UP *and* *RUNN*
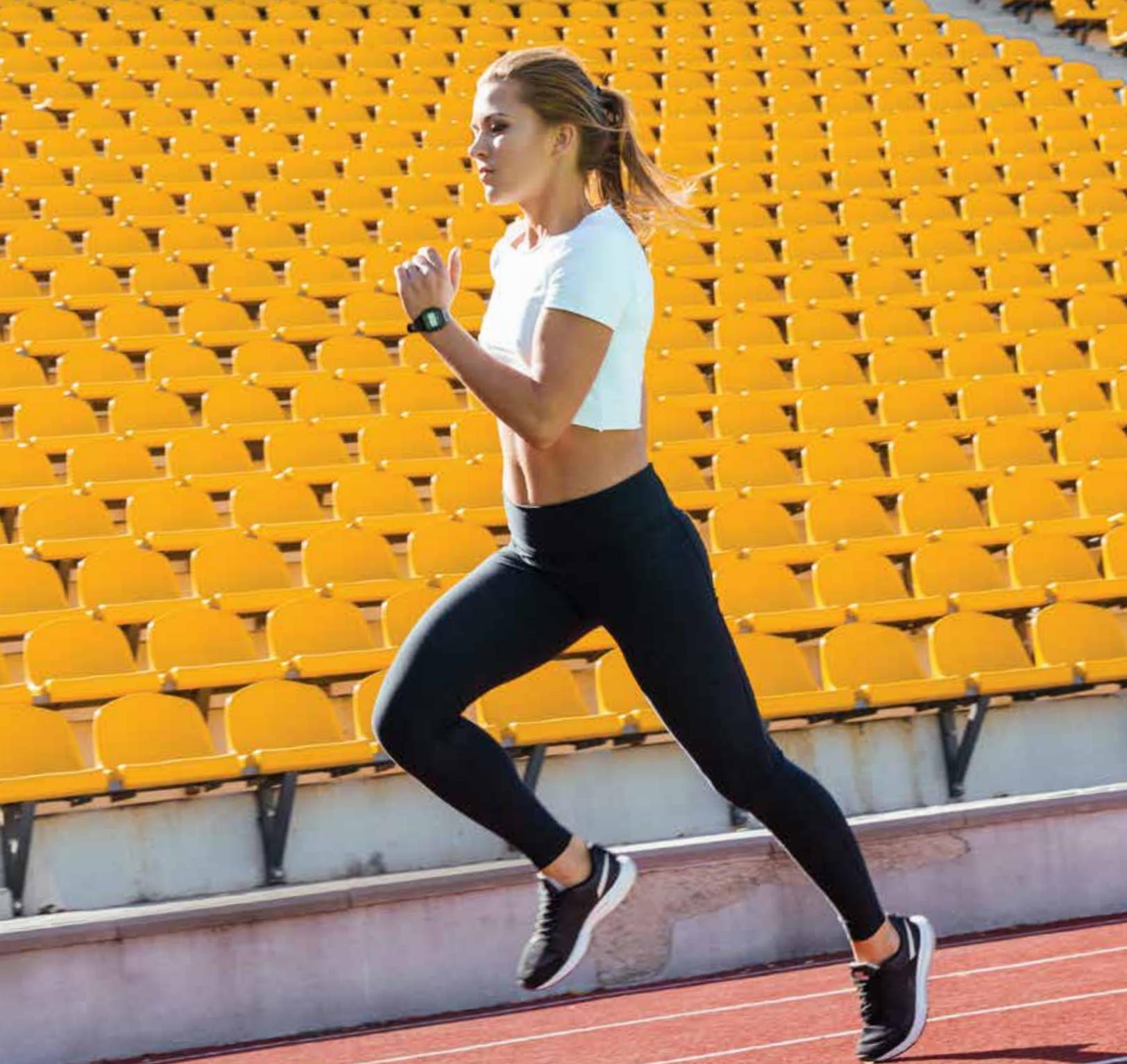
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Even if the last time you hit the track was circa ninth-grade gym class, this 12-week plan can help you find your stride.
By Jenessa Connor, CPT

FOR SUCH A SIMPLE, INNATELY HUMAN MOVEMENT,

running can be intimidating, even for fit women. Just the idea of lacing up may trigger feelings of inferiority. (Raise your hand if you still remember the very specific trauma of struggling through the timed mile in phys ed.) But devotees attest that no other form of exercise is as physically and mentally satisfying, and admittedly the rush of endorphins, aka "runner's high," can't be beat. Neither can the calorie burn: The average woman blasts through more than 600 calories an hour when running at a 10-minute-per-mile pace. But before you burst out of the gates like Seabiscuit, there are a few things to know to help you progress and prevent injury.

