

# Running Form

Running form varies from person to person. Differences in body types, i.e., limb lengths and muscle balance, may cause individuals to have variations in their running style. Attempts to force an individual to conform to one standard may do more harm than good. However, there are some basic guidelines that may improve running efficiency without overhauling the individual's natural stride. Generally, the form and technique for all types of running are fairly constant. The following information addresses optimal running form for the major body segments

## Head

The head should be held high, with the chin neither pointing up nor down. Allowing the head to ride forward puts undue strain on the muscles of the upper back.

## Shoulders

The shoulders should assume a neutral posture, neither rounded forward nor forcefully arched backward. Rounding the shoulders forward is the most common fault in everyday posture as well as with running. This is usually associated with tightness of the chest and shoulder muscles. Another problem occurs when the shoulders start to rise with fatigue or increased effort. This position not only wastes energy, but can also adversely affect breathing.

## Arms

Throughout the arm swing, the elbows should stay at roughly a 90-degree bend. The wrists stay straight and the hands remain loosely cupped with palms facing inward. The arm swing should be free of tension, but do not allow the hands to cross the midline of the body.

## Trunk and Pelvis

The trunk should remain over its base of support, the pelvis. A common problem with fatigue is allowing the trunk to lean forward of the legs and pelvis. This forces the lower back muscles to spend too much energy resisting further trunk collapse to the front.

## Legs

For sustained running, much of the power is generated from below the knee. Energy is wasted as the knees come higher and the large muscles around the hips and thighs are engaged. While running, concentrate on getting a strong push-off from the ankle of the back leg. This helps to naturally lengthen the stride. Lengthening the stride by reaching forward with the front leg will be counterproductive.

## Feet

The feet should be pointing directly forward while running. With fatigue and certain muscle imbalances, the legs and feet will start to rotate outward. This may hinder performance and create abnormal stresses that contribute to injury.

## Breathing

Breathing should be rhythmic in nature and coordinated with the running stride.