





MIX THINGS UP

Keep your training varied to make it interesting and gain more progress

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Do you find your regular run routine boring and mundane? Do you train regularly but don't necessarily see the improvement you are looking for? If the answer to any of these questions is yes, you are not alone.

In my line of work as a triathlon coach, one of the key observations I had is that a lot of athletes tend to train day to day with the same effort and intensity. This is an easy approach to take but if repeated over time, this can cause overuse injury and stagnation in performance.

So why is variety in training so important? This comes down to the Variation Principle, which advocates making

changes to training regimens to expose your body to new training stimulus and yielding more consistent gains in sport performance over time.

In other words, to continue improving in any sport, you need to introduce regular variation, which can include intensity, duration, volume and even a change in environment.

Athletes who log the majority of their runs at the same speed (usually the speed where they feel most comfortable) limit their rate of progression. This is because the intensity of the run is neither hard enough for the body to work hard and adapt, nor slow enough to build endurance or even count as a recovery run.

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Introducing variety isn't as hard as you think. Here are **6** types of running workouts you can use in your training regime to mix things up:

1



Long Slow Distance Run

[To increase stamina]

Long slow distance runs done at the correct intensity will help to improve your endurance and mental resilience. It will show you just how far you can push yourself before feeling fatigued.

Long runs should be executed at a natural pace which will allow you to go for an extended period of time. You should never feel too out of breath and your heart rate should not spike out of control.

A long run should be as long as you need to go depending on what race you are going for. To a marathoner, a long run can be for two to three hours, but for someone training for your first 10km, it can be as short as half an hour.

2



Hill Repeats

[To boost speed]

To get faster, you will need to be comfortable being uncomfortable. Think of hill running as resistance training for the legs – the very nature of us going against gravity requires us to drive our legs more aggressively thus building strength in the legs. Over time, you can even develop better overall run form as there is little opportunity for leg shuffling!

To execute a hill run, find a hilly slope that is around 4-6% gradient (such as Marina Barrage) with approximately 100 to 200 metres of upward slope. Sprint up the hill as hard as you can for about 30 to 45 seconds and walk back down for an active recovery before repeating. Your heart should be pumping during the workout and especially at the top. Remember to look upwards at all times (don't stare at the floor) and drive up and forward with your knees.

3



Fartlek

[To boost speed]

Fartlek is a Swedish word for "speed-play" and this run format incorporates different speeds into a single run. It challenges the body to go through varying intensities at different times, stimulating the uneven terrain and efforts you would typically go through in a running race.

There are many ways to do a Fartlek run, but the key is to be unstructured in how you increase and decrease your speed. An example of a Fartlek run is a 30-minute run where you go into a hard sprint for 20 seconds every 10th lamp post you see and then switch to a hard effort run for 2 minutes every time you see someone wearing a yellow top.





Intervals

[To boost speed]

Intervals include structured high intensity burst efforts with a duration of recovery, which could be moving or stationary. A common misconception many runners have is that track work or interval running are only for fast sprinters. However, the reality is even if you are a marathoner or ultramarathoner, you will benefit immensely from interval training.

Intervals really challenge your cardiovascular and speed endurance capabilities. It triggers the fast twitch muscles and develops neuromuscular coordination for a fast and powerful leg turnover. If you are not gasping for air and counting down the moments until the set is over, you are not pushing hard enough.

An example of an interval training workout would be 12 x 400m with one minute rest in between.

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Progression Run

[For speed endurance]

Progression runs are great because it packs variability within a single run. This allows you to practise proper pacing and helps you understand your body and what it is capable of. To do a progression run, divide any distance or duration of run into parts, with each part being faster than the part before. An example of a progression run would be 20 minutes easy effort, 10 minutes moderate effort and 5 minutes hard effort.



Tempo Run

[For speed endurance]

Tempo runs are not as intense as your intervals but still at a harder effort than your long slow distance run. It is done at sub threshold efforts (a comfortably hard pace you can sustain for around an hour). Tempo runs improve your body's anaerobic threshold, so do this often enough and it will increase the speed that your body can sustain over a long period of time. An example of a tempo run is 2km at marathon pace, 3km at a tempo pace, followed by 2km at a marathon pace again. **R**

