



Incorporating Hard Running Workouts

BY: Kevin Myers, Personal Running Coach, Plateau Racing

Runners who are training for the Amica Insurance Seattle Marathon, or one of their other running events being held that weekend, should try and incorporate one hard workout a week into your training schedule.

Here are a few tips we teach our runners when they run a hard workout session:

- Keep the hard workout total distance at 10-15% of your weekly mileage.
- Make sure your hard workout paces are appropriate for your current fitness level.
- Progression workouts: Over the course of your workout, you'll increase in pace by starting easy and finishing hard.

Why Add Hard Workouts?

- Gets you out of your comfort zone.
- Helps your body work on recovering from long and hard runs.
- Teaches you patience while managing low grade physical discomfort.
- Improves your ability to run at a faster speed for longer durations, improving your overall performance come race day.

Benefits of Hard Workouts:

- Work on efficient running form.
- Can train cardiorespiratory system and muscular system to efficiently absorb, deliver, and utilize oxygen while removing metabolic waste products (carbon dioxide, lactic acid, etc.)
- Can improve endurance.
- Can lower muscle stress and improve lactate threshold.
- Increases strength and reduces risk for injury due to an increased ability to absorb force.
- Can improve fast twitch muscle ability.

Adding Hard Workouts to your schedule

For the best results, we use one hard workout per week. For experienced runners they may incorporate two hard workouts into their weekly training cycle. We rotate Tempos, Hills, and Fartlek for 3-9 weeks total, depending on the athlete.

Depending on where you fall in your training, you can use different speed and strength workouts to improve your performance come race day. With that said let's go through the different types of hard workouts and how you might implement them.



What Kind of Hard Workouts?

- **Tempo (threshold, steady-state, pace run, control run)**
 - Done at a swift, sustained pace, generally for 20-30 minutes, sometimes as long as an hour or more.
 - Sub-maximal pace
 - Generally on flat or smooth terrain
 - Can be built into your long run
 - Use a pace chart as a guide for speed (Daniels, RRCA, etc.)
 - Can also use heart rate as a guide, stay between 75-90% of max, which is about 160-190 bpm for most runners, for longer distances your heart rate should be a little lower.
 - Two ways to approach tempo runs:
 - Create a workout ritual:
 - Aerobic warm up for 10-15 minutes
 - Stretching and form work drills as desired
 - 4-8 strides
 - The workout itself (tempo run)
 - Aerobic cool down for 10-15 minutes
 - Stretching and form work drills as desired
 - OR:
 - Easy “aerobic” warm up for 15-30 minutes
 - Roll into tempo pace for 20+ minutes
 - Easy run for 15 minutes to cool down
- **Hills**
 - Brisk running uphill with rest breaks on the flat or on the downhill
 - Run a sustained pace uphill, then relax back to conversation pace (or slower) on the downhills or flats
 - 15-30 minutes or faster running is a good target
 - Generally sub-maximal pace, with more moments of maximal pace
 - Paces depend on the grade of the hill and the amount of repetitions
 - By heart rate, 75-90%
 - 160-190 bpm for most runners
 - Create a workout ritual:
 - Aerobic warm up for 10-15 minutes
 - Stretching and form work drills as desired
 - 4-8 strides
 - The workout itself (tempo run)
 - Aerobic cool down for 10-15 minutes
 - Stretching and form work drills as desired



- **Hills (continued)**
 - Novices may find hills threatening, but hills are important for all types of runners
 - Good for the strength phase of running
 - Good for leading into interval phase of running
 - Good for mental fitness and simulating race courses
 - Types of hill workouts:
 - Hills at conversation pace
 - Great for training
 - Be careful of doing too much, too often
 - Hill repetitions:
 - Hilly loop or out and back course
 - Run comfortably hard on the uphill, relax on the flat or downhill
 - 600-1000m hill
 - Single set of 5-8 repetitions, with rest of jogging or walking downhill
 - Good for early in base stage
 - Good for marathon training
 - 100-600m hill
 - Multiple sets of 5-8 repetitions, with rest of jogging or walking downhill
 - At approximately 10-17% grade, these can be steeper and shorter
 - Good for short distance races
 - Modifications for hill workouts:
 - Vary the distance and duration of each hill, as well as the speed in a specific workout
 - Example: 3x600 of gentle grade at 10k pace, 3x200 of moderate grade at 5k pace, 3x75 of steep pitch at faster than 5k pace
 - For marathon training the ideal length of the hill should fall between 600-1000m
 - Downhill Workouts
 - Treat downhills with respect - there is an increased risk of injury when running downhill, be careful how often you are adding downhill running in.
 - Eccentric loading of the muscles on downhill causes more stress on muscles and greater impact to hip and knee joints.
 - Form tip: lean forward, don't overstride, don't windmill your arms.
 - Mimic upcoming race courses by doing long runs that include long downhill stretches



- Downhill Workouts (continued)
 - Allow additional recovery time after these workouts
 - Leg extensions and front squats can help prepare your quads and hips
 - 100m strides on a gentle downhill can enhance leg speed
- **Intervals**
 - Specific amount of bouts at a specific time at a specific effort with a specific recovery.
 - Create a workout ritual:
 - Aerobic warm up for 10-15 minutes
 - Stretching and form work drills as desired
 - 4-8 strides
 - The workout itself (tempo run)
 - Aerobic cool down for 10-15 minutes
 - Stretching and form work drills as desired
 - Flat and measured - 400m track, path, multi-use path, measured road, or grass field are great surfaces for intervals.
 - Track or softer terrain is better.
 - Who should do intervals?
 - Athletes running more than 20 miles per week
 - Athletes who have completed strength phase of tempo, hills, and Fartlek
 - Experienced runners who have recently completed a base phase of 500 miles
 - General tips:
 - Negative splits make it easier to succeed.
 - Amount of recovery between each interval rule of thumb: half the distance or half the time
 - Most athletes should not do demanding intervals the week of a peak performance (race)
 - Marathoners don't need much high intensity work at less than 800m (give or take 3 minutes)
 - Variables to consider:
 - Distance of fast bout
 - Speed/time of fast bout
 - Duration/distance of recovery bout
 - Amount of repetitions
 - Pace for novices
 - Faster than conversation pace but never all-out
 - Duration: 30 seconds - 10 minutes



- **Intervals (continued)**

- Long intervals:
 - 800m-1 mile or 2:30-10:00 minutes (give or take)
 - Helps push up anaerobic threshold
 - Good for marathoners, long multi-sport events, and early season training for road racers.
 - Dangerous for those dealing with an injury
- Short Intervals
 - 800m or less, 2:30 minutes and down (give or take)
 - Good for shorter road racing and track racing, use in the late season
 - Dangerous for marathoners, novices, and anyone dealing with an injury
- Interval workout examples for marathoner:
 - Longer repeats of 800m- 1 mile at goal pace or faster
 - Shorter recovery
 - Complete 4-8 miles overall
 - Increase mileage and pace for more experienced runners

Wrapping up

Adding speed and strength running workouts to your training can help you reach the PR you are training for and make you a more efficient runner overall!

If you have any training questions, feel free to email the coaching staff at:
Kevin.plateauracing@gmail.com

Or contact us using the contact form on our website:
www.plautearacing.com