30 Ways

To Become a Better Runner

Increase your running endurance, efficiency, speed, strength, mileage and fitness - in just 30 days! Reaching your goals is closer than you might think.

30 Ways to Become a Better Runner

1. Mix up your running workouts.

It's so easy to settle into the routine of heading out for a run at the same pace each and every time. While consistency with running can be great, staying consistent with your pace and effort will only leave your progress stagnant.

Instead, vary your workouts each week. Make sure your easy, recovery runs are just that – easy and slow, so your body can recover. Incorporate a speed workout each week, mixing up the type of speed work you try. Include some hills, fast finish runs, strides, track workouts, trail running and everything in between.

An example training plan could look like this:

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
60 minute recovery yoga	Easy recovery run	Interval run: 8 x 400s	Strength training	Easy run with negative splits	Long run	Rest
45 minute elliptical workout	Easy recovery run	Tempo run: 4 miles at tempo	Strength training + abs	Easy run at recovery pace	Long run with 3 miles at race pace	Rest
30 minute spin workout	Easy recovery run	Hill workout: 10 hill repeats	Strength training + arms	Easy run with 5 x 30 second sprints	Long run	Rest
Full body bodyweight workout	Easy recovery run	4 miles with twenty 30 second strides	Pyramid strength training	Easy run at recovery pace	Long run with 5 miles at race pace	Rest

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2. Complete strength training exercises at least once per week.

Running requires strength – full body strength, that is – and simply running each day will never help us gain the strength we need to improve. Designate at least one day each week to complete some simple bodyweight exercises (like squats, lunges, planks, bridges, etc).

Put all the strength training exercises together into a strength workout, or spread them out and complete a few each day after your run or workout. Strength training targets many muscles that can remain inactive or weak on the run, increasing your strength in ways that you don't get during a run.

For example, check out this 30 minute, full body strength training workout below.

- 25 squats
- 20 forward lunges
- 20 side lunges
- 25 jump squats
- 20 jump lunges
- 20 side lunges
- 20 right leg lifts (lying on back)
- 20 left leg lifts (lying on back)
- 60 second bridge
- 20 bridge lifts
- 10 single leg bridge lifts (each side)
- 60 second plank
- 20 clamshells (each side)
- 20 leg extensions (with stability ball)
- 20 superman lifts
- 30 second superman hold
- 20 single leg squats (each side)
- 15 dumbbell curls x 3
- 15 dumbbell shoulder press x 3
- 15 dumbbell forward extension x 3

OR, try breaking this workout up into four groups of 5 moves, and complete 5 moves after each run throughout the week. By the end of the week, you will have completed all of these strength training exercises by only adding 5-10 minutes on to the end of each run!

3. Increase your cadence.

It's easy to get so caught up in pace and distance that you forget about any other pieces of data. However, in doing so, most runners are regularly overlooking a key piece of information: their cadence.

The ideal running cadence for an adult is right around 180 bpm.

But most runners fall short.

Taking the time to find your average cadence will likely help immensely improve your running. Increasing your cadence is a secret weapon for runners looking to stay injury free. Check out your cadence and dedicate some time to increase it if it is low.

To start, you'll need to determine what your cadence actually is. The best and most accurate way to do this is by using a running watch that calculates this number for you. If you don't have a running watch that tells you cadence data, try downloading a running app on your phone.

Once you know your current cadence, you'll likely find out that it is lower than 180. Next, you'll need to work on increasing your cadence.

To do so, you'll need to download a metronome app on your phone – there are many free options. You'll want to set the metronome tempo to 180, and make sure you have headphones or are running in a place where you'll be able to hear the metronome throughout the *entire* run.

When you're running, you'll want to play the metronome at 180 and try and match your steps to each click. The best way to do this is by running on a treadmill and setting it to your regular, easy run pace. This will help you avoid inadvertently increasing your running speed as your steps quicken.

The goal is to take a step every time you hear the metronome click, without increasing your speed – this means that you'll need to shorten your stride and take more frequent steps. It will likely feel very tedious in the beginning, but after a week or so of running consistently with the metronome, you will reset your regular stride be able to maintain this cadence without hearing the beat.

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4. Add a dynamic warm up.

Dynamic warm up exercises get the blood flowing, loosen your muscles, and prepare your body for a successful run. Adding just a few minutes of dynamic warm up exercises before your run will help you be ready to go from the minute your start running.

