



## A Guide To Running Terminology

### Types of Runs

These are some different types of runs you will see referred to on the training log. All of these types of runs are done to accomplish different goals and objectives.

The **easy run** or a **recovery run** is simply a run at an easy pace done for recovery purposes or just simply enjoyment. Most of a beginner's runs should be easy runs. These runs improve a runner's aerobic conditioning. The intensity of these runs should permit conversing using complete sentences (60-75% of your maximum heart rate).

**Jogs** usually refer to slow running done to recover between intervals. Runners and (especially) non-runners will sometimes use the term "jog" for a slow run for exercise.

**Long Runs** are typically 25-30% of your weekly mileage or so and are usually done once a week. These are usually done at a comfortable, fairly easy pace. We often refer to them here as LSD -- long, slow distance or long steady distance. An appropriate long run distance is determined by your goals. A long run might be anywhere from 5 miles to 25 or more (for an ultra marathoner).

**"Race pace runs"** refer to running your predicted or expected race pace. So if a workout were to call for doing miles at "marathon pace," that means running at your predicted marathon pace per mile. That could be anything from 5:00/mile for someone fast to 12:00 minutes a mile for someone slower. A 5K race plan may call for doing intervals (explained below) at your 1 mile race pace. A good way to figure out your expected paces is to use an online calculator. The [McMillian Calculator](#) is excellent.

A **tempo run** is a run at around your 10-15K race pace (or about 80-85% of your maximum heart rate or so). Traditionally tempo runs were 20 minutes or so in length, but they vary. It's often described as being "comfortably hard" -- it's a challenging, but manageable pace. You want to finish a tempo feeling challenged, but not exhausted. Most tempo runs consist of ten to fifteen minutes of easy running, then the tempo part, then ten to fifteen minutes to cool down. Tempo runs build speed and teach your body to run at a certain pace.

A **fartlek** is a fun word that you can say and make non-runners snicker. It simply is an informal way of doing speed work. It's a Swedish word meaning "speed play." In a fartlek, you would run hard to say the next telephone pole, then slow down, then run hard again to the next object. It's just basically bursts of speed in the middle of a workout. It can be easy or hard. There's no set distance or speed, it's very loose and informal. Fartleks are good for a beginning runner who wants to dabble in speedwork.

**Intervals** (sometimes called "repeats") usually refer to track work, though you can do them elsewhere. Usually intervals consist of a set distance (say 400 meters, 800 meters, a mile) that you run at a set, usually fast pace. Between the intervals, you would recover by either jogging slowly or walking. People often do them on the track because the track is obviously measured. An example of an interval workout might be 4x800. This means you are going to run four sets of 800 meters (or about a half mile) at a

certain pace. Between those faster runs, you will walk or jog to recover. Often an interval workout will give you the pace you're supposed to run and the time you should take to rest. Usually rest time is roughly equivalent to how much time it takes you to run the distance. So in our 4x800 example, if you were doing the 800s in 4:00 minutes (8:00 mpm pace), you would take about 4:00 rest. Intervals build speed and improve aerobic capacity.

Just a brief word about the track. If you visit the track to do a workout, know that most tracks are 400 meters in length. (There are some quarter mile tracks, but most are 400 meters.) A mile is roughly equivalent to 4 laps around the track. A mile is actually a little longer than 1600 meters. If you want to do a true timed mile, find the common finish line. (It's usually located at or near the end of the straightaway in front of the home stands. Usually it has numbers painted there.) Go back 9 meters and there should be a line. That's where the mile would end.

**Repetitions** are a form of repeats that are faster and shorter than intervals with full recovery between them (usually 4-6 times as long as the repetition). These are used for improvement of anaerobic capacity, running form and running economy.

A **ladder** is an interval workout of increasing interval lengths, such as 200-400-600-800 meters.

A **cutdown** is the opposite of a ladder or an interval workout of decreasing interval lengths, such as 800-600-400-200 meters.

A **pyramid** is a combination of a ladder and a cutdown, such as 200-400-600-800-600-400-200 meters.

You will also hear about **hill repeats** -- these typically are runs up a hill at a fast pace to build strength.

**Strides** are short, controlled bursts of running of 50 to 150 meters designed to improve efficiency, work on form, etc. Often done at the end of a run.

**Warm Up** is a period of slower running prior to faster running. **Cool down**, sometimes called **warm down**, is slower running at the end of faster running.

### Physiological Terms

**Aerobic** means using oxygen to generate energy.

**Anaerobic** means generating energy without oxygen. **Lactic acid** in working muscles is a byproduct of anaerobic energy generation.

