

START WHERE YOU ARE

Honestly, if you spontaneously decide one day to go out and try to run a certain number of minutes or miles straight—whether you’re coming from the couch or from spin class—it is going to suck. Everything will hurt, and you’ll likely hate the experience.

Training plans exist (online, in books, via apps, from coaches in person) to help runners at any level improve safely, without injuring themselves, and successfully . . . whether their goal is to eventually complete a certain distance, clock a certain time, improve in another sport, or simply get fitter. But diving into a generic training plan without a little personalization can make running, well, suck.

So where to begin? Since the first step in achieving any of the above goals is to learn to actually stomach—and eventually maybe even love—running, do this: start where you are. That means both physically (see categories on page 110) and in terms of your personality—what sounds fun to you—and gets you even remotely excited about running.

KEY NO. 6 TO MAKING RUNNING NOT SUCK: START WHERE YOU ARE

Forget about thinking you “should” be able to run a certain amount of time or miles or at a certain pace. Self-assess where you are, what type of runs might actually appeal to you, and ease into running slowly (alternating running and walking, if that’s where you are) for a successful and enjoyable buildup.



SO, WHERE ARE YOU?

Someone who's never run before and isn't generally very active in their daily life will have a different starting point from someone who, say, plays rugby twice a week but hates going running, or someone who (begrudgingly) runs regularly. For that reason, here are four categories that should help you home in on a starting point for becoming a runner—a runner who doesn't hate every step.

YOU ARE:

» **HERE: Never Ever, Like Ever** ●○○○

You've never been a runner. You never played sports of any sort—or if you did, it was years and years (and years) ago. You're starting from what feels like square one.

» **HERE: Returning Athlete** ●●○○

You did sports of some sort in the not-too-distant past. You still have some muscle memory—and even some muscle—but you never really considered yourself a runner. Running was something you did back in the day to stay in shape for your sport, but you didn't and don't seek it out. Maybe you're starting from square two.

» **HERE: Non-Running Current Athlete** ●●●○

You do sports¹ or work out in some form now, so your body is used to being pushed, but you don't currently run consecutive steps beyond chasing after a tennis ball or sprinting to get to the elliptical before the person who hogs it. Square three!

» **HERE: Intermittent Runner (Who Hates It)** ●●●●

You run occasionally, whether it's during a gym workout or on your own. You hate it, so you don't do it that often and curse every step. You have all the squares, but

1 Soccer, Ultimate Frisbee players, and other run-heavy sports players can be considered intermittent runners—see next level.

maybe you've been trying fit a square peg into a round hole. You have friends or read about people who seem to actually enjoy and look forward to running, and you crave a new mind-set to help you learn to love it.

The running plans in this book are specifically created for all four types of people who think running sucks and don't want to start a running plan. Something got you to read this far. Trust that feeling. Read on. You'll find a unique approach that works for unique you.

CAVEATS

Only want to run two days a week? No problem! Do your other stuff (go on a walk, go to the gym, play a shit-ton of video games if that's your thing) in between your two running days. Want to lace up a fourth day? Awesome. Just make sure you don't do two days back-to-back while you're starting out.

RUNNING IS DIFFERENT

Even if you do a ton of other aerobic sports—mountain biking, road cycling, swimming, Nordic skiing, CrossFit, and so on—you'll still need to ease into running. Specific muscles and joints are used in running that aren't in other sports, and due to the repetitive nature of running, they're used *a lot*. That's why the running plans to follow integrate walk breaks and build up slowly so that you gradually train those running-specific muscles and joints and ward off injury. And, so that you might actually focus on the good parts of running and keep with it.

CHECK-INS

A lot of people make the mistake of starting a specific training plan and forcing themselves to stick to it verbatim, no matter how they're feeling physically or mentally. They end up resenting the plan . . . and resenting running in general.

To avoid such resentment, it's important to check in with yourself throughout whichever approach/plan you choose to pursue and adjust as necessary to help you keep the love flowing.

“If you feel like going harder, go harder,” says Scott Fliegelman, who founded Boulder, Colorado–based FastForward Sports and acted as head coach for ten years, helping thousands of athletes find joy in running. “If you feel like going easier, do. Listening to yourself is important. And whatever pace you run, you’re a runner.”