Walk Before You Run

If you're just starting out, you may be inclined to run like the wind, because after all, you already know how to run, right? And yeah, the calorie burn. However, it behooves you to be patient with your progress because going like gangbusters could do more harm than good.

"Like a car, your engine (your heart and lungs) is going to improve and get stronger quicker than your chassis — your soft tissues like your muscles, ligaments and tendons," explains Danny Mackey, head coach of the Seattle-based Brooks Beasts Track Club. "What happens to a lot of people just getting into running is they get an overuse injury." Common offenders include Achilles tendonitis (the inflammation of the tendon that connects the calf muscles to the heel bone), plantar fasciitis, which manifests as sharp heel pain, and "runner's knee," pain in your patellar area. While you should expect some soreness — since

you're literally building new muscle mass when you run — sudden or steadily increasing pain is your body's way of telling you to back off. Rest until you're feeling better, and adjust your training to incorporate fewer miles and more recovery time. If your symptoms persist or quickly reappear, get yourself evaluated by a medical professional.

Jason Karp, Ph.D., creator of the Revo$_2$lution Running certification program, encourages rookies to do what they can, using a walk/run approach, if necessary. "Run for 30 seconds, then walk for five minutes with intention, as though you are late to catch a flight," he says. "Repeat that run-walk-run pattern until 30 minutes have passed." Over time, he explains, your body will adapt, and you'll spend more of that half-hour running than walking.

No matter what your level, the best way to improve your running — and avoid time warming the bench — is to adopt a carefully curated training plan that exhibits these hallmarks:

▶ A gradual progression of volume and/or intensity of no more than a 10 percent increase in mileage per week. So if you ran a total of 10 miles in week one, your mileage for week two should be no more than 11 miles.
▶ Variability in intensity from day to day. In addition to prescribing distances to run, your training program also should specify what kind of speed or effort you should apply.
▶ Inclusion of rest and cross-training days. Recovery is crucial for runners of all levels, and having the option to cross-train or take a day off will help you avoid overtraining.

Form for Function

If there's one thing you *don't* have to worry about, it's achieving perfect form. "There's not a right way to run — for anybody," Mackey says. "We all have different mobility and ranges of motion, and optimal stride is unique to each person."

However, you do need to consider a few general guidelines: Keep your chest up and your shoulders back to avoid slouching; swing your arms in a straight line forward and back, not across your midline; and with each step, aim to place your foot on the ground directly underneath your hips. "Running is about moving from one balance point to another, so your body must be properly aligned when the foot lands on the ground to create that base of support," Karp says.

Again, Faster

When it comes to motivation, nothing beats a specific goal such as completing a local 5K race, and in the beginning simply crossing the finish line is an admirable goal. But after a few events, you may want to better your time. Plus, revving your heart rate at high-intensity levels leads to excess post-exercise oxygen consumption, aka "afterburn," which means your body is still cashing in calories long after your shower and post-run smoothie.

Shaving minutes off your time is a great goal, but you'll need to adjust your programming to include more speed- and effort-based drills such as these below, according to Karp and Mackey:

▶ Add "strides" to the end of a long(er) run by running at a fast (but not all-out sprint) pace for 20 seconds, then walking back to your starting point. Repeat for eight intervals.
▶ In the middle of your longest run of the week, add six one-minute intervals running at a hard pace followed by running two minutes at an easy pace.
▶ Find a long hill (or crank up the incline on your treadmill) and sprint up it as fast as you can for 20 to 30 seconds. Jog back to your starting point and repeat for six intervals.

