

THE RUNDOWN ON RUNNING

FROM
FORM *to*
FINISH

By Becca Newell

If you were a fan of the TV show *FRIENDS*, you may be familiar with the 'Phoebe run.' To a somewhat lesser extent, that was my stride. An arms-flailing, tip-toe-leaping, erring-on-skipping stride that I wasn't even aware of. That is until a former triathlete joked about it during a leisurely outing, and soon after found himself teaching me how to run *properly*. In less than two weeks, I had knocked five minutes off my pace. Apparently, there's a lot more to running than I realized.

Susan Noble, an Annapolis-based runner and marathon coach, had a similar epiphany about six years ago when she first adopted the aerobic exercise. Here, she gives us her rundown on the practice of running. Whether you enjoy a brisk walk or are gearing up for your first half marathon, one thing's certain: it's an activity you take one step at a time—literally!

FACTS ON FORM

For beginners, let's start with the basics. Noble recommends runners look straight ahead, at the horizon with shoulders down and relaxed; arms at a 90-degree angle with hands loose, "like you're holding potato chips and you don't want to break 'em," she says. Be sure to not swing your arms across the body with each stride, since that can lead to knee problems. You should lean forward slightly, from your ankles—"as if you're on a Segway," she adds—keeping your knees and feet under your hips. Even for the more advanced runners, Noble



"EVERYONE HAS THE ABILITY TO BE A RUNNER. DON'T LET YOUR FEAR AND YOUR INTIMIDATION STOP YOU FROM GETTING TO WHERE YOU WANT TO BE."

—SUSAN NOBLE, ANNAPOLIS-BASED RUNNER AND MARATHON COACH.

suggests performing a body check every so often while running to ensure correct form is retained. As for your feet, Noble encourages a forward-foot stride. "The easiest way to know what that feels like is to pretend you're jumping rope," she says. "That's where, on your foot, you should land when you run." And don't forget to breathe deeply. If you're unable to do so, you should readjust your form, since you're probably hunching over, which compresses the diaphragm, Noble says. Similarly, most runs should be held at a conversational pace, she adds. "You shouldn't be able to recite an entire book, but if you can talk about what was on TV last night, that's about right," she explains. Slow your pace if you're struggling to talk or breathing heavily.

EATING AND HYDRATION

Running on an empty stomach is okay for excursions lasting 60 minutes or less, but it's important to fuel up if you plan to run longer than 90 minutes. "What you eat the night before, the morning of, and post-run is really important," she adds. "It will affect the way you run." She advises against consuming lots of fiber, i.e. leafy greens, the night before a run and suggests a breakfast packed with protein and carbohydrates the morning of. For a run longer than an hour, it's also important to take in nutrition during that time, like a handful of salted pretzels, a pack of energy gel, or a hard candy or two. "What you really need to do is replenish your sugar and salt," Noble says, adding she has a penchant for gummy bears. Just be sure to test any on-the-go nutrition in advance. "You don't want to find out on your marathon that something doesn't sit well with you," she cautions.



HEART RATE TARGET ZONE

MODERATE & VIGOROUS

$$220 - \text{age} = \text{HR}$$
$$\text{HR} \times 0.5 \text{ or } 0.7 = \text{MODERATE HRTZ}$$
$$\text{HR} \times 0.7 \text{ or } 0.85 = \text{VIGOROUS HRTZ}$$

First, you must determine your maximum heart rate by subtracting your age from 220—"this is the maximum number of times your heart should beat per minute while you're exercising," according to the Mayo Clinic. With that number in mind, you can calculate your desired target heart rate zone—"the level at which your heart is being exercised and conditioned but not overworked"—multiplying it by 0.5 and 0.7 percent for the lower and upper ends, respectively, of each target zone during moderate exercise or multiplying it by 0.7 and 0.85 for the lower and upper ends, respectively, of each target zone during vigorous exercise. For example, a 30-year-old's maximum heart rate is 190 (220-30=190). This means the target heart rate zone for moderate exercise is 95 to 133 beats per minute; for vigorous exercise, it is 133 to 161 beats per minute. If you run without a heart rate-tracking device, you can find it by taking your pulse for 15 seconds and multiplying that number by four. If you're outside of either zone you're aiming for, adjust your intensity accordingly.

TRAINING

If you're just starting out, Noble proposes a 30-minute trek, comprising of a five-minute warm-up, a 20-minute run (with walking intervals whenever necessary), and a five-minute cool-down. "The goal is to keep doing that same distance, but shortening your walking time and increasing your running time," she says. The biggest mistake to avoid is "too much, too soon," Noble adds, encouraging newbies to build-up a base before tackling a larger distance. "There's a tendency to jump ahead. Just take some time and appreciate where you are," she says. However, if you're ready to, say, graduate from a 5K run to a 10K, simply increase your distance slightly—no more than ten percent per week—with every few runs. "If you run three times a week, keep two of those the same and make one a little bit longer," she says.

BENEFITS

For many runners, Noble included, one of the biggest perks of the exercise is the sense of community it creates—you find yourself instantly connected to a group of people who all have the same goal. "I don't love to run every day, but I like to see my friends, so there are times that I run just to get the reward of seeing those people afterwards," she says, laughing. For others, running enhances their mental wellness, courtesy of the inevitable endorphin rush. "I solve a lot of problems out there on the trail," Noble adds. And, of course, there are the physical benefits, including weight loss and muscle definition, and health improvements, like a stronger heart, stimulated immune system, and a reduced risk of diabetes, stroke, and other conditions.

LOCAL RUNNERS' GROUPS

For a more extensive list, visit Whatsupmag.com

ANNAPOLIS STRIDERS

Annapolisstriders.org
\$25/individual membership;
\$40/family membership

ANNE ARUNDEL STRIDERS

Annearundelstriders.org
\$25/individual membership
\$75/family membership

FLEET FEET ANNAPOLIS GROUP RUNS

Fleetfeetannapolis.com
FREE, Tuesdays at 6 p.m.,
Thursdays at 6 p.m., and
Saturday at 8:30 a.m.
Call 410-268-6290 for
meeting locations

FLEET FEET SEVERNA PARK GROUP RUNS

Fleetfeetannapolis.com
FREE, Tuesdays at 6 p.m.
and Thursdays at 6 p.m.
Call 410-544-1005 for
meeting locations