EMBRACE THE RUN/WALK

Since inventing a method he coined “Run-Walk-Run” in 1974, coach Jeff Galloway has transformed thousands of people who never thought they could run into capable—even marathon-finishing—athletes. His training plans lay out alternating running with walking in increments as short as fifteen seconds. “Run-Walk-Run puts you in control over how you feel during and after a run,” he explains.

Galloway says alternating running and walking by a prescribed amount of time, as opposed to a distance, keeps beginners from running too far when they’re starting out. But, he says, both can work. “The simplest form of the method is to take a walk break so early in the run that muscle fatigue is erased and stress on weak links goes away,” he says. “If you don’t feel good, reduce the running segments and increase the frequency of the walking. There never has to be suffering.”

LEARN-TO-LOVE RUNNING PLANS

On the following pages, you’ll find plans for each type of runner—Never Ever, Like Ever; Returning Athlete; Non-Running Current Athlete; and Intermittent Runner (Who Hates It)—based on different approaches to running that suit different personalities. Start your path to loving running with a method that best suits *you*, choosing an approach that goes by *time*, by *feel*, by *distances* on the track or elsewhere (i.e., telephone poles in your neighborhood, lifeguard towers on the beach), by *music* in your ears, or by a more *abstract approach based on time*.

And since each type of runner has a different starting point as far as current fitness is concerned, you'll have a different starting point within each plan.

All of these plans are based on putting on running shoes and heading out the door (which makes you a runner no matter how much you're walking, what speed you're traveling, or how frequently you're doing it) two to three times a week. Just don't do your run/walk days back-to-back to start. And all plans that follow are kept to thirty minutes long, because if you hate something, you probably don't really want to be doing it for more than thirty minutes, at least until about seven weeks in. Although, if you want to stay out longer, by all means, do! Just walk for longer instead of adding more running too soon.

DREAM COME TRUE

"I started having dreams in my midtwenties about being able to run and feeling really free, but I had asthma and never thought I could do it. A few years ago, a runner friend took me out, and we walked mostly but ran one minute at a time with walk breaks in between, just a few times at first. She taught me how to control my breath by breathing slowly, in through my nose and out through my mouth. The fact that the run portions were only one minute long also helped me control my breathing and kept my asthma in check.

"I ran a 5K nine weeks later and have run at least ten since then. I love that a run gives me an escape to clear my mind and some alone time, which I don't get very often as a working mom. I feel great."

—Alex Gilbert, 40, Firestone, Colorado

PACE SCHMACE, FORM SCHMORM

Do not worry about how fast or slow you might be running when you first start out. Running can mean picking up your feet slightly more than you would while walking. “A mistake some people make when alternating running and walking is running too fast and using walk breaks as a crutch to recover,” says running coach, author, and nutritionist Matt Fitzgerald. “There is no harm in going out too easy, especially when you’re starting out.” (For advice on how to get faster, or if hard efforts sound fun to you, turn to page 203.)

Same goes for form. There are numerous books, coaches, and gurus of all sorts who preach how to run “properly,” and there is a ton of merit in good form. But when you’re just starting out, just run however feels most natural to you. Don’t worry about high knees, landing on your midfoot, dancing lightly, or channeling your ancestors while they chased down their dinner. Just shuffle along however feels the most natural. You can work on form later.

LEARN TO LOVE RUNNING: BY TIME

- » **Best if you:** Don’t mind having your hand held a little; want a fairly fail-safe method to easing into running; are a rule-follower; don’t mind frequently looking down at your wrist.
- » **Needed:** A watch. (A digital chronograph watch is easiest to follow and can be preset to beep at you when it’s time to run or walk.)
- » **Where:** Outside on the road, a trail, the track, or inside on a treadmill. If you do it on a trail or on hilly terrain on the road, you’ll need to adjust a bit based on feel: run for longer on a downhill, shorter on an uphill.

- » **How:** Unless you have a photographic memory, either cut out the workout to take with you, or jot it down on something small like a business card and take that with you. Alternatively, you could try to memorize it, and/or you could take a picture of it with your phone to reference if you forget (and don't mind taking your phone with you). Some watches can be preset.