A dynamic warm up doesn't have to take long - even just 5 minutes of movement and stretching will reduce your risk of injury and increase your body's response time on the run.

Try some of these dynamic exercises before your next run.

Standing Leg Extensions: Complete these exercises one leg at a time. Balance on your left foot while bringing your right knee up towards your chest, and then extend your right foot straight out in front of you. Complete about 10 with your right foot, and then do the same with your left foot.

Knee Hug to Chest: Similar to the leg extensions, balance on your left foot while bringing your right knee up to your chest, this time hugging it closer with your arms. Hold for about 10 to 20 seconds and then switch legs.

Forward Leg Swings: Balance on your left foot as you swing your right foot out in front of you as high as possible, and then behind you like a pendulum. Complete 10-20 leg swings before switching to the other leg.

Lateral Leg Swings: These are very similar to the forward leg swings, except you will now swing your leg side to side rather than forward and back. Balance on your left foot and swing your right leg out to the right as high as possible, and then to the left. Complete 10-20 leg swings before switching to the other leg.

Bent Leg Circles: Complete these exercises one leg at a time. Balance on your left foot and swing your right knee in a circular motion up to your chest, out to the right, back down and around to your chest again. Complete 10-20 circles before switching to the other leg.

Butt Kicks: These exercises can be done either in place or moving forward. Jog while kicking your heels up high enough to kick your but each time. Do not rush the tempo here either, and focus on your form.

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5. Practice proper hydration.

How much water you drink each day effects so many things – one of them being running. Not only does proper hydration improve your quality of sleep, your energy, mood, and skin, but it also improves your efficiency and energy on the run.

Hydrating throughout the day, even on rest days, prevents you from feeling sluggish and slow on the run. Consistently drinking water each day keeps your muscles at their prime, which helps get you closer to accomplishing those running goals.

The average adult should aim to drink half their body weight in ounces of water each day.

After doing the math, it's easy to figure out that this is quite a bit of water – and it doesn't include water you drink and then sweat out.

The easiest way to increase your water intake is to create a habit of regularly drinking water throughout the day. This can be challenging for those of us who are on our feet all day, busy at work, or traveling.

If this is the case, aim for meal and snack times as a time to consume most of your water. If you eat three meals a day, divide your recommended water intake by 3 and aim to consume that much water during each meal.

For example, an adult who weights 180 pounds is supposed to drink 90 ounces of water each day. Divide this by three, and you'll want to consume 30 ounces of water at each meal.

This will likely feel like quite a bit of water when you first begin, especially if you are trying to drink a large portion at one time. Purchasing a water bottle is a great way to keep track of your liquid intake, and an easy way to sip water consistently throughout the day.

Get in the habit of taking your water bottle with you everywhere you go, and before you know it you'll be sipping without even thinking about it!

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6. Record your runs in a training journal.

The biggest benefit of keeping a training journal is the added sense of accountability. Recording your runs throughout the year helps to hold yourself accountable and monitor your progress. Being able to look back on your pace, distance and how you felt during different runs each week, month and year is a great way to check in and keep yourself honest.

You don't need to buy anything fancy to keep track of your runs – even a standard planner or simple notebook will do. As long as you find something that is easy for you to write in and understand, you are good to go.

Some things to include in each of your training log entries:

- Workout type
  - Is it a cross training workout? Are you at the gym? Running intervals? Recording the type of workout is crucial to help make sense of your progress.
- Distance
  - How far did you run or go on the elliptical, spin bike, etc.? How long were each of your intervals?
- Pace/speed
  - How fast did you run? Did you run a tempo pace? Did you increase your speed for a portion of the run?
- Heart rate
  - What was your maximum and minimum heart rate? What zones were you in?
- Cadence
  - Average cadence throughout the run? Did it change at any point?
- Weather
  - Was it raining or snowing? Hot or cold? These factors play an important role in our physical capabilities during each workout.
- Terrain/route
  - Did you run through the neighborhood or woods? Was it hilly or uneven?
- How you felt
  - Did you start the run with a headache or sore throat? Or were you feeling a bit sluggish and drained from the day before? Did you have any aches/pains?

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7. Cool down with a stretching routine.

One of the most crucial aspects of running comes from an activity that isn't even running: recovery. Putting in the effort during training likely won't get you far if you aren't ending that effort with proper recovery.

