

UoC Active – Running

Welcome to this UoC Active resource on running.

Running is one of the simplest forms of exercise. Done correctly it can be of great benefit to both physical and mental health. At UoC Active we thought it would be useful to publish some hints and tips, to encourage both staff and students to get or stay active.

We have tried to keep the advice non-technical and it is aimed primarily at beginners however we hope the more experienced will find some of the content useful.

If at any point you have any questions, there is an e-mail address for Adrian Sowerby, one of our Recreation Assistants and an experienced runner who works at our Carlisle Sports Centre, at the foot of the page.

The Kit

As stated above one of the best things about running is its simplicity. There is nothing too technical about putting one foot in front of the other, there's no need for a vast array of expensive equipment and, no matter how quickly or slowly we move, once you take that first step you can immediately call yourself a runner!

The one bit of equipment you should invest in is a pair of running shoes. Well cushioned footwear will make the whole experience more enjoyable, more comfortable and will help prevent injuries. Don't feel as though you have to spend a fortune but do buy specific running shoes as opposed to 'fashion trainers,' which simply won't have the required cushioning or be as durable. The two main considerations are the type of shoe required and getting the correct fit. A good dedicated running store should analyse your 'gait' and recommend both appropriate shoe type and the correct size. During 'lockdown' you are obviously restricted to online sales but many stores offer online advice and free postage/returns.

As for the rest of your clothing, keep it simple. Loose fitting and comfortable are the most important considerations. Avoid cotton or fleecy type material if at all possible, as this generally retains sweat and keeps it close to your skin, making you cold and uncomfortable. Lightweight 'wicking' fabric is better as it allows sweat to evaporate from its surface. Remember in cold conditions wrap up but be prepared to shed layers as you warm up.

The Plan

As a beginner there is no better place to start than the 'Couch to 5k' plan which you can find on the NHS website. It does exactly as it says, taking you from non-runner to being able to run 5k (3.1 miles) in around 9 weeks. It starts with walking and builds up very slowly, allowing you to repeat weeks if it becomes too much etc. Use the link below to take you to the plan OR follow our weekly session guides published on our Facebook pages (see below).

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/couch-to-5k-week-by-week/>

One of the biggest mistakes new runners make is to run too hard. The easiest way to gauge your pace is to ask yourself "Could I hold a conversation with someone if they were running with me?" If the answer is no then you are undoubtedly running too quickly. So slow down! If this means you are going at a pace not much quicker than walking then so be it. You will be surprised just how soon your ability to run improves if you start slowly.

Try to vary your routes, this will make things more enjoyable and less repetitive. Observe the most up to date COVID-19 restrictions, but where possible and permitted go with a friend.

If you can't run with someone else then it's always good practice to tell someone your route and roughly how long it will take. Try to run in daylight and wear bright clothing. If you have to run after dark then stick to well-lit streets and routes you know. Carrying a mobile phone is a good option too, there are a number of 'apps' that you can use to track your progress but be careful not to turn every session into a race!

Make sure you 'fuel' your runs. To begin with you will be walking/running short distances so there is no need to worry about taking extra food/drink with you. Avoid eating during the two hours before your session (longer if you've had a heavy meal). Ensure you are hydrated before your session but try not to drink excessive amounts too close to the session itself.

As your distances increase then feel free to take a drink, especially on warmer days, but take small regular sips rather than consuming it all at once.

Remember, even if you only 'run' a few metres you will instantly feel better than you would have done if you stayed at home and didn't exercise. Running is as much about your mental well being as it is your physical health.

Moving On

The best piece of advice for anyone who has begun their running journey and wants to improve/get faster/run longer is to join a club or group. During last few years there has been a real running boom, with lots of new clubs and groups starting up and a huge upsurge in the number of women running.

A great place to find a local running club or group is the England Athletics website: –

<https://www.englandathletics.org/clubs-and-facilities/> and simply enter your town/city.

These groups are non-elitist, very inclusive and have a strong community focus. They will cater for all standards and have sessions on most nights of the week (during normal times) with distances to suite all abilities.

We hope you have found this advice of use. Please keep an eye out on our Facebook pages (see below) for further information on running over the coming weeks where we will have weekly dedicated running sessions for the beginner and improver as well as taking a closer look at shoes/clothing etc.

<https://www.facebook.com/UoCActiveCarlisle>

<https://www.facebook.com/UoCActiveLancaster>

<https://www.facebook.com/UoCActiveAmbleside>

Please remember if you have any queries then do not hesitate to get in touch – you can contact Adrian at adrian.sowerby@cumbria.ac.uk

UoC Active Sports Centre Team

