

9 Tips for Your Night Runs

By Patrick McCrann [Marathon Nation](#) • For Active.com

With the change in Daylight Savings coming up, dedicated and newbie runners alike may have difficulty transitioning to running in the dark. Night running is a different animal for sure, but it doesn't mean you have to sacrifice your running fitness or race goals. With the right preparation and focus, you can make any evening workout rival its daytime counterpart.

A True Commitment

Getting out of work at 5 p.m. to find it's already dark outside makes winter running very challenging. Only the most committed and focused are able to sustain a high level of fitness through the winter months. And as we'll see below, winter running usually requires some additional purchases to make it safe and comfortable. At the end of the day, you want to be 100 percent sure of your ability to run before you dedicate time and money to it.

Safety First, Then Fitness

Without a doubt the most important steps in the transition to night running revolve around personal safety. No single workout is worth risking your overall health or well-being for. With proper planning, night running should allow you to get your workout in with minimal risk. Here are some additional thought points to consider:

Well-Lit Route: It might not be the sexiest route to run on, but the most well-lit route will be your safest bet. Not only will other folks be able to see you (and vice versa), but you will be better able to see where you are running.

Keep It Simple: Rather than plot out a 10-mile run, consider finding a 5-mile course that you can double up on. Or better yet, a two mile loop that you can do as many times as necessary. This keeps you close to home should you need/want to stop, and makes sure you are 100 percent familiar with every nook and cranny in the road. Best of all, you can tell your family/friends where you'll be running and that will make you easy to find in the event of an emergency.

Be Visible: While most of us try to blend in, night runners can't afford to. Loud colors with reflective material to catch passing headlights is a must. Add on a few flashing strobe lights (red for your back, white for your front) and you'll be spotted sure.

The Right Night Equipment

Running in the evening means preparing for lower temperatures and the chance of inclement weather. You'll essentially need to be a Jack or Jane of all trades — a variety of gear will ensure your comfort and safety over the course of every run.

Reflective Vest: Preferably a mid-weight version, this full zip vest will make sure you are seen and help to keep your core warm. The zipper means you can adjust your internal temp, a very nice feature in the event you do get warm.

Headlamp: Not required, but a really nice to have item. It will cut through the darkness, allowing you to pick the safest path. It also helps with the visibility issue. Newer models are light weight enough to clip on to your hat or visor without much weight.

Flashing Light: Similar to what bicycle commuters use, these simple lights are a cheap and effective way to make your presence known. Remember to keep the red flashing lights on your back and the white/clear ones on the front of your body. This will help drivers and fellow pedestrians know which way you are headed long before they can actually see you.

What Not To Bring: Your Headphones

You might be the next Yo-Yo-Ma, but running at night without the help of your ears dramatically increases your chances of injury or mishap. Save the music for your commute or the odd times you can get out in the daylight.

Other Night Time Tips

In addition to the right gear and the right route, there are a few other things to consider that will make your night running experience more worthwhile. From warm ups to when to eat, enjoy the following insights:

Pre-Run Snack: Odds are you will be running through your typical dinner time. If that's the case, make a point to have a solid afternoon snack to keep your glycogen levels up. Most athletes can make it through from lunch to dinner, but waiting until just before you head out the door to down some carbs will most likely set you up for some gastric discomfort.

Post-Run Food: Ideally you'll go right from running to a real meal, not a recovery shake. Try to incorporate some known recovery aids including high protein from lean meats or a dairy source. Be sure to include a few glasses of water with this meal. Eating early is key as your body not only needs the calories, but it needs to wind down from both the workout and eating. A big gap could delay your sleep time significantly.

Warming Up: Since most of you won't have a ton of time to get in the extras of warming up and down, consider the following options. First, you can add some activity to your pre-running routine, such as walking home from work or being active with your kids before they sit down to dinner. This activity will be sufficient to at least get the blood flowing, it should prove enough to make the first few minutes of your run that much easier. Your other option is to compress the main part of your workout to allow for a slower start. Remember that it's not all about your muscles — your eyes and ears will need to adjust to moving through the night at cruising speed too.