



6 Running Goals That Aren't Races

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June 4, 2020

Having a [running goal](#) is important. [Research has shown](#) setting goals keeps us motivated and helps us stay accountable to our training programs — and it can be the difference between getting out the door or hitting 'Yes, I'm still watching' on Netflix. Right now, your [original goal race](#) may not be happening anymore, and that might make you feel less-than-excited about your running. But a race finish or new PR at a specific distance isn't the only goal that keeps runners motivated.

Consider [smaller goals that ladder up to a larger goal](#) — also known as process goals — which actually may be more efficient and less stress-inducing, [according to research](#).

So, from least competitive to almost-racing, here are a few running goals to consider when you can't make your goal race.

1 FOCUS ON A HEALTH GOAL YOU'VE PUT OFF

Now is the time to make health your focus. From [getting enough sleep](#) to finally [eating well and fueling properly](#) to actually doing [those mobility exercises](#), there are many non-running goals that help improve your running performance. "You definitely want to make sure you're getting your rest and you're well recovered after runs, not stacking hard workouts on top of each other. Overloading the stress will negatively impact your immune system which is obviously important to avoid," explains Jason Friedman, a doctor and ultrarunner. "With no racing on the horizon for the foreseeable future, it's also a good time to back off the intensity and work on building a base, core strength, flexibility and [injury prevention](#)."

2 RUN YOUR LONGEST DISTANCE EVER

Once your health is in order, it's time to think about a running goal that keeps you excited about lacing up your sneakers. If you've already conquered [ultra-running](#) and done 100-milers, a new longest distance may not be for you, but if you've never gone beyond a half-marathon, maybe it's time to try to build up to a 15-miler or even a 20-mile run. You don't need to race this distance, though: Just plan a long, fun run a few weeks from now and slowly build up to it. If you want a more long-term version of this goal, [set a monthly mileage goal that feels like a stretch](#), but reasonable. Pro tip: Rather than having a finish line, try to end your longest run where you can have a great Rocky-style moment to bask in its completion.

3 UP YOUR ELEVATION

Similar to a distance challenge, set a goal of running a certain [amount of elevation over the course of a month](#) — or, if you're normally a more social runner, challenge a few of your normal running buddies to start logging meters of climbing over the next few weeks. Use an [app like MapMyRun](#) to [keep track of how much you climb](#). This could include heading to the one big climb in town, doing laps of a smaller local hill or going to the mountains for serious gains.



4 STAY CONSISTENT

You can try a [running streak](#), but any level of running consistency is an ideal goal. It allows you to run as little or as much as your mood dictates, and it's great for someone who's schedule has gotten less regular in recent weeks — if you're working late or get caught up in homeschooling, you only need to get in a 10-minute jog to call the day a win. The only goal is to move your body every single day.

5 PR YOUR MILE

While distance might seem like the harder challenge, setting a new [fastest mile time](#) will arguably be more difficult.

Start this challenge by getting your baseline: Do a 15–20-minute warmup, then run a mile as hard as you can. This will be your new pace to beat, and you can set a goal mile pace or just aim for 'going faster' each time you test. To get speedier, you can use MapMyRun to help you design a training plan that incorporates intervals and speedwork to gradually improve your pace. Test your mile time every few weeks, but don't do it too often: This effort should feel like a race day.

6 FIND A LOCAL SEGMENT RECORD TO CHASE

Using MapMyRun's route-making and finding feature, you can seek sections of trail or road that you frequent, and you can analyze exactly how fast you go on them. Pick one (it might be a kilometer, it might be a 5-mile chunk of road) and set a goal to improve your time on it every few weeks. Continue to test yourself and you'll be able to see progress as you get fitter — and faster.