

New York **runner**

Living the Running Life

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"I'm a Runner"

Six steps to make running your lifestyle

by Mackenzie Lobby

To transform yourself from "someone who runs" into "a runner," try following these six simple steps as you stride toward your new goal. Committing to just one of them can put you on the right track toward living the running life.

1

Buddy System Join a Training Group

Hopping on board with a training group can bring you into the running fold almost instantly. "Find a list of local clubs and choose one that will meet your needs and provide training that will benefit you," advises Central Park Track Club New Balance coach Tony Ruiz.

"For a new runner, or someone coming back to running after a time away, a training group can be a tremendous boost," says head coach Frank Handelman of Team for Kids.

"Runners form deep friendships from shared experience."

—Frank Handelman

John Honerkamp, a top New York Athletic Club runner and a coach at St. John's University, agrees, adding that "group training allows you to share the work a little. It's all about the buddy system."

A training group can also turn the exercise of running into a social activity. Handelman points out that "our runners form deep friendships, the kind that come from a shared experience. They will then train together on their own and often end up running the marathon together." Coach Shelly Glover, who leads NYRR Running Classes, concurs. "The group experience is the way to go for the camaraderie of the group adventure, the support, and the encouragement," she says. What's more, a training group supplies you with a whole community of other runners who are up for food and drinks after the miles are logged and the work is done.

Mackenzie Lobby is a freelance writer and marathon runner based in Minneapolis.

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Toe the Line Goal-Setting

If you aren't running toward something, where are you going? Setting realistic goals is an important part of becoming a runner. While a training group and a coach can help immensely with goal-setting, you may also choose to do it on your own.

"Stick to a schedule to gradually increase your mileage and intensity."

—Dr. Ethan Gologor

Sports psychologist and City University of New York psychology professor Ethan Gologor, PhD., emphasizes the importance of setting achievable goals. "The goal shouldn't be, 'I want to be the world's fastest,'" he notes. "Don't try too much too soon. It's very important to have a relatively structured schedule with gradual increases in mileage and intensity."

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Tracking Progress The Running Log

No matter how competitive you are, a race calendar is a good way to set goals. If you're relatively new to running, Ruiz suggests a 5K race after six weeks of training and a 10K at 10 weeks in. At 15 weeks, a half-marathon is a reasonable goal (if you've trained consistently).

To cut down on the intimidation that many newer runners feel when it comes to racing, keep your goals broad. Rather than setting a time goal, choose a distance to finish. "Your first race should be about conquering the distance, the terrain, and the elements on race day," says Handelman. Goals, especially reaching and exceeding them, keep the training interesting. Rather than stalling out with boredom, you'll find yourself enjoying the daily challenge.

A running log, or as Glover calls it, "a little history book starring you," can help turn your training into a concrete, rather than hypothetical, endeavor. "Keeping a log and learning from it, and also sharing your observations and responses with

22 the next week." A good rule of thumb is to increase your weekly mileage about 10 percent each week.

Technology has made keeping a running log easier than ever. Coach Devon Martin of Central Park Track Club New Balance has her athletes use strands.com to track everything from mileage to diet and sleep. "If someone's race didn't go well, I can see what was going on for the ten days before," she says. The online training tools also allow you to check out how other people are training. This can give you new workout ideas or simply the motivation to keep forging ahead.

**"Your training log is
a little history book
starring you."**

—Shelly Glover

your coach, will go a very long way to helping you improve and enjoy your running," adds Handelman.

Dr. Gologor also believes that a log can keep you committed to the training. It allows you to identify tangible progress as well as challenging days. "It can spur you to do more, too," he adds. "If you ran 20 miles one week, you might push yourself to do

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Gearing Up Equipment

Part of the beauty of running is its no-frills nature. While the latest and greatest water belt and a fancy running hat are nice accessories, go straight to the shoe wall before you worry about the bells and whistles.

“The right shoes provide comfort, delay fatigue, and can minimize the risk of injury.”