Luckily, recovery doesn't have to be all consuming. Completing just a few simple stretches after each run and workout will help flush out lactic acid and keep your muscles loose and limber. Plan to dedicate 5-10 minutes after each run for some cool down stretches – you won't regret it. Here are some excellent stretches to get in the habit of completing after each run.

Seated Hamstring Stretch

Kneeling Quad Stretch

Standing IT Band Stretch

Runner's Lunge Stretch

Standing Calf Stretch

Standing Shin Stretch

Lying Glute Stretch

Standing Achilles Stretch

Toes Pose Feet Stretch

Half Split Stretch

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8. Sign up for a race!

You can't go wrong with a race. Whether it's a 5k for next weekend or a marathon 8 months down the road, signing up for a race is a great way to stay motivated and continue to improve. Signing up for a race gives you a concrete goal to work towards and challenges you to push yourself each week.

More often than not, signing up for a race involves some sort of training plan, which is a great way to improve your running abilities. Having a plan mapped out for you will guide you to gradually increase your distance and speed each week.

In general, 5k training can take anywhere from 3 – 12 weeks depending on your current fitness level. If you're a beginner runner, look for a 5k a few months down the road to set as your goal! If you're a seasoned runner just looking for some motivation, sign up for a local 5k to give yourself some extra motivation to run.

10k training usually takes between 10 – 14 weeks for beginner runners. The 10k is a great race to shoot for once you've completed a 5k and are hoping to continue to increase your fitness! It is the logical next step. Again, if you're a seasoned runner, signing up for a 10k in the middle of your training is a great way to mix things up and find some extra motivation.

Half marathon training takes between 12 – 16 weeks for nearly all runners. Finding a good training plan and following it for the duration of training is crucial if you want to enjoy your race. Here is a free one you can download: http://eepurl.com/dc9D41

This training plan includes 3 days of running per week, 1 rest day, and 1 weekly cross training and strength training workout. There is an optional yoga or second rest day each week. This training plan is great for beginners or runners wanting to train for a half but worried about finding the time! It includes structured speed workouts and regular recovery weeks along the way. Download it for free!

Marathon training takes between 16 – 20 weeks. If you're hoping to run your first marathon, finding a good training plan and setting aside the time to complete each workout is a must. Running a marathon is one of the most humbling and satisfying experiences out there, and if you decide to train for one you will learn so much along the way. Check out our marathon training plans here: https://runninforsweets.com/shop/

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9. Take one complete rest day every week.

Rest is so important! Forgetting to take a rest day or doing too much on your rest day will eventually lead to burnout, or worse – injury.

Designate *at least* one day per week to complete rest. This day allows your muscles and mind to recover from the hard work and rid any lingering soreness or aches and pains. No matter how motivated you feel, never skip a rest day.

If you're feeling antsy or wanting to accentuate your rest day, here are some activities you could try for an active rest day:

- Yoga
- Stretching
- Easy walking
- Foam rolling

Some things you should focus on during your rest day are:

- Catching up on your training log entries
- Reflecting on the past week
    - Make note of what went well, what was a struggle, etc.
- Looking ahead and planning out your workouts for the following week
- Staying hydrated
- Replenishing the protein and carbs you lost on the run

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10. Foam roll on your rest day each week.

A great way to make the most out of those rest days is to use the extra time for some recovery measures you may not get to during the week. Foam rolling is a great way to recover from long runs or hard workouts.

An easy way to make time for foam rolling every week is to schedule it for your rest day. Take some time during your rest day to roll out all your muscles. If you feel any tight, achy spots, make sure to hold the foam roller against those spots for 20-30 seconds. The pressure increases blood flow to the area, which helps flush out any toxins and built up lactic acid.

Here are some foam roller positions to try that target all the major running muscles:

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11. Slow down your easy run pace.

One of the biggest mistakes new runners make is that they run their easy runs too fast. Your easy runs should be just that – easy. If you find yourself struggling to maintain a conversation or feeling really sluggish trying to complete the distance, you're likely running too fast.

Easy runs should be completed much slower than your regular pace. These runs act as a form of active recovery and shouldn't cause any extra strain on your body. Slowing down the pace for one or two easy runs a week keeps your energy stocked, so you can really give it your all during those hard workouts a few days later.

Your easy recovery runs should be about 90 – 120 seconds slower *per mile* than your goal pace.