**Aerobic capacity** or **VO2Max** is the maximal amount of oxygen that a person can extract from the atmosphere, send to the body's tissues, and consume to produce energy. You can use your current VO2Max to estimate your times for intervals, for example. (Find your VO2Max <http://www.runningforfitness.org/faq/vo2-max> by entering a recent race or run time.)

**Lactate threshold (LT)**, is the level of intensity at which anaerobic energy generation begins to rise and the resulting generation of lactic acid in working muscles causes blood lactate to rise and muscle efficiency to fall off significantly with fatigue.

**vVO2max** is the velocity or pace at which a person reaches VO2max.

**vLT** is the velocity or pace at which LT (lactate threshold) is reached.

**Anaerobic capacity** is a runner's maximum ability to run very fast ... beyond VO<sub>2</sub>max where all additional energy to run faster than vVO<sub>2</sub>max is generated anaerobically. Runners can sustain such fast paces for only a few minutes.

**Running economy** is a measure of the amount of oxygen used to run a given pace. More economical runners use less oxygen to run a specific pace than do less economical runners. Running economy is improved through training.

**Resting heart rate (RHR)** is your heart rate when you first wake up and before rising.

**Maximal heart rate (HR<sub>max</sub> or MHR)** means the maximum heart rate that can be reached while running. Training intensities are often determined by percent of HR<sub>max</sub>.

**Heart rate reserve (HRR or HR<sub>res</sub>)** is the difference between HR<sub>max</sub> and RHR (HR<sub>max</sub> - RHR = HRR). Some runners base training on percent of HRR instead of HR<sub>max</sub>.

**Target heart rate (THR)** is the desired range of heart rate reached during aerobic exercise which enables one's heart and lungs to receive the most benefit from a workout. Below is the formula which calculates one's THR. This formula gives you the suggested "intensity" expressed as a percentage. A good intensity range for a normal healthy adult should be between 65-85%.

Formula:

Step 1:  $220 - \text{Your Age} = \text{Maximal Heart Rate (MHR)}$

Step 2:  $\text{MHR} - \text{Resting Heart Rate (RHR)} = \text{Heart Rate Reserve (HRR)}$

Step 3:  $\text{HRR} \times (\text{Intensity \%}) + \text{RHR} = \text{Target Heart Rate (Exercise Zone)}$

Example:

Step 1:  $220 - 40 (\text{Years of Age}) = 180 (\text{MHR})$

Step 2:  $180 - 72 (\text{Resting Heart Rate}) = 108 (\text{HRR})$

Step 3:  $108 \times .70 (\text{Intensity \%}) + 72 (\text{RHR}) = 148 \text{ Beats Per Minute Heart Rate (Target Heart Rate/Exercise Zone)}$

**Common Runners' Abbreviations**

Some very commonly used abbreviations for running terms used universally:

**PR and PB** refer to the same basic thing, running your Personal Best or setting a Personal Record. For example "I ran a PR in that race" means I ran my fastest time ever at that distance. You can have multiple PRs, say for a course or a distance or even for the year. You decide.

**LSD** is long slow distance or long steady distance.

**FF** means gradually picking up speed during a training run, such as a LSD, until nearing race pace at end.

**MP** is marathon pace.

**GMP** is goal marathon pace.

**BQ** is to Boston Qualify; the Boston Marathon requires runners to meet a certain time standard based on gender and age. For example, to BQ a 18 year old male must run a marathon in 3 hrs 5 minutes or faster.

**ITBS or IT Band** refers to the iliotibial band syndrome, a common overuse running knee injury.

**MHR** is maximum heart rate.

**HRM** is heart rate monitor.

**CR** is course record.

**WR** is world record.

**AR** is American Record.

**USATF** is USA Track and Field.

**RHR** is resting heart rate.

**DNF** is Did Not finish.

**DNS** is Did not start.

**MPM** is usually minutes per mile.

**PF** is plantar fasciitis.

**TM** is treadmill.

**XC** is Cross Country.

**SFX** is stress fracture.

**MPW** is miles per week.

**MPM** is minutes per mile.

**GA** is general aerobic, which means running slower than vLT. **RICE** means rest, ice, compress and elevate....standard treatment for inflammation-type injuries.

**RR** is race report.

**NRR** means "not running related".

### Common Running Complaints

**Shin Splints** is pain anywhere between your knee and your ankle. They are more of a symptom of an underlying condition than a condition in itself. The problem could be a stress fracture, medial tibial stress syndrome, compartment syndrome, inflammation of connective tissue (periosteum) known as **periostitis**. Multiple causes, multiple solutions, even possibly multiple possible injuries might be causing shin splints. Very common, especially in new runners. Shin splints are typically manifested as **anterior** (front of lower leg) or **medial** (inside, facing the other leg) pain. A pain in the back of your lower leg is not shin splints, it's probably a calf strain.

