an important factor in good posture equating to efficient running technique.



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Part Five - Stretching

Stretching - a guide

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One - Glutes (Maximus & Minimus)

Sit with one leg out straight. Cross the other leg over, keeping knee bent. To feel stretch in backside hug bent knee into chest. Keep back straight.



Two - Hamstring (Origin point in buttocks and glutes)

Lay on back. Pull one leg up to chest and hug with both arms. Keep one leg straight on floor keeping ankle flexed.



Three - Hamstring (Belly or middle of)

Lay on back. Keep one leg on the ground. Raise other leg holding the back of the calf. Bring up to feel the stretch in the middle (or belly) of the hamstring. Use a rope or towel around the foot to help if you need to.



Four - Hamstring (insertion point - i.e., behind knee)

Repeat stretch number three but this time with a straight leg. Flex ankle to feel stretch in behind the knee. Use a rope or towel around the foot to help if you need to

Five - Lower back / IT band

Lay on back. Bring one leg up to chest and rotate to lower knee to floor using opposite arm as a weight. Keep one leg straight on floor keeping ankle flexed and keep shoulders on floor. Other arm should be straight out at shoulder level.



Six - Groin stretch (adductors)

Keep the back straight, take the foot to one side and take the knee over but not further than your foot, transferring weight to the bent leg. Feel the stretch on the inner thigh of the straight leg



Seven - Quads

This can be done lying on your side in a straight line. Grasp the top of the ankle with the same side hand and bring heel to backside. Hips should be pushed forward. If you do this stretch standing and lose your balance, you have weak core stability.



Nine - Calf stretch (Gastrocnemius)

Stand with feet shoulders width apart. Take one foot forward and keep feet parallel. Maintain the arch in the forward foot by pressing down with the toes to stop foot rolling in. Straighten back leg and feel stretch in top area of the calf



Ten - Calf stretch (Soleus)

Repeat position as for number nine. But this time bend back leg to take stretch into lower calf above Achilles.



Eight - Hip flexors

Kneel on one knee. Take the other leg forward with a large stride. Push hips downwards until a stretch is felt in the front of the hips/quads.



Remember

- Don't forget to stretch both legs and repeat holding stretch for 40-45 seconds each time
- Never stretch cold muscles. The main benefit for endurance runners is stretching after the run.
- Unfortunately running makes your muscles shorter and tighter.
- A good stretching routine will help to restore the muscle balance and allow you to be more flexible.
- Do not underestimate the value of cross training, massage and stretching in your schedule.



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Part Six - Strength and Conditioning

The Finger Crusher

Get into a sit up position, find the natural arch in your back, place your hands under the arch, engage your lower abs and pelvic floor and push your spine down on to your hands, trying to crush your fingers.

The next level: Do slight alternate leg lifts, while still keeping the pressure on your hands even.



The Plank

Keep a straight line from the neck down through the legs to your ankles, engage all your core muscles by sucking your belly button up to the ceiling. Keep your chest over your elbows.

The next level: Hold this for 30 seconds to one minute and build it up gradually. If this is too hard to begin with, you can avoid lower back pain by doing this with your knees on the ground.



The Side Plank

Make a right angle with your supporting arm, your feet together and your stomach strong. Rise up, making sure you squeeze your glute and push your pelvis through. Hold it for 30 seconds.

The next level: Lift your free arm into the air, keep your side really strong, and don't let your middle

sag.



The Bridge

From the sit up position, keep your stomach strong, engage your glutes and roll up into a bridge. Keep your hips high by squeezing your glute muscles.

The next level: Make this tougher by crossing your arms over your chest.



Strength and Conditioning - a guide

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Press-up

Press-ups are a key exercise to improve your arm swing when running. They work your pecs, triceps, abs and lower back. Every male runner should eventually be able to do 30 to 40. Place your hands shoulder and a half's width apart, get into the plank position, lower your chest to the floor and push back up, not just pushing through your chest and arms, but also through your core.



Split Leg Lunge

This works the running muscles in a full chain movement. Point your toes forward, keep your back heel lifted and with hands on hips, lunge down, squeezing the glute of your rear leg. Make sure everything goes down in the centre and not forwards. Your knee should NOT be over the front of your toes, lunge forward with a bent back knee.

The next level: Once you've nailed this move, you can progress to driving the knee up from the lunge.

One Legged Squat

This also works everything in a full chain movement. Stand on one leg, engage your glute on your standing leg, keep your hips facing forward and aligned with your knee and toe. You don't want your knee to roll inwards, so go down as far as you can without that happening.

The next level: You can use a Swiss ball between yourself and a wall for balance.





The Guide to Better Running

Part Seven - What To Do When Life Takes Over

What to do when life takes over...

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Something is always better than nothing

Keep 'ticking over' with easy paced stress free runs of 30 minutes. Once life returns to a level of normality so too can the running.

Consider having an easy phase by working on endurance.

Re-focus by just running to, well, enjoy running. No pressure, the same mileage or maybe less but simply completed as easy paced running.

Get organised!

Aim to predict your week and then place your runs within it.

Grab opportunities

Be spontaneous and always have your kit to hand!

The Key elements

Identify the key elements of your training and make them the priority

Maximise your weekends

Use weekends for long runs and big quality sessions.

Front load your week

Aim to complete higher volume running or key sessions at the beginning of the week

Less travel more speed

Be creative and set your own sessions if you can't get to your running club or running group.