For example, if your goal pace is a 10 minute mile, you'll want to run your easy runs at a pace somewhere between 11:30 – 12:00 minute miles. Your speed workouts will be faster than 10 minute miles and your easy runs slower, so you won't actually be running your goal pace on a regular basis each week.

Slowing down on the run is often easier said than done. Most runners find themselves programmed to run one pace without even thinking about it.

Next time you head out the door, make note of the pace you begin your runs with. If this pace is faster than your average pace, you are likely starting out too fast and ending at a slower pace.

Make a point of forcing yourself to slow down right from the get-go. It will require a lot of focus and willpower to slow down, but your legs will definitely thank you.

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12. Practice intervals, fartleks, and tempo runs on a weekly basis.

Since your easy runs are a little slower, you'll now have some extra energy for more challenging workouts. Try implementing intervals, fartleks and tempo runs on a weekly basis. Designate one day each week to be your speed day and throw some variation of speed work into your mileage that day.

Mix it up each week between different types of workouts and see what you can accomplish. Even short intervals can have a big impact on your pace and endurance, and they don't require much time each week.

Here are two workouts to try:

30 Minute Interval Run

Warm up: 800 meters (0.5 mile) at easy run pace
- Interval #1: 400 meters (0.25 mile) at 5k pace
- Recovery: 400m @ easy run pace
- Interval #2: 400m @ 5k pace – 10 seconds
- Recovery: 400m @ easy run pace
- Interval #3: 400m @ 5k pace – 20 seconds
- Recovery: 400m @ easy run pace
- Interval #4: 400m @ 5k pace – 30 seconds
- Recovery: 400m @ easy run pace
- Interval #5: 400m @ 5k pace – 40 seconds
- Recovery: 400m @ easy run pace
- Interval #6: 400m @ 5k pace – 50 seconds
Cool Down: 800m (0.5 mile) recovery at easy run pace

Tempo Run

Warm Up: 10 minutes easy pace
Tempo: 20 minutes tempo pace (increase time period by 5 minutes each week)
Cool Down: 10 minutes easy pace

This workout seems simple enough, but there is one question that needs to be answered in order to execute it properly: how do we determine our tempo pace? Luckily, is quite simple. Your tempo pace should be about 45 - 60 seconds faster than your goal pace, OR 80-90% maximum heart rate (maximum HR = 220 – your age).

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13. Set an A, B, and C goal.

There's nothing worse than dreaming big but feeling like you always fall short when trying to accomplish your goal. Or on the flip side, being afraid of failure and setting goals that don't push you to reach your full potential.

To avoid this, try setting three goals each training season: an A, B and C goal. With this method, you'll be able to set your dream goal as the A goal – something that you've always wanted to accomplish but still sounds a bit out of reach. Your C goal will be the safe goal, something that you can fall back on if all else fails, and your B goal will land somewhere right in the middle.

This way, no matter what unexpected events may come your way during training, you'll still find success at the end.

For example:

My A goal is always my shoot for the stars, best day ever goal. This is something I've always wanted to accomplish and seems a little out of reach – usually a new PR or distance. My B goal is a little more attainable, something I really want to accomplish, and if all goes right will be very realistic to complete. My C goal is the goal that I set knowing that there's a 95% chance it will be completed – for example, just finishing the race. This is my back up goal, so if something goes wrong during training or the conditions on race day are purely awful, I will still be able to check this one off my list.

Maybe your goals would look something like this.

A Goal: Complete a half marathon in under 2:00 hours.

B Goal: Complete a half marathon with a PR (less than 2:07).

C Goal: Complete a half marathon.

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14. Run some hills!

Hill training is such a great resource for runners. Whether you've got one short hill, a long gradual hill, or a massive incline, running any type of hill will increase your strength.

Throw some intentional hill training into your workouts every few weeks. Run some hill repeats on the hill down your street, or just plan your route to include a variety of different hills. Running at an incline activates different muscles than those we use on flat ground, which strengthens muscles (like the glutes) that are so often forgotten about on our every day runs.

Judging hill workouts based on effort, rather than pace, can give us more insight into how to structure the workout, since pace will likely change based on the incline and length of hill.

Easy effort = long run pace; can easily have a conversation, feel like you could run for days
Medium effort = half marathon or short run pace; can still have a conversation but need to take breaks after talking for a while
Medium-hard effort = 10k pace; cannot have a full conversation but able to talk in short sentences
Hard effort = 5k pace; cannot talk for a full sentence, only single words
Hardest effort = sprinting; too hard to lose focus, cannot talk

Hill workouts are simpler than most runners think.