Upping the Ante

Already crushing 5Ks or ready to tackle longer distances? The 10 percent rule still applies. "A runner's legs should be given a chance to fully absorb, adapt and habituate to the current workload before increasing that workload," Karp says. And resist the urge to scrap all training variety in favor of long runs. Keep incorporating hill sprints, interval workouts and fartleks ("speed play") runs into your rotation. Variability not only helps prevent injuries and overtraining but also bolsters your race-day performance. Running shorter distances can help you understand your pacing, which is clutch in longer races like half marathons and marathons. And training at different speeds and intensities will develop your slow- and fast-twitch fibers — both of which you'll need to sail across the finish line.

As your distances get longer and your body spends more time under tension, you will need to adjust your fueling strategy. If your runs are about an hour, your body should have plenty of stored carbohydrates to give you the energy to sustain, and having a post-run snack or drink that combines carbohydrates and protein should be sufficient, according to Mackey. But if your workout is approaching the 90-minute mark, consider consuming some midrun calories in the form of drinks, bars, gummies or gels to replenish energy stores and prevent the breakdown of muscle tissue for fuel. Experiment to find a product that goes down easy and doesn't upset your stomach.

Lastly, don't ignore injuries. "Any sort of problem that you have in a 5K or 10K is just going to get magnified in a marathon," Mackey says. Have any persistent pains, twinges and aches checked by a medical professional or movement specialist. Chances are, your issue is because of a muscular weakness or mechanical limitation, which can be addressed with strength training, stretching and mobility drills.

Get Your Kicks

Next to a supportive sports bra and shorts that don't chafe, a high-quality pair of running shoes is an essential investment in your training wardrobe. Here are a few of our favorites.

Brooks Levitate
▶ **$150, brooksrunning.com**
The Levitate's midsole cushioning provides energy return with every rebound, literally putting a spring in your step. Bouncy yet supported, the ultra-cushioned heel notch won't give you blisters.

Merrell Bare Access Flex
▶ **$90, merrell.com**
This hybrid trail/road shoe offers just the right amount of traction and durability for the gnarliest dirt paths but is still flexible and light enough for the road. A minimalist tongue and thin mesh upper offer a streamlined fit that won't slow down your favorite high-intensity interval training workout.

Asics Dynamis
▶ **$160, asics.com**
The Dynamis replaces traditional laces with Boa Technology, a system using an instant-release dial to provide a uniform and easily adjustable fit. If you're forever untying and retying your shoes in pursuit of the perfect level of snugness, these shoes are your jam.

Altra Lone Peak 3.0 NeoShell
▶ **$160, altrarunning.com**
Excuseproof your training with the Altra Lone Peak NeoShell, and bring on the mud, rain and even the snow. And thanks to their patented TrailClaw tread, you're less likely to take a digger on slushy trails and slick sidewalks.

New Balance Fresh Foam Lazr Sport
▶ **$90, newbalance.com**
Thanks to its stretchy collar, this shoe is a breeze to slip on and off: The upper fits like a sock, and the Lazr's solid rubber outsole offers a noticeably smooth heel-to-toe transition. The miles practically run themselves. (Available March 1, 2018)

Mizuno Wave Inspire 14
▶ **$130, mizunousa.com**
If your ankles roll inward when you run (aka overpronation) or you just prefer a more stable shoe, the newest iteration of Mizuno's Wave Inspire has you covered with a highly structured fit and cushioning in both heel and forefoot.

The 12-Week 5K TRAINING PLAN

This plan created by Danny Mackey includes two training tracks — **Beginner and Advanced** — and is designed to get beginners from the couch to the open road while offering more advanced runners an opportunity to become faster. On days that offer two different options, choose the one appropriate to your level. On cross-training days, do a full-body strength workout or another activity like yoga, cycling or a group fitness class.

