

Beyond Good

How to turn key workouts up a notch or two for better fitness and faster times **BY JASON R. KARP, PH.D.**

WHETHER YOUR GOAL is to run a mile without stopping or to qualify for Boston, how you train has a dramatic effect on your performance. As Yogi Berra once said, “You’ve got to be very careful if you don’t know where you’re going, because you might not get there.” Of course, there’s more than one way to get where you’re going, each with its merits. A good place to start is running regularly for fitness, since the most important building block of running is consistency. A better approach, once you have a solid base, is to add one

“quality” workout per week to increase your fitness. But to take your running to your highest level, it’s best to follow a training plan skewed to your strengths. For instance, if endurance is your strong suit, find a plan that focuses more on mileage and tempo runs and less on interval training. If speed is on your side, focus on interval training and less on mileage. Applying the principles of good, better, and best to your workouts will help you improve your fitness, avoid plateaus, and get closer to where you want to go—wherever that is.

KEY WORKOUT **TEMPO RUNS**

“Tempo training raises your lactate threshold velocity, the running speed above which fatigue sets in quickly,” says Paul Greer, associate professor of health and exercise science at San Diego City College. These runs should feel comfortably hard: For recreational runners (those who run fewer than 20 miles per week), that means a pace 10 to 15 seconds per mile slower than 5-K race pace; ➔

Running at a faster pace for longer periods trains your body to rely on fat for fuel; you don’t run out of carbs as soon and can hold your pace longer.

**RUN
BETTER**

for speedy racers (those who run faster than 20 minutes for a 5-K), it's about 25 to 30 seconds per mile slower.

GOOD → Run three miles over rolling terrain, changing your pace from slightly faster than easy, to comfortably hard, to hard. Mixing it up teaches newbies how to run at different speeds. Experienced runners coming back after injury or a lay-off will relearn what a comfortably hard tempo feels like, without overdoing it.

BETTER → Do 4 to 5 x 1 mile on flat terrain at tempo pace with a one-minute recovery jog between each effort. This will improve your ability to hold a hard pace.

BEST → Run four to five miles at tempo pace. "Continuous tempo runs are excellent for developing stamina, confidence, and sense of pace," says Greer. Keep the pace consistent. "Don't allow your pace to fluctuate more than a half-mile per hour," says Veronique Billat, director of the Exercise Physiology Lab at the University of Evry-Val d'Essonne in France.

KEY WORKOUT ■ **INTERVALS**

Of all training runs, interval workouts are the most potent for improving your fitness. Short, hard efforts beef up your cardiovascular system by increasing the volume of oxygen-rich blood your heart pumps with each beat. With more oxygen feeding muscles, they can work harder.

GOOD → Run repeats by time, rather than distance, and do them hard (it should be difficult to talk); for example, 4 x 3 minutes hard with two minutes easy running between each effort.

BETTER → Run 4 to 6 by 800 meters at 5-K race pace. More formal workouts help you practice running at race pace.

BEST → Match the speed of the hard efforts with the purpose of the workout. To enhance endurance, run 800- to 1,000-meter repeats at slightly faster than your 5-K pace, says Billat. To increase speed, run 8 x 400 meters fast with a two-minute recovery jog, or 5 x 400 meters very fast with a three-minute recovery jog.

KEY WORKOUT ■ **LONG RUNS**

Running long drains your muscles' supply of carbohydrates (glycogen). Nearing empty signals your body to stock even more glycogen, so you have more fuel to draw on in the future. "Long runs also develop your ability to transport and use oxygen, which allows you to run longer before becoming fatigued," says Billat.

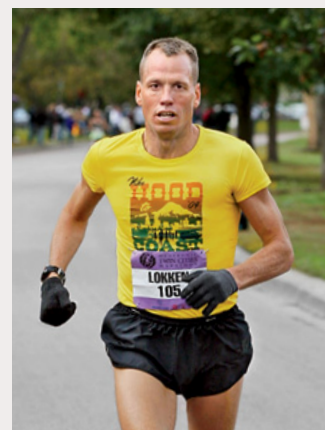
GOOD → Run one and a half to twice as long as your average run at an easy pace. When it comes to improving endurance, time on your feet is more important than the number of miles you run.

BETTER → Log 10 miles at marathon pace (or moderate pace). For intermediate runners, endurance isn't just about running longer—it's about being able to hold a slightly faster pace.

BEST → Complete 15 to 16 miles, with the first 12 miles at an easy pace and the last three to four miles at tempo pace (about 10-K race pace or slightly faster). Marathoners with a history of going long should make the long run more specific to the demands of the marathon. **W**

FOLLOW THE LEADER

Advice from the world's best runners



TRACY LOKKEN, 44, of Marquette, Michigan, earned masters titles at the 2010 U.S. Cross-Country Championships and the 2009 Twin Cities Marathon (in a 2:22:34 PR).

1 SURGE OFTEN

"I like to do six to eight 100-meter surges in the second half of tempo runs. This gets my leg turnover going faster to prevent the pace from stagnating."

2 SPIN WEEKLY

"I do weekly Spinning classes year-round. The intensity varies during each class, and it works my muscles while giving them a break from pounding."

3 STRETCH DAILY

"I stretch my hips for a minute or two before and after every run to keep them from tightening up and shortening my stride."
—BOB COOPER

PAUL PHILLIPS/COMPETITIVE IMAGE

Just Enough

Know when to add quality—and how much—to your schedule

NOVICE RUNNERS should follow the recommendations below for at least two months before adding additional workouts to their weekly routine. Intermediate and advanced runners may add more sessions as their bodies adapt.

Runner Type	Tempo Run	Intervals	Long Runs
NOVICE	Once a week	Every other week	Once a week
INTERMEDIATE	Once a week	Once a week	Once a week
ADVANCED	Twice a week	Once or twice a week	Once a week

50% OF RUNNERS SAY THEY REGULARLY RAMP UP THEIR WORKOUTS COMPARED TO 32% WHO RARELY, IF EVER, MAKE THEM HARDER.