

HOW TO BECOME A JOGGER

Carmel Sparke reveals the secret to staying the distance and achieving your goals – and still enjoy running a year from now

Now's the time flocks of runners fill the streets, keeping New Year's promises to lose weight or do a half marathon by May.

But give it a few months and their numbers will have thinned owing to injury, flagging motivation or simply because it's such a tough slog.

"Often the mindset is that running is a quick fix – I want to be skinny by my wedding day, I want to lose the weight I put on over Christmas," Rebecca Bryce, an exercise physiologist who specialises in running gait and technique, says. "But running is a process, not a destination, and that's where people go wrong in the beginning."

Joggers often try to do too much too soon, without a well-structured plan, and so give up, falling short of their fitness and health goals.

Here's what you need to know to help you stay the distance and keep running long after the glow of resolutions has faded.

COVER THE KS

Whether you're a beginner or regaining your running legs after a break, the key to jogging success is to build up slowly, allowing your body to adapt to each new phase.

"I think people rush it too much and they feel they have failed if they're not running in a couple of weeks, but really it will take a good 10 to 12 weeks to run five kilometres," Marie Bean, a running coach and founder of the Lazy Runner clubs, says.

Her approach for beginners is to map out a flat five-kilometre course. Every time you train, you run/walk this route, gradually increasing the running portion until you run the whole way. This may take 12 weeks, but the slow build is worth it.

"It's the best way to get it done, rather than running as far as you can, feeling dead and dreading running again," Bean says.

Bryce is also a fan of the structured run/walk over a set distance each time. "You might be jogging for two minutes,

working on good technique, and then walking for one minute until you've made your three kilometres distance," she says.

MAKE SURE THE SHOE FITS...

Your feet will carry you a long way once you start jogging, and

decent footwear is a must. Head to a specialist running shop for a fitting, looking for a pair of shoes that are comfortable and designed just for running.

Old, tired trainers have less stability, traction and shock absorption, which can cause problems for your feet and knees,



FINE-TUNE YOUR FOOTWORK

Technique can mean the difference between injury-free running and sore knees, hips and feet. As it can be hard to correct your own style, you may need help from an exercise physiologist or a running coach.

Bryce recommends you adopt a "mid-foot strike" style of running, as this is more efficient, less jarring and absorbs more shock than if your heel hits the ground first.



FROM
0
TO
5KM

BEAN SAYS YOU'VE BECOME A RUNNER WHEN YOU CAN JOG FIVE KILOMETRES WITHOUT STOPPING. HERE'S HER PLAN TO GET YOU THERE:

- Map out a flat five-kilometre course, which is the track you'll run/walk until you can run the whole way.
- Aim to run three times a week with a day off inbetween each for recovery. The best activities to do on your non-running days are swimming and cycling, or something gentler, such as yoga or pilates.
- Give yourself goals such as running for three power poles and walking for one.
- Once you've hit five kilometres, if you decide to run longer distances, build up by just half a kilometre a week.

3x a week

IS THE OPTIMUM TRAINING SCHEDULE IF YOU WANT TO BUILD UP TO BEING ABLE TO RUN FIVE KILOMETRES, ACCORDING TO MARIE BEAN, RUNNING COACH AND FOUNDER OF THE LAZY RUNNER CLUB.

so be prepared to change them around every six months and buy the best quality you can afford.

Another item not to skimp on is a supportive sports bra. "It doesn't matter whether you're small or big, you're still jiggling around while running and you could damage the tissue," Bean says.

As for high-tech gadgets, such as activity trackers, it all depends on the individual. Invest in these toys if you think they'll keep you motivated but they're certainly not essential.

"All those sorts of accessories are fun but not necessary. I don't need a machine to tell me when I am stuffed," Bean says.

STAY ON TRACK

Running is fantastic for becoming fitter and to help with weight loss, but making the commitment to train regularly can be challenging.

"One day of running a week just doesn't cut it. You'll never get to that point where you're really comfortable, you'll always feel like a beginner," Bean says.

Find strategies to help you run three times a week, such as writing down when you'll go and collecting your exercise gear in a pile the night before.

Bryce says consistency over time is what really matters for your health, even if you miss a few days here and there. Now hit the road.