Step 1: Find a hill of *any* length and incline (at least 0.1 miles long). It should be a hill with little traffic, so you can easily run repeats up and down without having to stop.

Step 2: Plan a starting point about a mile or so away from the hill so you can run an easy warm up before starting your hill repeats.

Step 3: Run from your starting point to the hill at an easy effort. When you get to the hill, begin your hill workout intervals – start the intervals at a medium effort, and increase your effort with each repetition.

Step 4: After the last hill repeat, run back to your starting point as an easy cool down.

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15. Schedule your runs.

If you want to be a successful runner, you're going to have to plan for it. Finding time to run is challenging for any person, no matter their circumstances. Be intentional about finding a time to run and avoid starting your day assuming you'll figure it out as time passes (we all know how that goes).

Take some time at the beginning of the week to look through your schedule and plan when you will fit your run or workout in each day.

Here are some questions to consider as you schedule your runs.

Are you planning to run in the morning, at lunch, or in the evening?

Is there one especially busy day where you will be unable to run?

Is the weather forecast dangerous at any point this week?

Will you run at a gym or outside?

Will you have to drive to get to your starting place?

When will you fit in strength training – one day of the week? At lunch? A little after each run?

How long will it take you to cool down, recover, and get ready after each run?

Will you need to prep any meals or snacks for before/after a run this week?

Putting a plan in place will set you up for success.

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16. Try a short run *before* you eat.

Running with depleted energy is a great way to train your body to burn fat for fuel. During long runs, our bodies first rely on quick energy, like the carbs and sugars from the meal you ate beforehand. Running before you eat forces your body to find alternative resources for fuel.

While it's not a good idea to head out for your long run on an empty stomach, running a short, easy run before breakfast during the week is a great way to practice. Running on low fuel will train your body for those long runs - not to mention burn some fat before you start the day.

To begin, designate a short, easy run during the week to try completing before eating. This run should be no more than 3-4 miles in length the first time you try.

Make a plan to head out for your run before eating breakfast for the day.

Wake up early, have your coffee, and lace up your shoes to head out the door.

You will likely feel hungry as you begin your run, but this feeling usually goes away once you get started.

When you return home, be sure to fuel up with a healthy breakfast of carbs and proteins.

If the run goes well, try adding a mile to the distance the following week. These miles teach your body to burn fat as fuel when energy is depleted. This is a great way to train yourself for those miles during a race or long run when all of your fast-acting fuel (sugar) has been consumed. Your body will be able to switch to using fat as a fuel source to keep you feeling strong.

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17. Get fitted for shoes – and keep track of their mileage.

Whether you're just beginning or already a pro, finding proper fitting running shoes is a must. Many running stores have treadmills and other tools to help you find the right running shoes.

Every person is different, so just because you've heard great things about a certain shoe doesn't necessarily mean they will work for you. Getting fitted for running shoes will pay off in so many ways – you'll avoid injury, feel comfortable, and stay pain free.

Once you have your running shoes, keep track of the mileage you run while wearing them. Wearing your shoes down too much may change your gait without you even realizing it. Be sure to get new running shoes every 300-500 miles to avoid this. For most runners, this ends up being once every five or six months.

However, if you're training for a distance race – such as a marathon or sometimes even a half marathon – you will likely want to replace your shoes more often than twice a year.

Keep track of your mileage and start to pay attention to the soles of your shoes once you've logged around 300 miles. The soles of the shoes will start to show noticeable signs of wear and tear. Once the soles are starting to wear down, it's important to switch out your shoes.

If you continue to run on worn out shoes, you may be putting yourself at risk for overuse injuries. As the soles wear down, the cushion and support within the shoes do as well. If you were fitted for these running shoes, they will no longer be supporting your feet in the way that was best determined when you bought them.

If you're starting to notice any unusual aches and pains in your feet or legs, be sure to check out your soles.

18. Practice negative splits.

Running negative splits is a great challenge for the mind and body. A run with negative splits means that the speed at which you ran each mile got faster as you went along.

Most runners naturally tend to do the opposite. We get tired as we run further and gradually start to slow down. Challenging yourself to hold back in the beginning and then continue giving it your all for the final miles is a great confidence booster. I bet you'll be surprised what you can accomplish!

