

# HOW TO TEACH RUNNING

Who taught you how to run? "No one!" is the answer that most people will give, "I just run." But it is teachable argues Mike Antoniadis and here he shows you where to begin.

**S**o your client comes to you one morning and says "I want to start running!" That's good news for you because they're sounding motivated. The problem is do you know how to coach it? Many personal trainers are untrained in addressing running technique – and most do not have access to the correct equipment for assessing running technique. So what do you do?

The good news is that running technique is simple to learn. Firstly, in a mental sense, there is usually a good reason someone wants to train for running. Whether it is a desire to get rid of that extra tyre around their waist, take part in a charity run or to de-stress, it means that the motivation is there and your words of encouragement will do the rest. In a physical sense running, and running fast, is a skill and just like any other skill it can be taught and it can be developed to a high level.

### Is there such a thing as perfect running technique?

No. We are all made with limbs of different lengths. But there is a perfect running technique for each individual and their body shape. Muscle imbalances and previous injuries can change the biomechanics of the arms and legs so we usually need to re-teach the body how work efficiently again.

### Where to start

Begin with Technique. The most efficient running motion is when the body has very little up and down movement, the arms are relaxed, but moving like mini pistons backwards and forwards, and the legs are cycling with the heel coming up above knee when it is off the ground.

The feet should be landing under the body not ahead of it; landing further ahead means there is over-striding. Make sure the ground is hit lightly. The best and most efficient way is to land on the balls of the feet although this is not for everyone and a "heel, toe runner" is fine so long as time on the ground is minimised. How about getting your client to practice using the balls of their feet 10 minutes at a time during a run to get used to it?

Most injuries runners get are from landing shock. Many people's running styles are very inefficient and cause stresses and strains on the body, which means around 65% of runners get injured every year. The numbers are much higher when race time approaches because of the increase in volume or intensity of their running.

### Try this

#### Lower Leg Cycling motion.

When the foot leaves the ground make sure the heel is moving up towards the backside to contract the hamstring and the gluteus maximus. This creates a cycling motion which will shorten the stride length.

#### Coordination.

Ensure the arms and legs are moving in unison. This will eliminate bounce and encourage faster forward movement. The arms should be bent at the elbow at about 90 degrees and the movement should be back and forward.

It should take about five or six 45 minute sessions to change technique. Do short runs of 20-30 seconds at a time. Try incorporating one change at a time and then at the next training session make another change until it becomes fluid.

Get these basics correct and you'll soon have someone on your hands who enjoys running and who no longer says "I want to start running" but "I don't want to stop!"

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Mike Antoniadis is the founder and Performance Director of The Running School®. For more information on improving your running and on franchise information visit [www.running-school.co.uk](http://www.running-school.co.uk).