—Dr. Paul Langer

A running specialty store can fit you for proper footwear.

“We take 1,000 to 1,500 footsteps per mile and we land with two and a half to three times our body weight, so the impact of running can add up quickly,” says Dr. Paul Langer, DPM, a podiatrist and a clinical advisor for the American Running Association. “Properly fitted shoes provide comfort, delay the onset of fatigue, and may minimize the risk of injury.”

You can set yourself up for success by creating a good foundation. Buying a pair of shoes with the right amount of cushioning and stability for your feet and gait can save many aches and pains down the road.

Remember that the right pair of shoes for your running partner may not be the best for you. Langer suggests visiting a reputable running store that will have a good selection of shoes. “I advise my patients to compare at least three different shoes because studies have shown that comfort is relative and we need a point of reference. Standing or walking in a running shoe is not a good way to assess comfort—you have to run in it,” he advises.

You should replace your shoes regularly, roughly every 300–500 miles. Your training log comes in handy here: Record what shoes you wear on your runs so you can easily go back and add up the mileage.

5

Getting Psyched Mental Preparation

You’ve put in the training and are ready for your first goal race. Visualization can provide you with a priceless tool for competition, and it only takes a few minutes.

“Before a race, try to anticipate being on the race course,” recommends Dr. Gologor. “Even if you’re amidst 30,000 other people at the start line, there’s time.” Whether you’re on the subway or lying in your

“Practicing visualization can have significant benefits.”

—Devon Martin

bed the night before, seeing the race play out in your head can alleviate some of the anxiety and fear that can accompany race day.

Martin tells her athletes to visualize the race from start to finish, providing positive reinforcement over and over again. “It doesn’t have to be time-consuming. Even if you do it once a week for five to 10 minutes, you’ll reap the benefits,” she says.

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Extra Extra When You're Not Running

With training buddies, goals, a log, good shoes, and a race under your belt, you should begin thinking about the extra things that will keep you healthy and help you improve.

First and foremost, hydrate. Drink water in your car, at work, and at the dinner table. While most people need 8–10 glasses of water a day, runners typically need more. Also consider mixing it up with an electrolyte drink like Gatorade.

Consider taking time in the evenings, while you read or watch TV to use ice and self-massage to relieve soreness. Fill paper cups with water and freeze them to make icing cups. For self-massage, you can choose between a number of

different inexpensive devices, like The Stick or a foam roller, which can help work out those stubborn knots.

“Sleep can drastically improve your performance on race day.”

—Devon Martin

While these extras are important, remember there are only 24 hours in each day. Here comes the good part: “Sleep is probably the number one thing that can drastically improve your performance in workouts and races,” says Martin.

A Running Start



NYRR is committed to helping people of *all* ages transform their lives through running. Whether you're training for your first 5K or your 41st marathon, we're here to help. Similarly, our Youth and Community Services programs are developing the next generation of runners. Through initiatives like the Mighty Milers program, kids from around the city and across the nation are adopting the running lifestyle. During the 2009–10 school year, the program helped 100,000 kids from all 50 states and South Africa to run 2.5 million miles! And closer to home, 2,500 New York City kids in our Young Runners after-school program are training for distances between one mile and 10 kilometers. They're well on the way to developing a healthy, lifelong habit. No matter where you are on the path to becoming a runner, we're glad you've joined our community.

Pulling It Together

Routine is king when it comes to the running life. Establishing a schedule for eating, sleeping, and running will help keep you from falling off the wagon in any one area. While the first few days of early-morning running may be a challenge, you'll soon find yourself getting out of bed and stepping into your running shoes without a second thought.

With each step and added milestone in your training log, running will begin to feel more necessary than supplementary. “You are truly a runner when you find yourself running because it's just what you do,” says Glover. As you run toward this state of being, Honerkamp counsels, “it's not just about getting through training; it's all about enjoying the journey along the way.” ■