

THE IMPORTANCE OF A GOOD TRAINING PLAN

A well-designed regimen has to be specific and tailored to meet your level of fitness, capacity and goals



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Have you ever signed up for an endurance running event, got overly excited and immediately headed straight into a series of hard training sessions, only to eventually succumb to injuries before even getting to the starting line?

Or are you one of those who tend to wait until the very last minute to begin your training and end up struggling just to complete the race, or worse, putting yourself at risk of serious injuries and harm through over-exertion during the race?

If you answer yes to any of the above, you are probably not alone.

Many people tend to underestimate the importance of adhering to a systematic training programme, and this is a particularly common mistake among recreational runners.

A well-designed training plan is important for the safety and success of all endurance runners, and not just a requirement for elite athletes.

So, how do we know if a training plan is well designed? Often, good training programmes abide by a few key principles which can help us gauge the suitability of our training plan.

INDIVIDUALITY

Individuals differ in their capacity to adapt to exercise and training as a result of differences in their hereditary and physiological build.

This explains why some runners may experience significant improvement after adopting a given training programme while others exhibit little or no progress despite going through the same plan.

A good plan has to be specific and tailored not only to the individual's fitness, but also to his/her training capacity and needs.

SPECIFICITY

Exercise adaptations are specific to the volume, intensity and type of training. In other words, if you wish to race fast, you have to train fast; if you wish to race far, you have to train long.

PROGRESSIVE OVERLOAD

A systematic increase in training demand is also necessary for the continuous improvement of one's fitness. A good training regimen gradually conditions your body towards the specific physical and mental demands of your upcoming race.

It also ensures that as you edge closer towards your fitness goal, the risk of unintended injuries is minimised.

VARIATION OR PERIODISATION

A good endurance training programme should not be repetitive, dull and one-dimensional.

The prescribed volume, intensity and mode of training should vary systematically, so that the training stimulus remains challenging and effective over the entire training cycle, or even across multiple cycles within a training season.

RECOVERY AND REVERSIBILITY

During rest, and not training, your

body repairs itself and gets stronger.

Therefore recovery periods or days should be periodically incorporated into training programmes to afford the body sufficient recovery before the next bout of training.

Training too hard or too soon is one of the most common and leading causes of over-training or overuse injuries.

On the other hand, if training sessions are spaced too far apart, your body may lose the stimuli and benefits gained from the previous session. Fitness gained can, and will, be lost (detraining) when you stop exercising for a prolonged period.

Therefore, in order to ensure optimal training gain, an ideal training programme should allow just enough time for recovery before introducing the next training stimulus. Remember, consistency is key.

So, is there a "one size fits all" solution when it comes to training prescription? Unfortunately not.

One man's meat may be another man's poison. You should never blindly adhere to a training regimen just because it has worked well for others.

Finding an optimal training programme may also sometimes involve a certain degree of trial and error. Nonetheless, it is always good to begin with a programme that has been tried and tested, and gradually tweak it to suit your specific needs and abilities.

If you are not sure where to start, try the #RunWithMok training plan, by runONE above this article.

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