Be flexible and listen to your body

Be prepared to adapt.

However much we love our running, prioritise our running, make sacrifices in order to complete our runs, there are or will be times when quite frankly life will be bigger than your running. Full stop. Accept it. Be it the responsibility of being 'mum or dad' during school holidays, moving house, beginning a new job, dealing with family commitments and social engagements or quite simply being exhausted and stressed by the sheer pressure of life. There are times when running will feel like the last thing you want to do but the first thing you think you should do therefore leaving you in an anxious state of guilt ridden sweat (I've clearly been there myself!)

If running is to become a regular part of your lifestyle for the foreseeable future, these periods in time are inevitable so let's stop fighting them and begin tackling the issue head on in order to make these difficult weeks bearable, guilt free and equate to some running value.

It is important to remember the first lesson of running – develop acceptance, resilience and intelligence. Review what's going in life and rationalise the situation. We coach some incredibly intelligent people and yet when it comes to runners, however intelligent, there appears to be a lack of common sense! Step back and ask yourself whether this really is a period in life when you simply can't fit in or complete as much training as your plan suggests your should. If the answer is yes then back off and accept it and work out what you realistically can fit in by using some of the tips in this training guide on how to maximise your time. There is nothing wrong with doing a little less for a while if it is essential to work, family and life harmony. If the answer is 'I probably need to man up slightly and I could get out of bed even earlier than I already do to fit a run in' then get resilient and set that alarm clock please!



The Guide to Better Running

Part Eight - Cross Training

What is cross-training?

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▸ There are 2 types of cross-training or X training we all need to know about.

▸ One is your conditioning work, which focuses on strengthening muscles but won't make you fitter. This is your Pilates, core conditioning, weights and floor work such as the plank or press-ups (see the page on strength and conditioning for more). All very important and we need to be strong with a great posture to run well.

▸ The other is aerobic conditioning such as swimming, cycling, aqua jogging (yes running in the pool with a buoyancy aid!), rowing and other clever machines. This exercises the heart and muscles and will definitely keep you aerobically fit.

▸ Your heart doesn't know the difference between going for a run or X training it just works as hard as you ask it to. You can really boost your fitness towards any running distance with clever X training we promise.

In detail:

As we have already mentioned, we are always talking about training, writing about training and setting plans. So, like many coaches and writers, I suspect we have become guilty of just assuming you all know exactly what we mean when we say the magic words tempo, fartlek, progression run or X training. On our Charity Training Days the area of X training is always popular and there are lots of good questions.

The truth is there so much jargon out there and so many ways for you all to train. We have already described X training in the glossary and provided examples of the exercises you should be doing.

Now we are going to look at what X training really is and why it could be so important. Many of you will be doing it already as lovers of the gym and classes and for some of you we hope this article explains why you should be including it now in your weekly mix. In future newsletters from the charity we will include specific X training sessions and top tips.

Some of us are born to run yet for some of us every run can be a challenge. Those of you who have looked in envy at those elite types who look like they could run all day will know exactly what I mean here. Yet the reality these days is that most of our elite performers (The Paula's and Mo's of this world) all spend hours in the gym completing rehab exercises, lifting weights, engaging their core muscles and exercises aerobically in the pool, on the bike or on X trainer machines etc. These days its not just about running, we have changed and so have our lives.

We used to all have manual jobs and our strength came from our work, home life and generally being busy. As kids we were allowed to play more and even PE lessons were tough. So why is this X training relevant? Well to be honest we are now more fragile than ever before and break quite easily. Three and a half times your body weight is forced through the foot with every stride and we have to change from one leg to the other constantly as we run, unless you have mastered another technique of your own of course! It's not the first stride that hurts you but the body might start to suffer after thousands completed each week. Now interestingly the heart doesn't know the difference between going for a run or X training and swimming, it just works as hard as you ask. The muscles do though as running is totally weight bearing and the hardest form of exercise, yet most natural also. So the clever athlete will run as much as they know their body will allow but X train also in the training week to boost fitness without the risk of injury.

We always recommend the new runner to X train 2 or 3 times a week combined with a couple of runs if possible. This way we can strengthen the muscles and improve posture before increasing the running volume. We also tell runners who are sore from running in recent days to X train instead of following their normal plan therefore reducing the risk of injury and allowing muscles to recover actively.

Cross-training tips

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For example if the running plan says 45 minutes recovery run this can be easily recreated on the kit listed above. So can 4 x 6 minutes at threshold effort, just work harder and make sure you are at 3-4-word answer pace.

Recreate your running plan on the bike, cross-trainer, rower or in the pool swimming or Aqua Jogging if you feel exceptionally sore in the lower limbs after recent hard days.

Cardiovascular cross training options include; biking, spin, swimming, aqua jogging, elliptical machines, rower.



Try our core conditioning exercises earlier in this pack once or twice a week for 10-15 minutes holding and repeating each position several times. These can all be completed at home after an easy run and you don't need to belong to a gym or spend hours there!

If you're injured the first thing to do is consult a doctor or a physiotherapist. If they say you are able, please still follow your training plan but use X training kit or the pool instead. Don't lose that hard-earned fitness and let's keep going. If you can see a running physio or sports injury expert they will also offer treatment and advice. Make sure though that the X training is also pain free.