WEEK 1 ●○○○

NEVER-EVER: START HERE

- Lace up 2–3 times a week
- 2 minutes total of running, 4 × 30 seconds
- » 0:00–10:00 walk
- » 10:00–10:30 jog/pick up your feet slightly more than you would when walking
- » 10:30–12:30 walk
- » 12:30–13:00 jog/pick up your feet slightly more than you would when walking
- » 13:00–15:00 walk
- » 15:30–16:00 jog/pick up your feet slightly more than you would when walking
- » 16:00–18:00 walk
- » 18:00–18:30 jog/pick up your feet slightly more than you would when walking
- » 18:30–30:00 walk

WEEK 2 ●○○○

- Lace up 2–3 times a week
- 3 minutes total of running, 4 × 45 seconds
- » 0:00–10:00 walk
- » 10:00–10:45 jog/pick up your feet slightly more than you would when walking

- » 10:45–12:30 walk
- » 12:30–13:15 jog/pick up your feet slightly more than you would when walking
- » 13:15–15:00 walk
- » 15:00–15:45 jog/pick up your feet slightly more than you would when walking
- » 15:45–17:15 walk
- » 17:15–18:00 jog/pick up your feet slightly more than you would when walking
- » 18:00–30:00 walk

CHECK YO SELF: AN EVALUATION

After this week, how are you feeling?

- ☐ **Feisty?** Consider adding a little time to your run increments (skip ahead to a future week's plan); walking for longer at the end of your run increments; or going for a brisk walk on a day or two between runs.
- ☐ **Sluggish/Annoyed?** Consider running shorter or slower during your run increments, and repeat this week's plan before moving on to Week 3. Or consider going on a hike or bike ride in a pretty place (or in a dirty alley, if that's your thing) instead of one of your runs.
- ☐ **Fine?** Continue on to the next week.

WEEK 3 ●○○○

WEEK 1 ●●○○

RETURNING ATHLETE: START HERE. IT'S YOUR WEEK 1.

- Lace up 2–3 times a week
- 4 minutes of running, 4 × 1 minute
- » 0:00–10:00 walk
- » 10:00–11:00 jog/pick up your feet slightly more than you would when walking
- » 11:00–13:00 walk
- » 13:00–14:00 jog/pick up your feet slightly more than you would when walking
- » 14:00–16:00 walk
- » 16:00–17:00 jog/pick up your feet slightly more than you would when walking
- » 17:00–19:00 walk
- » 19:00–20:00 jog/pick up your feet slightly more than you would when walking
- » 20:00–30:00 walk

WEEK 4 ●○○○

WEEK 2 ●●○○

- Lace up 2–3 times a week
- 6 minutes of running, 4 × 90 seconds
- The jump in running is 30 seconds instead of 15; you're ready for it. If you'd rather, throw in a terrain change, like a gradual uphill, and keep running increments at 1 minute when on hills, making them longer when on downhills.
- » 0:00–10:00 walk
- » 10:00–11:30 jog/pick up your feet slightly more than you would when walking
- » 11:30–13:00 walk

- » 13:00–14:30 jog/pick up your feet slightly more than you would when walking
- » 14:30–16:00 walk
- » 16:00–17:30 jog/pick up your feet slightly more than you would when walking
- » 17:30–19:00 walk
- » 19:00–20:30 jog/pick up your feet slightly more than you would when walking
- » 20:30–30:00 walk

CHECK YO SELF: AN EVALUATION

After this week, how are you feeling?

- ☐ **Feisty?** Consider adding a little time to your run increments (skip ahead to a future week's plan), a little speed² to your run increments, or hills.³ Or consider walking for longer at the end of your run increments, or go for a brisk walk on your days off from running.
- ☐ **Sluggish/Annoyed?** Consider running shorter (you could go back to a prior week's plan), or slower during your run increments or going on a hike or bike ride—maybe a harder one than in previous weeks—in a pretty place instead on one of your run days. Or do a fun workout or class at a gym. The point is to do something active that sounds fun.
- ☐ **Fine?** Continue on to the next week.

2 If you feel like running fast, do your run intervals (maybe slightly shorter) at a more intense pace, recovering for a little longer on your walking intervals. Do this only once a week, however, to help mitigate injury.

