

5 Easy Ways to Run Better on Race Day

By Coach [Jenny Hadfield](#)
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The hay is in the barn and you've trained hard all season. It's time to taper down the mileage, and rest up for race day. Here are five simple ways to run better on race day.

1. Go with what you know. As you begin to taper down towards race day, a funny thing can happen. Your ability to make simple decisions like what to eat and what to wear goes out the window. You might even begin to second guess yourself every step of the way. This condition is caused primarily by taper madness, or the time when the mileage decreases and you find yourself with way too much time to think. Keep it simple and go with what you practiced. Every week has been a dress rehearsal for race week, and it is no time to try something new. Save the new cuisines and cute apparel you bought at the expo for after the race.

2. Eat the elephant one bite at a time. This is something I learned while toeing the line at the start of a nine-day continuous race through the jungle. Although you are well-prepared for the race, it can still be mentally overwhelming standing at the start line thinking about [13.1](#) or 26.2 miles. Develop a mental game plan and break the total distance into smaller, more digestible pieces. Divide the race distance by two and then again to equal four check points or think your way through specific locations on the course (aid stations, bands, landmarks). Creating a mental road map will ease your mind and keep your focus through the finish line.

3. Run efficiently. It may be tempting to take the scenic route on race day, but if you run the long way around every turn, it can translate into running more miles at the end. And they are not going to give you credit for running 27.2 miles! Think like an elite athlete and run the tangents at every turn on the course. A tangent is a straight line just outside the curve (or as close to the curve while still on the road). At every aid station, perform a head-to-toe form inventory to prevent poor form and energy waste. Think about having your head forward, relaxed shoulders, arms swinging like pendulum and your hands gently clenched. Keep your hips under your shoulders and your feet landing with quick strides under the hips. Keep your mind actively engaged in running the course and you'll complete the race distance--and do so with good form.

4. Pace yourself. Control the things you can. Forget about everything else. The most common mistake newbies and seasoned runners make on race day is to get caught up in the excitement and go out way too fast in the first few miles. Doing so makes for a fantastic [10K](#) and a miserable finish. Invest in the final 10K of the race by pacing yourself and running the first half slightly slower (5-10seconds/mile) than the second half of the race. Reserving your energy for the second half allows you to have the mental and physical stamina to go fishing in the final miles. That is, mentally casting your fishing hook towards the guy in the red shirt ahead of you and reeling him in (please pass nicely). And my friends, there is nothing more fun than having the stamina to pass people in the final miles of a race. Invest in it. It's worth it.

5. Go with what the day brings. You never know what race day will bring until you're in the middle of it. It could end up being a perfect weather day, and you run the race of your life. Or, you could wake up to 30 mile per hour winds and sleet and struggle to reach the finish line. Show up with a flexible game plan and adjust as needed because in the end, it's all about performing your best on that day. Fast or slow, every finish should be celebrated as it is a significant accomplishment and one that most can't even begin to imagine.

[Coach Jenny Hadfield](#) is the co-author of the best-selling *Marathoning for Mortals*, and the new *Running for Mortals* and *Training for Mortals* series. Coach Jenny has trained thousands of runners and walkers with her training plans. Improve your running performance or train for your next event with Coach Jenny's Active [Trainer Plans](#).

