

Five Exercises to Make You a Faster, Stronger Runner

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Paula Radcliffe and Mo Farah aren't just fast – they're strong, too. Up your body power with these five simple moves

Jumping lunges: the key to these exercises is keeping good form, so limit the repetitions to how many you can perform correctly

Plyometric exercises are intense, explosive moves that boost muscle power – the type you need to run faster for longer. “They also increase your ability to run with good form and improve running economy,” says running coach Nick Anderson. “This means your legs become quicker at landing and pushing off the ground, making you faster and efficient.”

To prevent injury, you should be reasonably fit before trying these. Warm up thoroughly but don't do these after a run – you should have fresh legs. “The key is keeping good form, so limit the repetitions to how many you can perform correctly and do plyometrics no more than twice a week,” says Nick. “For all the exercises, stand tall and stay light on your feet.” Build up repetitions as you get stronger.

Jumping lunges



Start in a lunge position, with right leg forward bent at a 90° angle (ensure that your knees don't extend beyond toes) and left leg trailing behind with knee almost on the floor. Jump up and switch legs mid-air to land with left leg forward and right leg back. Pump your arms back and forth as you do when running. Focus on control and stability as you land – you shouldn't be moving forward or sideways. Activate your gluteal (buttock) muscles to achieve this. Aim for 8-10 repetitions.



Toe taps

Stand facing a box, park bench or stairs. Lift your right leg and tap your right toes on the platform. As you bring the foot back down, spring up with your left foot to tap it on the platform, and keep repeating with alternate legs. Get a rapid rhythm going, springing off the ground with each step. Use your arms for momentum. Aim for 20-30 taps.



High skips

You all know how to skip but this move requires high skips, so spring as high as you can on each skip by bringing your knees up in front of you and using your arms to give you height and momentum. Really focus on the height of each skip, not the distance, and aim to land softly on the balls of your feet. Aim for 20-25 skips.



Bench jumps

This is a powerful move that requires good form, so stop before you get too fatigued. You'll need a strong box, step or park bench that's between 30cm and 45cm high. Stand facing your platform. Squat down, bring your arms back and jump with both feet onto the box, swinging your arms forward to aid your momentum. Land with bent knees into a squat and then step back down. Repeat 6-10 times.



Calf drives

These are great for strengthening the calves and Achilles tendons. Stand with feet slightly apart and start jumping up and down. The key, though, is to barely bend your knees and use the ankles and calves to propel you into the air. So your legs should remain almost straight throughout, but not locked. At the top of each jump, your ankle should be fully flexed and toes pointing downwards. Keep up a rapid rhythm, taking off again as soon as your feet land. Aim for 15-25 jumps.