3 A hill does not mean a mountain. A hill is anything that is a slight incline; if you put a marble on it, it would roll backward, however slowly. You can achieve the effect of a hill by increasing the treadmill incline by a percentage, or running on a road or trail in your neighborhood that isn't flat or downhill. And then, of course, you can progress from there and go steeper as you get stronger.

WEEK 5 ●○○○

WEEK 3 ●●○○

WEEK 1 ●●●○

NON-RUNNING CURRENT ATHLETE: START HERE. IT'S YOUR WEEK 1.

- Lace up 2–3 times a week
- 10 minutes of running, 4 × 2:30
- » 0:00–10:00 walk
- » 10:00–12:30 jog/pick up your feet slightly more than you would when walking
- » 12:30–13:30 walk
- » 13:30–16:00 jog/pick up your feet slightly more than you would when walking
- » 16:00–17:00 walk
- » 17:00–19:30 jog/pick up your feet slightly more than you would when walking
- » 19:30–21:30 walk⁴
- » 21:30–24:00 jog/pick up your feet slightly more than you would when walking
- » 23:00–30:00 (or longer, but not shorter) walk

WEEK 6 ●○○○

WEEK 4 ●●○○

WEEK 2 ●●●○

- Lace up 2–3 times a week
- 12 minutes of running, 4 × 3 minutes. Or throw in a terrain change like a gradual uphill, and keep running increments shorter when on hills, making them longer when on downhill. Or throw in a speed change, running harder during the run increments, and walking slower to recover.
- » 0:00–8:00 walk

⁴ This walk increment is longer than the others because the run increments have gotten longer.

- » 8:00–11:00 jog/run
- » 11:00–12:00 walk
- » 12:00–15:00 jog/run
- » 15:00–16:00 walk
- » 16:00–19:00 jog/run
- » 19:00–21:00 walk⁵
- » 21:00–24:00 jog/run
- » 24:00–30:00 (or longer, but not shorter) walk

CHECK YO SELF: AN EVALUATION

After this week, how are you feeling?

- ☐ **Feisty?** Consider adding a little time to your run increments (skip ahead to a future week's plan), a little speed to your run increments, or hills. Or consider walking for longer at the end of your run increments or going for a brisk walk on your days off from running.
- ☐ **Sluggish/Annoyed?** Considering running shorter (go back to a prior week's plan) or slower during your run increments, or going on a hike or bike ride in a pretty place instead on one of your run days. Or take a day off altogether . . . especially if you're starting to have trouble sleeping, which could indicate you're doing too much right now.
- ☐ **Fine?** Continue on to the next week.

⁵ This walk increment is longer than the others because the run increments have gotten longer.

WEEK 7 ●○○○

WEEK 5 ●●○○

WEEK 3 ●●●○

WEEK 1 ●●●●

INTERMITTENT RUNNER WHO HATES IT: START HERE. IT'S YOUR WEEK 1.

- Lace up 2–3 times a week
- 18 minutes of running, 4 × 4 minutes, plus 1 × 2 minutes
- » 0:00–5:00 walk
- » 5:00–9:00 jog/run
- » 9:00–9:30 walk
- » 9:30–13:30 jog/run
- » 13:30–14:00 walk
- » 14:00–18:00 jog/run
- » 18:00–18:30 walk
- » 18:30–22:30 jog/run
- » 22:30–23:00 walk
- » 23:00–25:00 jog/run
- » 25:00–30:00 (or longer, but not shorter) walk

WEEK 8 ●○○○

WEEK 6 ●●○○

WEEK 4 ●●●○

WEEK 2 ●●●●

- Lace up 2–3 times a week
- 23 minutes of running, 4 × 5 minutes, plus 1 × 3 minutes. Or throw in a terrain change like a gradual uphill, and keep running increments shorter when on hills, making them longer when on downhills. Or throw in a speed change, running harder during the run increments and walking slower to recover.

