



5 Steps to Better Running Form

by [Lara Rosenbaum](#)

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Good form can make your runs easier, more efficient and more effective, especially when it comes to edging toward new mileage goals. Running properly can also help stave off injury.

Here are five tips from Nashville-based Fleet Feet Sports run-form coach Alex Mimlitz to improve your runs from your first step forward:

It's important to [keep your body upright](#). Stand with your feet hip-distance apart, and clasp your hands, extending your arms above your head. Reaching your hands up can help bring your hips forward, so they're aligned with your shoulders. "Runners often bend forward from the waist, which can make it harder to lift the knee for an effective stride," Mimlitz says. "This helps correct posture from the get-go."

Pretend you're holding potato chips in your hands, with one between your index finger and thumb. Maintain a loose grip, so as not to break the chips. "Fisting your hands can cause your upper body to unnecessarily tighten and also takes extra energy," says Mimlitz.

[Keep your elbows](#) bent to about 90 degrees while running, and avoid upper body rotation as you stride.

If you must look down, do so with your eyes only. Focus on the horizon during your runs.

"When you lean from your ankles, your body leads your feet, helping you conserve energy," Mimlitz says. "If you lean back, you're setting yourself up for a [heel strike](#), which can force stress into your tibialis, potentially leading to shin splints. Keeping your feet under your body (through a proper ankle lean) allows you to better use your glutes, too, so you can have more power to propel yourself forward."

Runners often tend to bound up vertically, which uses energy you could be putting toward more mileage. Instead, focus on pushing forward from the balls of your feet. This is where proper posture and an ankle lean come in. Lean back, and it's nearly impossible to push forward with a heel strike; lean forward from the waist, and you're in your own way. Proper posture and a slight ankle lean can help keep your feet under your body, making it easier for you to push your mileage.

Once you've put a lock on proper running form, you can turn your attention to [cadence](#), which is perhaps the key secret ingredient to better runs. "A faster cadence doesn't allow you to spend extra energy lifting your knees too high or bounding upwards," Mimlitz says. "It helps you maintain your ideal pace while conserving energy."

Runners often shoot for 180 steps per minute, but Mimlitz suggests starting slowly. "Your ideal cadence can depend on your height, weight and body mechanics," he says. "But generally speaking, you may want to shoot for 160 steps per minute to start and work your way up."



[Under Armour's connected running shoes](#) calculate and track your cadence using your height, weight, age, gender and running pace to provide personalized cadence targets at any pace. The [Samsung Galaxy Watch Active2 – Under Armour Edition](#) can even help you address and tweak your form mid-run with real-time feedback on your cadence, among other metrics.

Some runners use a metronome app to check cadence. You can also download songs that have your desired beats per minute. Or you can go old-school and count your steps for a minute to understand the way your ideal cadence feels.

Mimlitz suggests checking your cadence once or twice during a run to start. “You’ll also want to give your body a chance to adjust,” he says. “Focus on one form issue per run, and be patient with yourself. By week five, you’ll notice you’ll be able to better listen to your body, and your body will have made more optimal adaptations.”

6 Running-Form Pointers From Expert Coaches

by [Emily Abbate](#)

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There are a few things virtually all runners agree are important. A perfect pair of running shoes, for starters. A really [good anti-chafe solution](#), for sure. And of course, running form. Every person’s running form is just as unique as their fingerprint, and [research](#) shows good running form can positively impact performance.

“Even when you watch elite runners at [major marathons](#) like Boston or New York, you will see differences in how they run and the differences in their running form,” says Kim Peek, a RRCA and USATF coach based in Kansas City. “Rather than fixating on how to be perfect, pay attention to just one detail at a time to make your form 1% better. Trying to overhaul your entire running form all at once is going to create a whole new series of problems.”

There are a few aspects important to keep your stride not just effective, but safe. Here, experts weigh in on five things to take into account when you hit your stride:

1 STAND TALL AND IN ALIGNMENT

“Your ears should be over shoulders and shoulders over hips,” says Peek. “It’s very similar to when you go into a Pilates or a TRX class and they tell you that the basis of all movement is the [plank](#). When you’re in a plank, your total spine is in alignment. That’s what we want when we are running. We want the [body parts to be stacked](#).”

2 KEEP YOUR EYES FACING FORWARD

Head positioning should be comfortable and relaxed. Peek suggests making an L with your right thumb and pointer finger, then placing the thumb right between your collar bones with your pointer facing out. Your chin should comfortably and effortlessly meet your pointer — that’s the money spot. Also, keeping your gaze set on an item in the distance (you know, that whole “eyes on the prize” mentality) actually makes the distance feel shorter, according to [research](#).

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3. STEP UP YOUR CADENCE

Everyone moves at a different pace. However, most runners should aim to hit a [cadence between 165–180 steps per minute](#), suggests Rick Muhr, a Boston-based running coach. By maintaining this cadence, you'll avoid overstriding — or when the horizontal distance between your heel and center of mass at the moment of contact is too long.

If you're below that steps-per-minute target, don't freak out. "Gradually increase [the] number of steps you take per minute over weeks or a month," suggests Peek. [Under Armour's Connected HOVR](#) running shoes calculate and track your cadence using your height, weight, age, gender and running pace to provide personalized cadence targets at any pace. "If you try to make this grand sweeping leap — you will likely create an injury. Also the number of steps is not as important as the increased cadence."

4 RELAX YOUR HANDS WITHOUT CROSSING YOUR MIDLINE

Running can be a really relaxing, enjoyable experience — so do yourself a favor and avoid clenching your fists (this applies to your jaw, too). If you hold tension there, it could translate to other areas of your body. "You want to keep hands close to your torso without crossing your center line," suggests Muhr. "Crossing your centerline causes rotation in your hips and disrupts the efficiency and rhythm of the kinetic chain."

5 LEAN FORWARD AT THE ANKLES

A lot of people lean forward at the hips, and that takes away our ability to be fast, says Peek. Instead, find that lean in the ankles, which can promote alignment throughout the entire body. "

6 AIM FOR A FOOT STRIKE BELOW, OR CLOSELY IN FRONT OF, YOUR CENTER OF MASS

"If you extend well beyond your center of gravity, you will overstride," says Muhr. This could cause what he calls a "breaking effect," placing more stress and impact on your lower extremities.