

# A Beginner's Guide to Running

By Scraftoft Joggers very own 'Dr Sue'

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Running is a fabulous activity - something you can do on your own, whenever you like, or with like-minded friends. If you're a complete beginner, or restarting after a gap, you might find the following advice helpful.

- Running on your own can be hard. Look for a suitable club/running group, but make sure it caters for beginners. (*Scraftoft Joggers always offers shorter, slower runs and can tailor them to newcomers*)
- Decide what you want to get out of running. Do you want to get fit, lose weight, enter races?
- Whatever your reason, set yourself goals, but make sure they are realistic. (*At slow pace and short distances you won't lose a lot of weight, but over time your muscles will be more toned*)
- When setting your running goals, choose a target that is achievable - maybe run for 1 mile non-stop, or 5k.
- You can always adjust your goals, but don't start off with something that is so far off what you can do now, that you feel you will never get there.
- If thinking of miles feels daunting, then maybe think in terms of time - running for 15 minutes, or half an hour.
- Initially, particularly if you join a running group, you will probably feel that you are the slowest, that you are holding people up etc. Remember that everybody was once in the same boat. (*Running groups are always delighted to have new members, particularly beginners, and members will do all they can to help and encourage*)
- When measuring your progress, its easy initially. Virtually every run you do will be a new PB. After a little while, don't be surprised if things level off a bit. You won't increase speed and distance instantly.
- Write down details of your run - the route, time, type of terrain, and how it felt. (*Its interesting to look back and see how you have come on*)
- Don't make the mistake of comparing yourself and your progress with anyone else. We are all different. Progress will depend on a lot of things: age, weight, level of fitness, motivation etc.
- Little and often is the secret. If you can manage 2 or 3 runs a week, you will find you get fitter and running gets easier. The easier it gets the more you want to do!

- Don't push yourself too hard or too fast initially. If you can go at a pace where you can keep up a conversation, you should be fine. If your breathing is too hard, slow down.
- It won't always be progress each time. Sometimes, for no particular reason, you might find a run hard or feel you didn't go as well as previously. That's life. Don't let it put you off.
- If you are unwell, it might be wise to give running a miss. Or if you are particularly tired.
- Assuming you want to run, and not walk in between, you need to apply a bit of discipline. There will be times in a run, particularly on hills, where it can be hard. Really slow down to a very steady jog, shorten your stride, but try and keep that jogging motion going. It is much easier to get going again and you will have the satisfaction at the end of knowing that you ran all the way.
- Hills are a challenge, but we can't avoid them. Experienced runners often power up the hills to get them out of the way. For beginners the best advice is to slow right down, lean forward, and push off from your toes, with little steps.
- For every up hill run there is usually a downhill one. Relax on the downhills - shake out your arms and let the gradient carry you down.
- Pace yourself on a run. It is always better to start off slowly and leave a bit in reserve at the end.
- Make sure you have the right kit. Good, well-fitting shoes are vital. These should be your biggest item of expenditure. Some running shops will offer a running treadmill service where they analyse your gait and advise on the type of shoe you need. Make sure they are big enough to allow your toes room to spread.
- Clothing should be comfortable and preferably breathable. There are some great colours in high visibility gear - run safely and be seen.
- If you are running on the road, always run into the traffic. Take particular care on blind corners.
- Carry water with you if you need it. Small sips on the run may be all that you need.
- If you are running on your own, make sure you have some identification on you - perhaps an emergency contact number. And you might also want to carry a mobile phone.

But the best advice of all is 'Go ahead and get started'. And enjoy your running. The 'runner's high' really does exist! Have fun looking for it!