- » 0:00–5:00 walk
- » 5:00–10:00 jog/run
- » 10:00–10:30 walk
- » 10:30–15:30 jog/run
- » 15:30–16:00 walk
- » 16:00–21:00 jog/run
- » 21:00–21:30 walk
- » 21:30–26:30 jog/run
- » 26:30–27:00 walk
- » 27:00–30:00 jog/run
- » 30:00–35:00 (or longer, but not shorter) walk

CHECK YO SELF: AN EVALUATION

After this week, how are you feeling?

- ☐ **Feisty?** Add a little time to your run increments (skip ahead to a future week's plan), a little speed to your run increments, or add hills. Or consider walking for longer at the end of your run increments, or go for a brisk walk on your days off from running.
- ☐ **Sluggish/Annoyed?** Considering running shorter (go back to a prior week's plan), or slower during your run increments, or going on a hike, bike ride, or pub crawl instead of one of your run days. Or take a nap.
- ☐ **Fine?** Continue on to the next week.

WEEK 9 ●○○○

WEEK 7 ●●○○

WEEK 5 ●●●○

WEEK 3 ●●●●

- Lace up 2–3 times a week
- 26 minutes of running, 3 × 7:30, 1 × 3:30

- » 0:00–5:00 walk
- » 5:00–12:30 jog/run
- » 12:30–13:30 walk
- » 13:30–21:00 jog/run
- » 21:00–22:00 walk
- » 22:00–29:30 jog/run
- » 29:30–30:30 walk
- » 30:30–34:00 jog/run
- » 34:00–40:00 (or longer, but not shorter) walk

WEEK 10 ●○○○

WEEK 8 ●●○○

WEEK 6 ●●●○

WEEK 4 ●●●●

- Lace up 2–3 times a week
- 30 minutes of running, 3 × 10 minutes

- » 0–5:00 walk
- » 5:00–15:00 jog/run
- » 15:00–16:00 walk
- » 16:00–26:00 jog/run

- » 26:00–27:00 walk
- » 27:00–37:00 jog/run
- » 37:00–42:00 (or longer, but not shorter) walk

ONWARD

- **Improve.** From here, increase the run segments by two minutes per segment.
- **Improve more.** From there, increase the run segments to 2 × 15 minutes.
- **Improve even more.** After your five-minute walking warm-up, run 20–25 minutes straight. Add minutes to that run time as you progress.

NOTE: If you already run for 30+ minutes or a certain amount of time straight, but hate it, try a) short walking breaks; b) mixing up when and where; and c) adhering to other tips in this book regarding mindshift, gear, company, etc.

CROSS-TRAINING

Cross-training—activities besides running—are great in that they keep your body moving without stressing the muscles and joints used in running, allowing you to be active on “off” days from running, if you want to be.

Non-Running Current Athletes and Intermittent Runners (Who Hate It) likely already cross-train.

Cross-training activities include:

- cycling
- walking
- gardening
- rock climbing
- swimming
- weight lifting
- skiing/snowboarding
- hiking
- Nordic skiing
- rowing
- yoga
- Pilates
- ball sports
- elliptical machining
- dancing

Note: If you do an activity that uses your legs—like hiking, walking, skiing/snowboarding, cycling, rowing, using the elliptical, or playing ball sports—factor that into how much time you need to recover before another run, or take your next run easier than you would if you didn’t use your legs the day before. Even though a cross-training activity may not use the same exact muscles, those activities take a toll. If you do an activity that’s aerobic—like cycling, swimming, rowing, or Nordic skiing as your cross-training—factor that in to your needed rest for recovery as well. For instance, don’t do a feisty, harder-interval run the day after a hard swim or bike ride.

LEARN TO LOVE RUNNING: ABSTRACTLY, BY TIME

- » **Best if you:** Have a rebellious streak and want a looser approach to increasing running by time
- » **Needed:** A watch
- » **Where:** On a road, a trail, a treadmill, a track
- » **How:**
 1. Walk for roughly the first five minutes. If you feel like walking for six, go nuts.
 2. Run until you don't effing feel like running anymore. Maybe this is 30 seconds, maybe it's a few minutes.
 3. Walk again, dammit.
 4. Run again, laughing in the face of structure. (Or just run.)
 5. Repeat for the remainder of your run, aiming to run for a total of 2 or 3 minutes on your first time out. Break down those 2 or 3 minutes within a 30-minute outing however the hell you want. The other 27 or 28 minutes, walk.
 6. Walk to cool down.
 - **Improve (Week 3ish):** Increase your total run time to 5 minutes.
 - **Improve more (Week 5ish):** Increase your total run time to 10 minutes. And walk more if you bloody feel like it.
 - **Improve even more (Week 7ish):** Increase your total run time to 15, 20, and eventually 30 minutes or more.

