

Cross Country Training Workouts

- **Tempo Runs:** A tempo run is a workout best run on trails or in the woods so you have no reference to exactly how far or how fast you are running. Here's how to do a tempo run. Begin at an easy pace, about as fast as you would during any warm-up on the track. After 5 or 10 minutes of gentle jogging, gradually accelerate toward peak speed midway through the workout, holding the peak for 5 or 10 minutes, then gradually decelerate, finishing with 5 minutes of gentle jogging, your cool down. At peak speed, you should be running somewhat near (or just slightly less) than for a 5K run. Run hard, but not too hard. If you do this workout correctly, you should finish refreshed rather than fatigued.
- **Fartlek:** Fartlek is a Swedish word, loosely translated as "speed play." Fartlek runs involve constant changes of pace at different distances. These runs are also best run on trails in the woods where you have no idea how far you are running. After 5 or 10 minutes of gentle jogging at the start, pick up the pace and surge for maybe 10 or 20 or more seconds, then jog for near equal time until partly recovered, then surge again. These speed bursts could be anywhere from 100 to 400 meters, or longer. They could be up a hill or down a hill or on the flat. They could be at top speed or at the pace you might run a 5,000 meter race or from this tree to that tree. In order to be a good distance runner, you have to build strength and endurance, learn race pace, and practice race tactics. Fartlek training can incorporate all of these essential elements into a single workout. Fartleks teach you how to surge in the middle of the race to get away from opponents – or hang with them when they attempt to surge on you.
- **Interval Training:** This is a more precise form of speed training than tempo or fartlek runs. Interval training consists of fast repeats (400m, 600m, and 1,000m, for example), followed by jogging and/or walking to recover. It is the "interval" between the fast repeats that gives this workout its name. For most of our workouts, we will have a 400m jog between the 400m repeats, a 200m jog between the 600m repeats, and 3 minutes walking and/or jogging between the 1,000m repeats. Most important is not how fast or slow you walk or jog the interval, but that you are consistent with both the repeats and the interval between. For example, you do not want to run this workout and discover near the end that you are running the repeats slower than at the start, or that you need more rest during the interval between. If that happens, you picked too ambitious a time goal for the workout. Interval running can be run on a track, on roads, or on soft surfaces, as long as you maintain consistency. You should finish fatigued, but

also refreshed. Run correctly and in control, interval training can be invigorating. It is also the single best way to improve both your speed and your running form.

- **Long Runs:** Long runs are necessary to improve your aerobic fitness and endurance. It really doesn't matter how fast or slow you run, as long as you run for the prescribed length of time at a pace that allows you to finish as fast as you start. If your pace lags and you have to walk in the last few miles/minutes, you obviously ran the early miles too fast. Run at a conversational pace. If running with your teammates (something I recommend), use this workout as an excuse to talk about every silly thing that happened to you during the week. This is a workout that you can run on the roads or on trails. Mostly, have fun. If Saturdays are not convenient for long runs, you may do them on Sundays instead.
- **Rest/Easy Days:** These are the three days of the week when you do not run hard. And quite frankly, you can't run hard seven days a week without risking injury or overtraining. So in between hard workouts, run easy. Rest can be an easy run of 30 minutes, or it can be a day when you do not run at all. You need days of comparative rest between hard workouts; otherwise you will not be able to run those hard workouts at full speed. If you fail to do the hard workouts properly, you will not improve. Don't train hard every day assuming that it will make you a better runner; it may actually affect your training negatively.
- **Racing:** Low-key road races during the summer can be fun, can offer a change of pace from training, and can motivate you to run all summer long. For that reason, you are free to run several road races during the summer, maybe once every fourth week. You don't need to race on the week I indicated; you don't need to race at all. The ultimate goal is to break the routine and to maintain your racing mind. It also provides you a measuring mark for your training up to that point.