You can try negative splits with any interval or tempo workout, as well as just a regular run. Make a point to hold yourself back in the beginning by forcing yourself to run slower than your usual pace. Gradually speed up just a few seconds per mile for each new mile or interval.

Negative splits could be as simple as running each mile one second faster than the previous, or taking larger chunks of time off each mile split.

For example, a 5 mile run with negative splits may look like this:

- Mile 1 – 10:30
- Mile 2 – 10:15
- Mile 3 – 10:00
- Mile 4 – 9:45
- Mile 5 – 9:30

Or, it may look something like this:

- Mile 1 – 10:30
- Mile 2 – 10:28
- Mile 3 – 10:26
- Mile 4 – 10:24
- Mile 5 – 10:23

There is no right or wrong answer when it comes to negative splits, as long as each mile gets faster in some capacity.
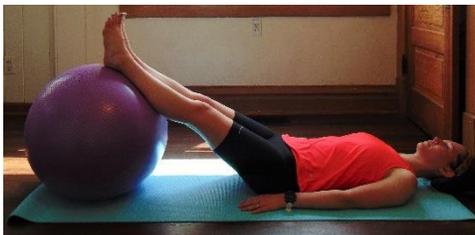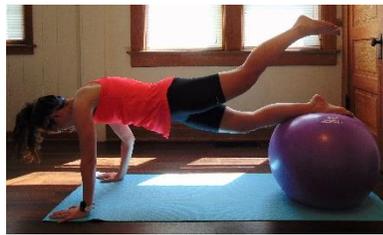
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19. Complete some balance and stability exercises.

Balance is an important aspect of running strength, but often overlooked. Completing balance and stability exercises is a very effective method of strength training. These types of exercises isolate one muscle at a time, bringing weaknesses to the surface and forcing each muscle to work, rather than letting others compensate.

Investing in a stability ball or bosu ball will become great resource for adding balance to any regular bodyweight exercises.

Here are some simple exercises to try on a stability ball.

20. Check for muscle imbalances.

Muscle imbalances can easily develop among runners, and you'll likely never find out until you develop an injury. To prevent this, you can check for muscle imbalances regularly by completing a few simple exercises.

When one side of the body is stronger than the other, it often changes your gait and stride without you even realizing. This change usually leads to some form of pain or injury from the overcompensation. Avoid these common injuries by checking regularly for muscle imbalances, and completing exercises to fix them.

Here are a few great exercises to use to find and fix muscle imbalances.

Single leg squat – check for the knee on your grounded leg angling in or out. If it does, your muscles are weaker on this side.

Single leg bridge – check your hip alignment. If one side sags down when you hold the bridge, this side is weaker than the other.

Kneeling Spiral Twist – check if you are able to twist the same amount on both sides. If not, one side may be tighter or weaker than the other.

In-line lunge – make sure that both feet are in a straight line when performing this exercise. Then, check to see if your front knee angles in or out. If it does, your muscles are weaker on this side.

Single leg deadlift – if you find yourself losing balance when completing this exercise on a certain side, your balance is weaker on this side.

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21. Eat to run.

If you want to reach your full running potential, training will involve various aspects of your life outside of just your workouts - which includes food. Hitting your dream goal won't be so realistic if you're skipping meals or binge eating fried food for every meal.

Treat all of your meals and snacks as fuel for your run. Fill your body with healthy, nutritious foods. Stock up on fruits and vegetables, whole foods, and avoid processed foods. Putting good foods in will bring you one step closer to those results you've been craving.

I have experimented personally with nutrition and running two times before and been decently surprised with the results. The first time was when I gave up sugar for 40 days. With a huge sweet tooth (and ice cream addiction) this was an incredible challenge.

During this time, I was training for a 25k race. In the beginning, my body felt slow and lethargic on each of my runs, but as time passed and I got used to fueling with foods other than sugar, each run started to feel better and better.

This past summer, I decided to try the Paleo diet in hopes that it would improve the symptoms of my autoimmune disease. I experienced similar results here – my body initially felt very slow and lethargic on each run, but as it adapted to its new fuel, I started to feel better and better.

My energy levels piqued during both experiments and I experienced firsthand what proper nutrition can do for us runners. It is truly amazing how our bodies respond when we fuel them with healthy, nutrition foods.