Tip: Make sure you're entering this plan, and any other, from where you are physically and mentally as a runner. If you're an Intermittent Runner (Who Hates It), for instance, do the above by running, say, 20–30 minutes total, broken down however you want, for your first time out.

THINK LIKE A KID!

Think about how fun it was to run when you were a kid. If you can tap into that childlike feeling of running for fun—across a playground, in a kickball game, chasing after a kid you liked—you might just have the mind shift you need to really start enjoying yourself on the run.

LEARN TO LOVE RUNNING: BY FEEL

- » **Best if you:** Don't love watches; need a break from technology; want to feel more in tune with your body
- » **Needed:** An ability to listen to your body and mind
- » **Where:** Anywhere
- » **How:**
 1. Start by walking.
 2. When your body feels moderately warmed up (less creaky than when you started; usually about 5 to 10 minutes in), break into a jog.
 3. Stop running and start walking when you still feel sorta okay, but when you notice a hitch in your stride or a light strain (more than usual) in your muscles or breath. *Do not* wait to walk until you can't breathe or talk.⁶
 4. Start running again.
 5. Repeat steps 3 and 4 three or four times.

⁶ The Talk Test: If you can no longer speak a full sentence, it's time to slow down and walk. Walk until you regain your breath and your muscles feel semi-ready. (Don't wait until you feel perfect, because you won't.)

6. Walk for a few minutes after your last run segment to cool down.
- **Improve (Week 3ish):** Run for longer during each segment, but don't make jumps that are too big. Give yourself at least two to three runs with similar run-length segments before adding time.
 - **Improve more (Week 5ish):** Run for longer still during each segment. Again, do this gradually.
 - **Improve even more (Week 7ish):** You got it. Run for longer during each segment, still listening to your body.

Tip: Choosing natural markers, as in "Run until that big tree," "Walk until the stop sign," can help motivate . . . but if your body tells you to stop before then, listen.

YOU WON'T ALWAYS FEEL SUCKY

"It takes time for the body to adapt to the demands of running," says Jenny Hadfield, running coach and coauthor of *Running for Mortals: A Commonsense Plan for Changing Your Life with Running*. "At first, it may seem really challenging. The more you ease into it, the easier it will be for your body to adapt and progress. You can expect to feel stronger within thirty days of regular training three times per week, with a training plan that progresses gradually from your current fitness."

LEARN TO LOVE RUNNING: WITH MUSIC

- » **Best if you:** Need music to make your heart beat; don't like watches but want some structure on your runs; can't fathom getting out the door without music blasting in your ears
- » **Needed:** Some way to play music into your ears and carry said music player comfortably (see page 77)
- » **Where:** Anywhere

» **How:**

1. Walk for the duration of two songs (avoiding jam band epics).
2. Jog/run for the first verse of the next song.
3. Walk during the next verse and chorus of that song.
4. Jog/run for another verse, before walking until the end of the song.
5. Repeat the run/walk for four songs.
6. Walk home during the duration of two songs to cool down.
 - **Improve (Week 3ish):** Warm up by walking for two songs. Once you feel comfortable jog/running for the duration of a verse, increase the jog/run duration from one verse to two.
 - **Improve more (Week 5ish):** Warm up by walking for two songs. Jog/run for two verses and through the end of the chorus (while still walking for the rest of the song). Repeat for four songs.
 - **Improve even more (Week 7ish):** Warm up by walking for one or two songs. Jogging for an entire song, then walk a song, then jog/run for another entire song. Repeat for four or so songs.

Tip: Playing the same music/playlist will help you gauge your improvement.

