

Run a Faster 5K

June 29, 2011



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As a personal trainer, running coach, and competitive racer I have learned through personal and professional experience that no matter what your 5k time is, almost every runner wants to improve it. After all, running is an individualized sport where you compete against yourself, so quickening your time is a real personal accomplishment. Even while running there are several things you can do on race day to quicken your race time. Follow these tips and you will run your fastest 5K and set a new personal record!

Do not Burn Out

I have learned from my own experience that starting out too fast can sabotage your race. And I have used this experience to help train running clients to quicken their race time within a limited calendar period. Starting your race like a gazelle can put you in an oxygen deficit for the

remainder of the race and hurt your overall finish time. It is also likely you will burn out. However, starting too slowly can leave you trapped at the back of the pack and makes catching up with other runners a strain. Runners who are “freshman runners” or new to the sport of racing should start their race slowly. By using this strategy, a “freshman runner” will get acclimated to racing and will not start a race running a pace that they cannot hold. However “senior runners” (I mean this is an experienced sense not an age sense 😊) usually benefit more from starting at the front of the pack, as they will have fewer people in the way. They will also feel mentally stronger at the start with no obstacles in their way. It is not recommended to go to the front line of the race pack unless you run a 6-minute mile or better. Runners who line up in the front running a longer time than a 6-minute mile are putting themselves at risk for an injury as they can get knocked over. I have seen this happen at several races. When you start out at the front before you’ve reached this race level you can also get caught up with the adrenaline, which makes many racers start out at a pace they can’t keep up. Not sure whether or not you’re going at the right pace? A good rule of thumb is: if you can talk a little but not a lot without feeling uncomfortable, you’re going at the right pace.

Speed Up the Hills

The more you race the more you will encounter races with hills. You can’t avoid all the races with hills and you really shouldn’t. Most runners actually tend to run quicker on a rolling hill course, especially when you run hills the efficient way.

When you run up a hill in a race, you are moving against your own momentum. This can slow many runners down. The best way to overcome these challenges and avoid getting bogged down is by inserting a speed burst as you enter the hills. When you come out on the other side, you’ll be farther ahead and moving faster than you would have been otherwise.

Finish Strong With A Sprint

Do not jog through the finish—sprint in! By quickening your pace you can cut seconds off your time and improve your overall finish standings. Most runners also benefit from the adrenaline of getting closer to the finish and hearing the roar of the crowd. Do not be afraid to kick it in and finish with a sprint! As you near the end of the race, increase your pace—most runners try to accelerate their speed inside the last 300-400 meters and gradually build up to a full-out sprint. Within the last 75 meters of your race, you should be running as hard as possible. When you finish your run you should feel like you ran your hardest race and left all your energy on the pavement. Finish strong and you will have no regrets!

You can run your fastest 5k time with practice, cross training, and the right race day strategy. And remember to have fun; after all that is the reason you are running!