Remember that you get out what you put in. If you're putting in healthy, wholesome foods, you're results will mimic this.

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22. Refuel after every run.

Just as you're trying to eat the right kinds of foods during each meal, it's important to eat at the right times as well. Refueling within 90 minutes of every run will replenish the lost sugars and give your muscles the protein they need to rebuild (when they need it). Aim for a 2:1 ratio of carbs to protein.

Here are some simple snacks that have a great carb to protein balance.

Apple slices with peanut butter

Chocolate milk

Cottage cheese

Oatmeal raisin protein balls

- ½ cup peanut butter
- ½ cup honey
- 1 ½ cup oats
- 1 tsp vanilla
- 1 scoop vanilla protein powder
- ½ cup raisins
- 1 tbsp chia seeds

Hard boiled eggs

Fruit smoothies (here is the recipe for my favorite):

- ½ cup frozen peaches
- ½ cup orange juice
- 2 ice cubes
- 1 scoop protein powder
- ½ cup vanilla yogurt

String cheese with crackers

Greek yogurt with fruit or granola

Toast with peanut butter or honey

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23. Practice your planks.

Your core keeps you strong and stable during each run, especially those moments when you start to fatigue. Increasing your core strength will help improve your running posture, and therefore your efficiency on the run.

Planks are a simple exercise that pack a lot of power. While their primary focus is on the core, holding a plank is also working your arms, shoulders, back and legs. Incorporating planks into your daily routine is simple, and the benefits are plentiful!

Try this 30 day plank challenge!

30 DAY PLANK CHALLENGE

DAY & PLANK	✓	DAY & PLANK	✓
Day 1: 45 seconds		Day 16: 1 minute, 15 seconds	
Day 2: 45 seconds		Day 17: 1 minute, 20 seconds	
Day 3: 50 seconds		Day 18: 1 minute, 20 seconds	
Day 4: 50 seconds		Day 19: 1 minute, 25 seconds	
Day 5: 55 seconds		Day 20: 1 minute, 30 seconds	
Day 6: 60 seconds		Day 21: REST	
Day 7: REST		Day 22: 1 minute, 35 seconds	
Day 8: 55 seconds		Day 23: 1 minute, 35 seconds	
Day 9: 1 minute		Day 24: 1 minute, 40 seconds	
Day 10: 1 minutes, 5 seconds		Day 25: 1 minute, 40 seconds	
Day 11: 1 minutes, 5 seconds		Day 26: 1 minute, 45 seconds	
Day 12: 1 minutes, 10 seconds		Day 27: 1 minute, 50 seconds	
Day 13: 1 minutes, 15 seconds		Day 28: REST	
Day 14: REST		Day 29: 1 minute, 55 seconds	
Day 15: 1 minutes, 10 seconds		Day 30: 2 minutes	

30 Ways to Become a Better Runner

24. Activate your glutes and pump your arms.

Most runners think of their quads, calves and hamstrings on the run, and usually forget about the rest. However, in doing so, they're forgetting about some of the greatest weapons they have at their disposal.

Forcing yourself to activate your glutes and pump your arms during each and every run is a recipe for power. Keep those glutes active by completing regular strengthening exercises. Remind yourself to pump your arms on the run when you feel yourself start to get tired and it may just be the extra energy you'd been needing.

Check out these glute exercises and this dumbbell arm workout to keep your full body strong!

15 Minute Dumbbell Arm Workout

- Squats with Press x 15
- Bicep Curls x 15
- Bent Over Row x 15
- Tricep Extension x 15
- Frontal Raise x 15
- Dumbbell Swing x 15
- Single Leg Deadlift x 15

30 Minute Glute Workout

- Leg Raises x 20
- Hip Lifts x 20
- Bridge x 30 seconds
- Single Leg Bridge x 10 (each side)
- Leg Extension (with stability ball) x 20
- Clamshells x 40
- Side Plank & Hip Dip x 20 (each side)
- Single Leg Squats x 20 (each side)
- Bosu Ball Squats x 20

30 Ways to Become a Better Runner

25. Remember your why.

Running feels easy when motivation is high and time is free, but when things start to get tough we begin to question why we are doing it.

Always remind yourself why you started. Did you want to get healthier? Meet a goal? Run for a bigger purpose? Gain self confidence? Whatever your reasoning, write it down and keep it somewhere you'll remember. Those reasons are what's going to keep you moving forward when your motivation fades.