KEY:
▶ *Beginner*
▶ *Advanced*

WEEK	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
1	Rest or 30 minutes cross-training	Intervals: 6 rounds running 2 minutes moderate, 2 minutes easy	Rest	▶ 3K run, easy pace ▶ 5K run, easy pace	Rest	▶ 20-minute run ▶ 30-minute run	Rest
2	Rest or 30 minutes cross-training	Intervals: 6 rounds running 3 minutes moderate, 1 minute easy	Rest	▶ 3K run, moderate pace ▶ 5K run, moderate pace	Rest	▶ 20-minute run ▶ 30-minute run	Rest
3	Rest or 30 minutes cross-training	Intervals: 6 rounds running 4 minutes moderate, 1 minute easy	Rest	▶ 3K run, moderate pace ▶ 5K run, moderate pace	Rest	▶ 25-minute run + 6 x 15-second controlled sprints ▶ 30-minute run	Rest
4	Rest or 30 minutes cross-training	5 x 1-minute hill intervals	Rest or 30 minutes cross-training*	▶ 3K run: Alternate between hard/moderate pace every 600 meters. ▶ 5K run: Alternate between hard/moderate pace every 1K.	▶ 30-minute run at comfortable effort (Track your pace.) ▶ 5K run at comfortable effort (Track your pace.)	30-minute run	Rest
5	Rest or 30 minutes cross-training	Intervals: 3 rounds running 1 minute hard, 1 minute easy + 3 x 1-minute hill intervals	Rest or 35 minutes cross-training*	▶ 3 x 1K hard pace/1-minute recovery pace/walk ▶ 5 x 1K hard pace/1-minute recovery pace/walk	▶ 30-minute run at same pace as week 4 ▶ 5K run	35-minute run	Rest
6	Rest or 30 minutes cross-training	Intervals: 3 rounds running 2 minutes hard, 1 minute easy + 5 x 30-second hill sprints	Rest or 30 minutes cross-training*	Progressive 5K: Increase pace each K so your last K is your goal pace.	5K run at a comfortable pace	40-minute run	Rest
7	Rest or 35 minutes cross-training	Intervals: 3 rounds running 3 minutes hard, 90 seconds rest + 4 x 45-second hill sprints	Rest or 35 minutes cross-training*	▶ 5K run, hard pace ▶ Above + 3 x 100 meters at a harder pace/3-minute rest, taking more rest (if needed)	5K run or 30 minutes cross-training	35-minute run	Rest
8	Rest or 35 minutes cross-training	Intervals: 4 rounds running 600 meters at race pace Recover for same amount of time (e.g., if you run 2 minutes, rest 2 minutes).	Rest or 35 minutes cross-training*	Intervals: 2 sets of 3-minute/2-minute/1-minute hill intervals (Increase effort as intervals get shorter.)	▶ 5K run, easy pace ▶ 6.5K run, easy pace	40-minute run	Rest
9	Rest or 35 minutes cross-training	▶ 3 x 1K at moderate pace/2-minute rest ▶ Above + 2 x 400 meters at race pace/90-second walk/rest	Rest or 35 minutes cross-training*	▶ 2 x 3K hard runs with 2-minute rest between ▶ Above + 3 x 100 meters at hard pace/4-minute rest	5K run with no pace or 30 minutes cross-training	45-minute run	Rest
10	Rest or 35 minutes cross-training	▶ 3 x 800 meters at race pace/3 minutes standing or walking rest ▶ Above + 2 x 250 meters at faster pace/3-minute rest	Rest or 40 minutes cross-training*	5K progressive pace: Start moderate and increase pace at each K. Last K should be slightly faster than race pace.	▶ 5K run at comfortable pace ▶ 6.5K run at comfortable pace	50-minute run	Rest
11	Rest or 35 minutes cross-training	▶ 40-minute run as you feel ▶ Above + 5 x 100 meters at fast pace	Rest or 40 minutes cross-training*	▶ Increase pace with each distance: 1,200/800/400/200 meters Rest 3 minutes between 1,200 and 800; rest 2 minutes between 800 and 400; rest 2 minutes between 400 and 200. ▶ Above + 2 additional 200 meters at same pace	▶ 5K run (Track your easy pace.) ▶ 6.5K run	45-minute run	Rest
12	Rest or 35 minutes cross-training	▶ 3K moderate run + 4-minute run at recovery pace ▶ 5K moderate run + 4-minute run at recovery pace	Rest or 30 minutes cross-training*	1 x 600 meters at comfortable pace; 2 x 400 meters at race pace with 1-minute rest between; 2 x 200 meters at faster than race pace; 3-minutes rest all the way through	Rest or easy 5K run	Rest	**RACE DAY!**

If you rested Monday, cross-train today. If you cross-trained Monday, rest today.