Lesson 2.2

Proper Running Form

By Carone Fitness

Proper Running Form

Each runner tends to have his or her own running style or form. However, there are certain techniques that each runner should pay attention to in order to make sure that they have proper form.

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Reasons for Good Form

Good form is important for several reasons.

Running with good form

- Can make you more confident in your running abilities.
- Can make your run more enjoyable.
- Prevents injuries such as shin splints and back and shoulder pain.

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Elements

Proper Running Form involves four main elements.

1. Footstrike
2. Stride
3. Body Angle
4. Arm Action

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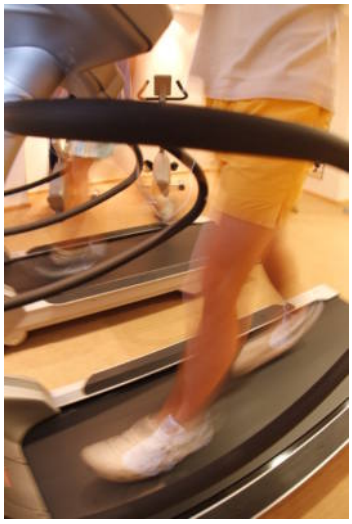
1. Footstrike



According to Bob Glover, author of *The Runner's Handbook*, when you run you hit the ground with a force three times your body weight. Because of this, it is important to hit the ground as gently as possible.

Recommended footstrike for most runners is a heel-ball pattern. This involves landing gently on the heel, rolling forward to the ball, and then pushing off with the ball of your foot.

Keep the toes pointed forward.

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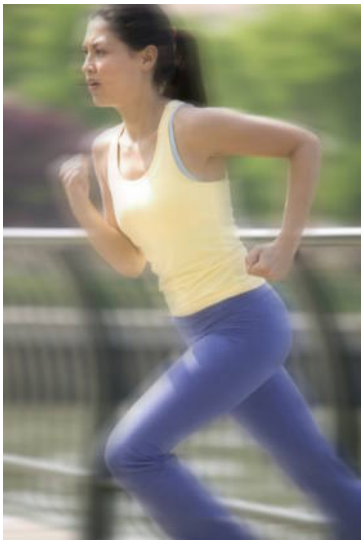
2. Stride



Stride is the length of your steps as you run.

Beginners should not worry too much about stride. However, for an intermediate runner who wants to increase his/her distance, stride is important.

Proper stride involves hitting the ground with the hips over the front foot and the knee bent.

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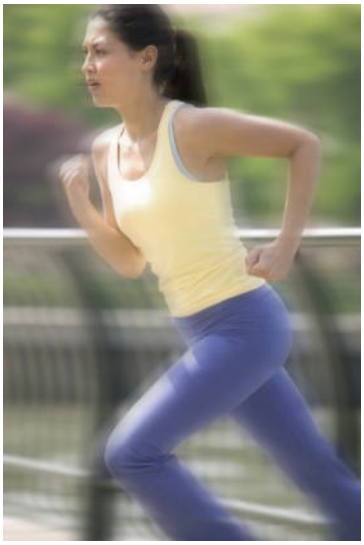
2. Stride



Don't feel pressure to match the stride of another runner. The most appropriate stride for each individual is generally the one that feels the most comfortable.

To increase the length of your stride, focus not on reaching your front leg further, but on increasing the propulsion or push off of your rear leg. Increasing your muscular strength in your legs can also help with this. In addition, flexibility training can also help you increase your stride and improve your running speed.

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3. Body Angle

How should you hold your body while running? Bob Glover suggests, "The best advice is to relax. Allow your body to move as freely and with as little rigidity as possible."

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3. Body Angle

When running, you want to also maintain that proper posture.

- Keep that same ear, shoulder, hip alignment.
- Keep the abdominals tight with the buttocks slightly tucked.
- Keep your shoulders relaxed.
- Don't bend at the waist or lean too far forward or back.
- Don't keep your head down, looking at the ground. Instead, keep your head up and your eyes forward.

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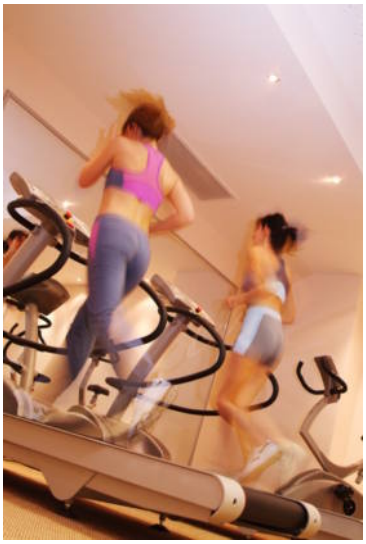
4. Arm Action



Good arm action when running helps you maintain balance and conserve energy.

An advanced runner might "pump" his/her arms in order to add propulsion and speed. However, a beginner or intermediate runner shouldn't worry so much about arm pumping as maintaining proper position.

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4. Arm Action

Proper arm position when running means allowing your arms to hang loosely.

Keep your shoulders relaxed and away from your ears. Carrying your arms too high can cause back, neck, and shoulder tension, muscle fatigue, and can even shorten your stride. Carrying your arms too low can cause a forward lean.

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4. Arm Action

You should keep your arms between your hips and chest—with your hand coming up towards your chest on the upward swing and down by the side of your hips on your downward swing. Keep your elbows unlocked and away from your body. Don't clench your fists.

Every runner may vary slightly. The key is to keep your arms and shoulders relaxed and moving in a comfortable manner.

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Uphill Form

When going uphill, there are a few changes you may need to make to your form to ease the transition.

- Increase your knee lift.
- Shorten the length of your stride.
- Increase your arm swing.
- Push harder off the back foot.
- Lean slightly into the hill.
- Don't tense up; keep your arms, neck, and shoulders relaxed.
- Maintain a steady rhythm, even if you have to slow your pace.

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Downhill Form

While gravity makes downhill running a bit easier, there is still proper technique for downhill running.

- Try to maintain the proper form used on flat roads.
- Try to keep your center of gravity over your front leg.
- Leaning forward or back will control your speed. (Forward will increase your speed; back will slow you down).
- Control your arm motion.
- Keep your footstrike light.
- It's okay to land on the ball of your foot instead of the heel to absorb more shock.

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Breathing

When running it is important to relax and breathe through the belly, not the chest.

Chest breathing is shallow and makes your chest rise.

Belly breathing, on the other hand, is slow and relaxed and allows your body to bring in more oxygen. When you "belly-breathe" your stomach should expand rather than your chest.

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Breathing

When exercising the general rule is to breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth. However, because running requires so much oxygen for the body, Bob Glover claims that, when running, it's okay to "open your mouth and suck in all the air you need."

Some runners try to time their breathing with every other footstrike. Feel free to experiment with different running/breathing exercises. However, don't feel like you have to follow any specific breathing pattern. Just do what is most comfortable for you.

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