

# Rules To Run By In The New Year

*By Mackenzie Lobby for Active.com*

As we run into the New Year, we look back on what we learned in 2013. Some of our latest rules to run by come from new and groundbreaking research, while others are based on tried-and-true principles runners have been following for decades. As you jumpstart your 2014 season, consider these bits of wisdom for faster, stronger and healthier running. While there are no guarantees when it comes to our sport, these rules to run by may just help you reach that next level.

## Maintain Training Balance

This may be the most obvious, but also most ignored rule of running. Following the principles of periodization, a runner should utilize a strategic training plan that balances intervals, easy days, tempo runs, long runs and rest days. With an organized training program that takes into consideration your fitness and experience levels, you'll see your performance increase incrementally with a reduced chance of injury. If you are a fairly new runner, this is where consulting a coach comes in handy. Every runner is different in terms of what they can handle and how quickly their body adapts, so it is important to tailor the plan to your own needs.

## Warm Up Dynamically

While most runners know it is important to warm up their muscles before competition or workouts, it can be challenging to know exactly how to do that. A large body of recent research has shown that a dynamic warm-up is more beneficial than static stretching. In addition to a short jog, include exercises like butt kicks, high knees and skipping before your next track session or tempo run to prime your muscles to fire properly during those high-intensity sessions.

## Include High-Intensity Training

If you're interested in getting faster and stronger in the New Year, it's important to include some high intensity days in your training program. With a reputation for boosting VO2 max, interval training is one of the best ways to do that. A recent review of 37 separate studies on the topic showed that the best way to execute intervals is in 3- to 5-minute bouts of faster running. Any longer and it could leave you sidelined with an injury; any shorter and you may not reap the benefits of increased VO2 max. In a related study out last year, researchers in the UK suggest incorporating active recovery between each of those intervals, rather than full rest, in order to help clear your leg muscles of the metabolites that may slow you down.

## Strength Train

New research published in the European Journal of Applied Physiology examined the effects of strength training on endurance performance. Participants were coached over eight weeks to include 3 to 4 endurance-based workouts each week and 1 to 2 strength sessions. The results showed that the athletes improved strength, power, running speed and endurance. With just a couple days strength training sessions each week, you are likely to see significant improvements in your running performance.

### Hydrate Properly

Runners sweat a lot. This means that, as a runner, you'll need to take in more fluids than the Average Joe. If you're one of those harriers who often forgets to rehydrate after a run and throughout the day, consider this: A study presented last year at the American College of Sports Medicine's annual meeting showed that runners who rehydrated 75 percent of their sweat lost from running were three percent slower than when they fully replenished fluids. The longer the distance you're running, the more this can have a major impact, so be sure to carry that water bottle with you and continue to drink all day long.

### Train With Friends

Research out of Kansas State University recently showed the positive impact training partners can have on endurance performance. Monitoring speed, distance and perceived exertion, the researchers presented several different circumstances to participants during 12 exercise bike workouts. During half of the sessions, they worked out with a partner through Skype and the other half of the workouts they rode alone. Results showed that when they rode with a training partner, they went up to 200 percent longer and their perceived exhaustion didn't change from the sessions when they were riding half that distance alone. While schedules don't always allow, it's worth recruiting friends to run with you at least a couple days a week, for the sake of good company and better running.

### Rotate Your Shoes

A study published in 2013 touted the benefits of having multiple pairs of running shoes in your arsenal. Researchers classified runners into two groups: those who were single-shoe wearers, who wore an average of 1.3 pairs of shoes during the 22-week study; and multiple-shoe wearers, who sported an average of 3.6 shoes throughout training. Results showed that those who rotated and switched their shoes out more often (the multiple-shoe wearers) had a 39 percent lower risk of injury.

### Listen to Your Body

While there are plenty of loose guidelines out there to direct your training, such as don't increase your mileage more than 10 percent from one week to the next, every runner is different. This is why it is important for harriers to develop a sixth sense for knowing when they are doing too much too soon. If you've got dead legs, back off and cross-train instead that day. If a previously injured knee is bugging you, it may be worth taking an extra rest day. Your body is constantly sending you signals, so listen to it.

## Visualize

If you haven't yet subscribed to the powers of the mind, this is the year to start. By visualizing a race performance or an awesome workout, you prep your brain to withstand those nagging voices that suggest you aren't capable of successfully completing the task at hand. Indeed, a 2013 study showed the effects of positive self-talk by testing two groups of cyclists—one of which was coached in honing that positive inner voice and the other which received no such training. Unsurprisingly, the group who learned how to practice those positive self-talk skills lasted 18 percent longer on the bike than the control group.

## Rest

It is important to see rest as part of training, rather than the absence of it. In the same way that a tempo run boosts performance, a rest day allows your body and mind to bounce back from tough training. Without enough rest, you'll reach a point of diminishing returns where extra running is simply breaking your body down, rather than building it up. By scheduling in regular rest days, you'll be able to string together more consistent training over the long haul.

## Hill Train

While most runners know hill training can be beneficial, a new study by New Zealand researchers demonstrated its effects conclusively. Upon assigning 20 runners to various hill workouts over six weeks, the researchers had them do a 5K time trial before and after the training. After the 6 weeks of incorporated hills, runners were 2 percent faster in that 5K effort, suggesting that while hills may be unpleasant, they are well worth the effort.

## Don't Sweat Shoe Type

While there has been plenty of attention on barefoot shoes, "fat" shoes and everything in between, a new study published last fall suggests that they type of footwear you run in may not make that much of a difference. The research compared runners who wore shoes with soft midsoles to those who wore shoes with hard midsoles. At the conclusion of the 5-month study, they discovered that there was no difference in injury rates between the two groups. Indeed, this does not negate the fact that some runners find footwear, or the lack thereof, to be a big piece of the puzzle when it comes to injury woes. It is a good reminder, however, that every runner is different and there is no silver bullet when it comes to healthy running.

## Refuel Post-Run

Nutrition experts and coaches are becoming increasingly insistent upon taking in both carbohydrates and protein almost immediately after exercise, especially hard workouts and races. By ingesting a 4:1

ratio of carbs to protein in the 30 minutes after you stop running, you'll increase your body's muscle repair processes. This simple practice will prep you for the next big workout and contribute to healthier, more consistent training.

### The Big Picture

Instead of viewing running in the framework of a single training cycle, think of it in the long-term. This will help keep a bad workout or less-than-stellar race performance in perspective. It is all about the miles and workouts over many months and years that will collectively elicit good performances. Regard your running career as a long-term lifestyle choice rather than a three-month training cycle leading up to race, and you'll be less likely to sweat the small stuff.

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