blog

**Basic rules to start running**

Know these essential guidelines first before you get out the door for a run.

by Susan Paul



Getty Images

*Adele asks: I am really a beginner. I want to start running, but all the information overwhelms me to the point that I don't know where to begin. Can you just give me the very basics? What exactly do I need to start running?*

You are right; too much information can be overwhelming. What matters most is your desire to run, so try not to get too caught up in the details.

First, find the right pair of running shoes. I encourage you to have a professional shoe fitting, which can be done by your local specialty running store. The right running shoes are worth the investment because they provide comfort and reduce the risk of injury. (Here's more information on finding the [perfect running shoes](http://www.runnersworld.co.uk/kit/shopping-for-running-shoes-top-10-tips-to-finding-your-perfect-trainer/12366.html).)

Another piece of gear that might be helpful is a running watch, allowing you to track your progress. For women, it's also important to have a good, supportive sports bra.

Next, decide when you are going to run — and make the commitment. "When" means what days of the week and what time of day you plan to run. Writing it on your calendar is a good place to start. Morning exercisers have a higher consistency rate and ultimately, a higher success rate. Doing your workout early in the day reduces the number of other commitments that may cause conflicts with your exercise time.

Plan where you are going to run, too. Walking out your front door and running in your neighborhood is the most convenient when it is possible. Safety comes first, however, so consider things like well-lit areas, sidewalks, traffic, and the presence of other exercisers. Or, you can head to the gym for the treadmill or an indoor track.

A training plan is very helpful and can provide guidance and structure for building your mileage. Running every other day, or three to four days a week, is a good way to begin, and alternating running with a day off gives your body time to recover. The duration of your running sessions may be as short as a few minutes to as much as 20 or 30 minutes depending upon your current fitness level.

You can begin a running program by walking, or by using a run-walk combination. Walking begins the conditioning process necessary for running, just in a gentler manner. It will stimulate your heart and lungs and begin the process of toughening up muscles, tendons, ligaments, bones, joints and connective tissues. Walk with purpose; you should feel your breathing rate and heart rate increase so you know you are giving a good effort — without feeling uncomfortable.

A run-walk program means interspersing short intervals of running into your walking. You can do this in whatever time increments best suits your fitness level.  Run for 30 seconds or for several minutes. When the run interval is over, walk for one to three minutes to recover. Once recovered, repeat this sequence again. Give yourself several weeks to adapt to each intensity level before increasing the length of your run interval.

If you begin with running continuously, set a comfortable pace that you can sustain for at least several minutes, and you should be able to carry on a conversation while running. If you cannot speak, slow down — you are running too fast. Gradually increase your run time by small time increments every few weeks.

Finally, if you need more advice, head to our [Start Running](http://www.runnersworld.co.uk/beginners/start-running/13553.html) index for beginners.