Another tip: The cadence of a song can affect the speed with which your feet hit the ground, so choose songs accordingly. Look for a running playlist online or just choose songs that have an upbeat tempo. It's tough to crank out miles to "The Way You Look Tonight," unless you want to force yourself to run slower. Likewise, especially if you're first starting out, avoid superfast dance beats. You don't want the cadence of a song to make you feel badly about your stride or make you trip on yourself trying to keep up.

LEARN TO LOVE RUNNING: BY DISTANCE ON A TRACK

- » **Best if you:** Are a visual thinker; feel more comfortable in controlled environments; are competitive
- » **Needed:** A track
- » **Where:** A track
- » **How:**
 1. Walk two laps.
 2. Jog/shuffle the curve of the beginning of the third lap.
 3. Walk the rest of the lap.
 4. Jog/shuffle the curve of the beginning of the fourth lap.
 5. Walk a cool down lap or two.
 6. Walk two laps.
 - **Improve (Week 3ish):** Walk two laps. Jog/shuffle the straightaway and half a curve, walking the rest of the lap. Repeat for four laps total. Walk two laps.
 - **Improve more (Week 5ish):** Walk two laps. Jog/shuffle the straightaway and curve of the third lap (half a lap!), walking the rest of the lap. Repeat for four laps total. Walk two laps.
 - **Improve even more (Week 7ish):** Walk two laps. Jog/shuffle a lap, walk a lap. Repeat for four laps (running two laps total). Walk two laps.

Tip: If you get bored, try music in your ears.

Another tip: While you're trying hard, take an inside lane. While you're not, move to an outside lane. Always look over your shoulder before switching lanes so you avoid collisions and annoyed track mates. For more on track etiquette, see page 188.

A NEED FOR SPEED

“I’m in the gym working out all the time, but I don’t really like running on the road or on trails. It wasn’t until I went to the track and ran hard that I realized I actually love running. I love going fast and pushing really hard and then lying on the ground feeling completely destroyed between intervals. I hadn’t felt that before with running and realized I’d really missed going fast like I used to during tennis sprints and sprinting around the field when I used to play rugby.”

—James Scheurer, 21, Boulder, Colorado

LEARN TO LOVE RUNNING: BY DISTANCE, NOT ON A TRACK

- » **Best if you:** Are a visual thinker; don’t want to go by time
- » **Needed:** An ability to listen to your body (see “Learn to Love Running: By Feel”); a treadmill, if doing this on a treadmill; a GPS-enabled device (see Chapter 4), if doing this by device
- » **Where:** On a road, a trail, a treadmill
- » **How:**
 1. Walk until your body feels less creaky than when you started.
 2. Spot something ahead of you, but not too far ahead of you—a tree, a telephone pole, a stop sign. If you’re on a treadmill or if going by distance measured by a device, choose a distance.
 3. Jog/run to that thing/mileage.
 4. Walk until another thing—a different tree, a different telephone pole, a yield sign. Or to the next mileage increment on your treadmill console or smartwatch.

5. Repeat, listening to your body. If the thing/increment you chose makes you go into overload—your muscles or lungs scream—walk sooner. Likewise, if you feel ready to run again before the first thing you chose, adjust said thing. Pick something closer/shorter.
6. Walk to cool down.
 - **Improve (Week 3ish):** Pick natural markers or distances on the treadmill or smartwatch that are farther than the first time you tried this.
 - **Improve more (Week 5ish):** Pick natural markers that are farther still and/or choose natural markers for your walking breaks that are closer together.
 - **Improve even more (Week 7ish):** Choose natural markers that are farther than you ever thought you could run at one time, only after you've built up to doing so.

Tip: If you run the same route once a week, you'll be able to gauge your progress easily. That said, don't run the same route every time you head out. Your body wants to run varied routes, as does your mind.

PALM TREE TO PALM TREE

"I play volleyball every day and consider myself a good athlete, but the timed mile in PE was kind of challenging for me. Growing up, I never really liked running, but I wanted to get better. I started off running on the beach near my house. I set small goals like running to a palm tree twenty houses down, walking to catch my breath, and then running again, giving myself breaks to recharge. Before this, I never really enjoyed running, but giving myself breaks and being in a beautiful environment definitely helped."

—Alex Lougeay, 16, Encinitas, California



Sucky thought zapped by this chapter:

**“I don’t know
how to start.”**