

10 Tips for Beginning Runners

By [Thad McLaurin](#) • For Active.com

Spring is in the air and so is the pitter pat of beginning runners hitting the roads and trails across the country. Similar to the hoards of new gym goers in January excited by New Year's resolutions to become fitter, [beginning runners](#) often hit the road at the first sign of warmer weather with similar aspirations.

According to Running USA's State of the Sport 2010 report, an estimated 43 million total runners nationwide enjoyed the sport in 2009. That's up 6.7 percent from 2008. Actually in the last nine years, total running/jogging participation is up 40 percent, [running/walking on the treadmill](#) is up 38 percent, walking for fitness is up 21 percent, and trail running is up 16 percent.

More: [How to Burn More Calories on Your Run](#)

Many new runners head out with good intentions and admiral goals, but often find themselves overwhelmed or unenthused with the progress of their new activity. Why is that? Running is often the first choice of new fitness enthusiasts because of the low start-up costs, the fact that you can do it just about anywhere, and there are no long term dues or fees associated with running. One sport that hasn't been hurt by the bad economy is running. Buy some shorts and a T-shirt and a [good pair of running shoes](#) and you're good to go. How hard can it be, right?

Because of the low cost and ease of access, many new runners aren't prepared mentally or physically for the new demands they're about to put on their bodies and well as the time investment needed. All good things come in time and running is definitely one of those "good things." Here are 10 tips to help ensure success with your new adventure into running.

More: [Race-Day Tips for Your First 5K](#)

1. Get Fitted: Pay a visit to your local independent running store. Often these smaller stores have more knowledgeable staff than the big box retail stores. Many provide gait analysis which reveals your foot strike pattern. Knowing this will determine whether you overpronate, underpronate or have a neutral gait which will help in selecting the [best shoe for your foot type](#). Don't skimp on your shoes. Be prepared to pay \$80 to \$100 for a good pair of running shoes.

More: [Importance of a Proper Shoe Fit](#)

2. Get Technical: Invest a little in some technical fabric running shorts, tops, and socks. Technical fabric can be made of a variety of fibers including natural (bamboo, smartwool) and synthetic (polyester, nylon, Lyrca) materials. Avoid 100 percent cotton. It tends to retain sweat causing chaffing, irritation, and even blisters. Technical fabrics allow the moisture to rise to the surface where it can evaporate. They still get damp, but not nearly as much as 100 percent cotton.

3. Get a Group: Motivation, inspiration, accountability, and commitment increase dramatically when you're a part of a [running group](#) or at least have a running buddy. Everyone experiences times when they don't want to run, but if you know you have buddies counting on you, it can make all the difference in the world when it comes to rolling over and getting out of bed. Check with your local running store. Many provide beginning running groups or know of running coaches in the area that work with beginning runners.

4. Get a Plan: Just getting out the door and running often does not work for many people, especially if you've been sedentary or away from exercise for any period of time. Find a [beginning running plan](#) to follow. There are beginning running programs online or you can contact your local running store, running club, or running coaches in the area to inquire about beginning running plans. One of the most effective ways to begin is with a run/walk method. With my new runners, I often begin with a 1-minute run/ 5-minute walk interval. We repeat the [run/walk interval](#) five times for a great 30-minute workout. Over the next 11 weeks, we gradually increase the running and decrease the walking portions of the intervals until the group is running 30 minutes with no walking.

5. Get Acclimated: Whenever you begin new exercise your body's fitness level will actually dip a little while you [acclimate](#) to the new demands you're putting on your body. This is when most new runners give up. I've heard many a new runner say, "If I feel this tired, drained, and wiped out, what's the point in running?" Understand before you take up running that it takes your body about four to six weeks to acclimate to the new demands. Anticipating that "wiped out feeling" can actually make it less of a shock. Just know that you're going to feel the effects of your new activity. Hang in there and before you know it, you'll pull out of that dip and begin to feel stronger than before you started. Also, start slowly. Many new runners experience shin splints, pulled calf muscles, cramping quads, or sore hips from going out too fast or from doing too much too soon. Take it slow and ease into your new activity.

More: [Basic Gear for a Beginning Runner](#)

More: [3 Plant-Based Power Meals for Athletes](#)

6. Get Fueled: Fueling your new activity is very important. Timing is key. It's a good rule of thumb to eat about 200 to 400 calories of mostly complex carbs and a little protein about 1.5 hours prior to your run. This will give your body time to digest the food and provide your body with the needed energy for your activity. Not eating or not eating enough before your run can make your run feel labored or cause your muscles to feel fatigued. Eating too soon can sometimes cause stomach issues.

Digestion usually stops or slows dramatically when you run, so if you eat just before running, then all the food will just sit there. It will go nowhere and do little to provide you with little energy. What works best for your pre-run snack will vary from runner to runner, but some foods to try include yogurt with granola, an English muffin with peanut butter, or half a peanut butter sandwich and a banana. [Post-run refueling](#) is important too. Eating a 4:1 ratio of carbs to protein within 30 to 45 minutes after a run is optimal timing to provide your tired muscles with the fuel they need to rebuild quickly. Lowfat chocolate milk actually has the 4:1 ratio.

7. Get Hydrated: Being [well-hydrated](#) is just as important as being well fueled. Be sure to drink about 20 oz. of water about two hours prior to running. This will give it time to pass through your system and be voided before your run. During your run, drinking water is fine. Once you're running more than 45 to 60 minutes, you'll need to switch to a sports drink to help replace vital electrolytes which are minerals (sodium, potassium, magnesium, calcium, and phosphorus) that play a major role in helping to maintain proper water balance in your body. Electrolytes can be lost through your perspiration. Sports drinks such as Gatorade contain these important minerals.

8. Get Warmed-Up: Before you head out on your run, be sure to warm-up your muscles with a [dynamic stretch](#). A five-minute walk is a great way to do this. This will help decrease the chance of your muscles feeling tight during your run. Save the traditional stretch-and-hold stretches for after your run.

More: [5 Key Stretches for Runners](#)

9. Get In Tune With Your Body: Listen to your body. If you're feeling something other than regular workout-related muscle soreness, don't run. Running through the pain is never a good idea. If you're experiencing pain along your shin, hip, [IT Band](#) or any area of the body that's beyond normal muscle soreness, ice it, elevate it, and use your normal choice of anti-inflammatory medication and rest. When you no longer feel any pain, ease back into your running. If the pain persists, don't let it linger. Go see your doctor.

More: [27 Ways to Run Better Everyday](#)

10. Get Rest: Rest is just as important as your workout. [Rest](#) allows your body time to rebuild and recover. When you run or do any type of exercise, you actually create little micro tears in the muscle tissue. Your body then rushes in to rebuild and repair the tears. This is the normal muscle-building process that makes you stronger. However, if you don't take the proper rest, your body may not have time to fully repair before your next run causing you to feel sore, tired, and sluggish. When you first start your beginning running program, it's a good idea to have at least one day of rest in between runs.