**Runner's Knee** is a condition called Chondromalacia patella. That's why we call it runners knee. **PFS (Patello-Femoral Syndrome)**, which is the kneecap (patella) rubbing on the front of the thigh bone (femur), is another form of Runner's Knee. It's most often caused by overuse, doing too much too soon, osteoarthritis, insufficient muscle development and/or improper alignment, including wrong or worn-out shoes or running on slanted pavement.

**Runner's Trots** refer to gastrointestinal problems on the run.

**Stitch** is a side cramp, usually on the right side.

**Bonk** means to run out of energy, to "hit the wall" ... It's not fun.

**Plantar Fasciitis** is an often chronic problem of the foot that can be very painful.

**Stress fracture** is a hairline crack in a bone.

**Illiotal band syndrome (ITBS or IT Band)** is inflammation of the illiotibial band, which runs on the outside of the leg from the hip to just below the knee. The injury most often occurs where the band crosses over the outside of the knee, but can also occur at the hip.

**Piriformis Syndrome** means a pain in the buttocks.

**Tendinitis** is inflammation of a tendon. Tendons connect muscles to bones. Tendinitis due to running can occur in a runner's groin area, buttocks, legs, feet and lower joints. ITBS is a common form of tendonitis.

## More Stuff

**Ultramarathon** is simply any race that's longer than the marathon. All marathons are 26.2 miles.

**Wicking fabric** refers to technical fabrics that draw sweat away from the skin. Also might be referred to as say a "tech shirt."

**Split shorts** are higher cut running shorts often used in racing.

**Cross training** or **XT** is another aerobic exercise such as swimming, cycling, cross country skiing used to complement running or when you are injured and can't run.

**Doubles** refers to doing two runs in the same day. Singles would be doing just one run. So if someone says "I did 50 miles this week, all singles" they are saying "I ran 50 miles this week, all as once-a-day runs."

**Kick** is usually used as in "finishing kick" -- simply means running harder at the finish line, the last final sprint.

**Rabbit** is someone who goes out with the intention of setting a fast pace in a race, but then often drops out.

**Foot strike** refers to how your foot initially impacts the ground as you run. There are heel strikers, midfoot strikers, and forefoot strikers.

**Out and back** means a course you run out a certain distance, then turn around and run back. A **loop** is simply that -- you start in one spot and run in a big circle. **Point to point** means a course that begins and ends at widely separated locations.

**Pronation** is the inward roll of your foot during a running stride.

**Overpronation** is where your foot rolls over to the inside too far during the running stride, which can lead to an injury, such as ITBS. Usually you can tell your overpronating if you have excessive wear on the inside part of the forefoot of the shoe.

**Supination** is where your foot rolls to the outside during the running stride, which can also lead to an injury. Supinators land on the outside of their feet.

**Cushioned** refers to a shoe designed for a neutral foot that does not overpronate or that may supinate.

**Stability** refers to a shoe designed for an average arched foot; it offers some degree of control for overpronation.

**Motion Control** are shoes that offer the most overpronation control.

**Splits** are your times in a race or workout at several measured intervals. For example, a 36:00 minute 4-mile run might have mile splits of 9:00, 8:50, 9:10, 9:00. Splits can also refer to cumulative times, e.g. if you are running 8:00 min/miles, your split times will be 8:00 at Mile 1, 16:00 at Mile 2 and so on.

**Negative splits** refers to running the second half of the race faster than the first. The opposite of negative splits is **positive splits** where you run the first half faster than the second. **Even splits** would be running essentially the same time (within 2-3%) for both halves of the race.

**Taper** is where a runner cuts back mileage before a big race like a marathon or even a shorter race.

**Master** is an athlete 40 years of age or older.

**Elite** refers to those really super fast folks who usually don't have to pay for shoes because they get them sponsored.

**10% Rule** is a general guideline that says don't increase your weekly mileage by more than about 10% each week.

**Chip** refers to a little thing you tie on your shoe that measures finishing time when you cross a mat in a race.

**Junk miles** are runs at an easy pace done in order to reach a weekly or monthly mileage total rather than for any specific benefit. A lot of people say no miles are junk, though!

**Road Kill** is a runner who has been passed by a faster runner during a race.

**Ghost Runner** is someone (imagined or not, as the case may be) who is on your heels and about to pass you, used for motivation to keep up the pace.

**Garmin** refers to the [Garmin Forerunner](#) line of handheld Global Positioning System (GPS) devices.