Write down your reasons for starting and your goals here! Use this page as a reminder when things start to get tough and your motivation fades.

Why I decided to start running:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

My goal with starting running was:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

30 Ways to Become a Better Runner

26. Invest in a GPS watch.

One of the best things about running is that it requires very little equipment to get started. Some shorts, a shirt and shoes are all you need to head out for a run.

However, if you are going to purchase one accessory to improve your running, let it be a GPS watch. These watches can tell you so many statistics about each run that can help you improve - the fact that they measure pace and distance is just a start. Many watches now measure heart rate, stride length, cadence, elevation, and so much more. Investing in a GPS watch will provide you with so many tools to improve.

Here are some links to the best GPS watch options for runners.

Garmin Forerunner series

https://explore.garmin.com/en-US/forerunner/

Apple Watch

https://www.apple.com/watch/

Suunto Fitness Watches

https://www.suunto.com/Product-search/Fitness-Watches/

Fitbit Iconic

https://www.fitbit.com/ionic

30 Ways to Become a Better Runner

27. Know when to run and when to skip.

There will always come a time when it's actually more beneficial to skip a run and take a rest day than it is to power through. Knowing how to determine if you're just feeling lazy, or are really needing some extra time off is key.

Evaluate your progress lately to determine if you've been feeling burnt out, injured, run down, or just plain lazy.

Here is a guide to help you decide whether you should skip, or suck it up and just run.

6 times you need to be like Nike and just do it:

It's miserably hot and humid outside, and I really don't feel like running in it.

My legs are a little tired today and I really would rather rest.

I'm feeling incredibly lazy and unmotivated and just want to binge watch tv.

It's raining/snowing outside right now!

My nose is running and I might be getting a cold.

I'm feeling pretty stressed.

6 times you need to skip your run and stay in:

I hear thunder and see lightning in the distance.

My right leg hurts in one specific spot all day long, and feels worse when I walk or run on it.

I have a fever and miserable cough.

I have felt burned out and sluggish for the past few weeks.

The only way I can get my run done is if I sacrifice more than 2 hours of my normal amount of sleep.

There is a layer of ice on the sidewalks and roads.

30 Ways to Become a Better Runner

28. Follow the 10% rule.

Sometimes our motivation can actually be harmful as we find ourselves wanting to do more and more each day, feeling the need to improve as quickly as possible.

Whether you are aiming to increase speed or mileage, working towards a goal brings many different emotions. Sometimes it's frustration and sometimes it's pure elation. Regardless of the emotion, having a goal in mind often makes us want to do everything possible to make sure we achieve it.

This can be dangerous to runners, who are often overachievers in their sport. Goal setting is great, but be sure you aren't doing too much all at once. Drastically increasing mileage or speed will put you on the direct path to injury, illness or burnout.

So how do you avoid running too much, too soon?

Create a plan to achieve your goals that increases slowly and methodically. It will likely feel that you could be doing more or improving faster, especially in the beginning – but don't give in. Hold yourself back, especially in those first few weeks.

Try to follow the 10% rule: don't increase anything by more than 10% per week. This rule was created as a guide for runners and athletes to help them avoid injuries from overuse. If you are increasing your mileage, play it safe by not increasing by more than 10% each week. If you're increasing speed, start at a comfortable pace and don't increase your speed by more than 10% each week.

30 Ways to Become a Better Runner

29. Find a road or trail that you enjoy.

It's surprising how much outside factors can affect our running progress. Running somewhere that you enjoy and look forward to going will keep you motivated to improve. It's hard to put in a lot of effort when you're stuck somewhere that you hate.

Take advantage of these outside factors by finding yourself somewhere to run that you love.

Do you love running through neighborhoods? Find a new route that takes you past some beautiful houses. Do you love running trails? Set your stuff out the night before and plan to drive to a nearby trail. Or would you rather run on the roads? Do some exploring to find some well visited country roads.

No matter what you love, there is something for everyone.

30. Be consistent.

If you want to find success, you're going to have to work for it. The key to becoming a better runner is consistency. Keep at it, even on the days when it feels like everything is going wrong. Progress is not a straight line, and there are bound to be unexpected twists and turns up ahead.

Continue to move forward even when it feels like you've been pushed two steps back. As you continue, you'll be able to look back on where you started and may surprise yourself with just how far you've come.