

ST. HELENS
=*Striders*=

Improve your Running



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COACH IN RUNNING FITNESS

Welcome!

So you've taken the plunge and joined a running club! Firstly, we'd like to wish you a very warm welcome to St. Helen's Striders. It's amazing to have so many new members at the club and to see so many other new runners in the local area.

Naturally, we're big advocates of running. The mental and physical health benefits are huge, in addition to the amazing relationships you'll build along the way.

Coach Kelly has pulled together a list of some helpful hints, tips and guidelines, for you to get the most out of your training.

You'll get support from our Coaches and Run Leaders too. Drop an email to coaches@sthelensstriders.com or chat to your run leader during a club session if you've got any questions.



How old are you?

Biological Age vs Running Age

Your biological age (how old you are) and your 'Running Age' (how long you've been running) are not the same. A new runner is a 'baby' in terms of their running age, with an established runner with decades of consistent running being classed as an 'adult'.

Thinking like this helps you to remember that you're still learning and adapting to something new. This means your body and mind are under stress and should be allowed time to adjust.

Don't compare yourself to the person running next to you - they could have been running for many years. Give yourself the time and opportunity to grow into your running and you'll be surprised by what you'll achieve.



Adaptation

Adapting to the changes

Your body will need time to adapt to the physical and emotional demands that running creates. When done properly, the process of adaptation will take years - it is a continuous process that isn't 'complete' in weeks or months.

You'll see some really quick improvements in your running performance, but that doesn't mean your body is fully conditioned to running. You'll need more time for the muscles, bones, joints and ligaments to adjust and strengthen.

Conditioning your body reduces your chance of injury. Too often, new runners will pick up injuries because they try to do too much too soon.

In the next few pages, you'll find some tips to prevent injuries and maximise your potential.



Coaches' Tips

Thing to keep in mind

Have rest days

When you're new to running, you shouldn't run more than 3 days a week. Gradually increase this over time as your body adjusts but you'll always need some rest days so your body can recover and get stronger.

Take an easy week

Have an easier week every 4-6 weeks. This could be a reduction in distance, pace or frequency of your runs. Enjoy these easy weeks and let your body recover.

Build up your distance slowly

Don't increase your mileage by more than 10% per week. For example, if you run 10 miles in week one, you shouldn't run any more than 11 miles in week two.

Slowly increase intensity

Just like distance, you should build your intensity slowly too. This could mean only doing one workout or race per week, until you've got used to this type of running.

Club Sessions

The club offers 2 structured training sessions per week. Some easy (e.g. social run) and some hard (e.g. fast intervals). If you're new, or building back up, don't do two hard sessions in a week for at least 6 weeks.

Cross Training

Variety is the spice of life!

Adding in alternative forms of exercise is an excellent way to add variety to your training. Try to do something else you enjoy, which will help build strength and endurance in different ways.

This will keep things interesting and also help ward off injuries that can be caused by repetitive movements - i.e too much running!

Swimming and cycling are great exercises to compliment your running, by building strength and aerobic capacity. Weight-lifting, circuits and yoga are also excellent ways to get stronger.



Stretching

Flexibility is important too!

Stretching should be a ritual before and after every run. If your muscles are too tight, or your range of movement is limited, you'll be more prone to injury.

Increased flexibility and range of movement is also a key performance factor. Think about your stride length - if you've got tight hamstrings and hips, you'll take shorter strides.

Inflexibility = shorter strides = less distance = slower paces.

Before a run, you should do 'Dynamic Stretches' which means moving stretches. This way, you're loosening your muscles, tendons and ligaments in preparation for what's to come.

After a run, you should do 'Static Stretches' for approx 10 seconds in each muscle group. After you've rehydrated, longer stretches of up to 2 minutes per muscle group are really beneficial. Take a look at the 'Stretches for Runners' at the back of this guide.



Strength & Conditioning

Get strong all over!

It's important to add some strength and conditioning into your training. You could do cross-training, lifting weights in the gym, doing circuit training or cross-fit, or even a strength based yoga class (ashtanga, jiva-mukti or vinyasa/flow are all great for strength). But, it doesn't have to be anything as structured or as long as these things.

15 minutes at home, once or twice a week, will help ward off injury and improve your performance. You don't need any special equipment, just your body! Focus on the core, hips and glutes. This will provide relief and support for the weaker parts underneath (e.g knees and ankles).

Take a look at the '15 Minute Strength Training' routine at the back of this guide.



Trainers

Your most important piece of kit

You'll very quickly realise that there's loads of kit you can use when running. Whilst nearly all of it can be useful and help you perform better, prevent injuries etc. there is nothing more important than your running trainers. They take all the impact of your running, and over their life-time will hit the ground hundreds of thousands of times!

Treat them like your car tires. They'll wear down and need replacing from time to time. Even if the tread looks good, the cushioning will become compromised over time. General guidance is to replace your trainers once every 300 - 500 miles. This will vary based on your running style, the terrain you run on, your weight and the trainers themselves.

There are lots of different trainers out there and it can be difficult to find the right pair for you. Incorrect or ill-fitting trainers can cause injuries too!

Take advantage of the expert knowledge at the local running store, Made to Run in St. Helens, who'll help you choose the perfect pair.



Racing

See what you're capable of!

Racing is a different experience to running solo or with club friends. The atmosphere will energise you, the anticipation will build as you're on the start line and your competitive streak will push you to go faster than ever before.

Taking part in a race is one of the highlights of running and for this reason it can be easy to do too many too soon. Just like all other aspects of running, care needs to be taken to build up properly to avoid injury. If you are doing quite a lot of races, make sure you cut back on intensity on other days. A race is one of the hardest workouts you'll do!

Cross Country and Trail races rely on good leg and ankle strength so make sure you're prepared for tough terrain like this by working on your strength and flexibility, and making sure you've built up to appropriate distance properly by following the tips in this guide.



We hope you've found this guide helpful. if you've got any questions or want some advice, feel free to chat to one of the Coaches or Run Leaders at the club.

You can also email coaches@sthelensstriders.com and someone will get back to you as soon as possible.



Good Luck!