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## Key Habits Highly Effective Runners Share

by [Molly Hurford](#)

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When it comes to being a healthy, happy, steadily improving runner, coaches agree on one thing: It takes consistency and good habits to make sustainable improvements in your running.

The classic book “The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People,” by Stephen R. Covey, isn’t just a prescription for improving your work life, the habits highlighted in the book can make your running improve, too.

Let’s take a look at his list of habits, seen through a runner’s eyes:

[When dealing with injury](#), there are two types of runner: The type who eases back at the first sign of pain or discomfort, and the one who runs through a tingle, ignores a twinge and only stops when even hobbling to the next lamppost has proved impossible.

Don’t be the latter — instead, try to catch injuries before they start. A bout of [runner’s knee](#), for example, can often be nipped in the bud with a few days off, but ignoring it can lead to months of recovery. Be proactive and seek help from a physical therapist before an injury becomes serious. If you’re not injured, be proactive about warmups and cooldowns, adding [yoga](#), stretching and [foam rolling](#) to your routine and [improve your core](#).

[Having some kind of goal](#) is important for any runner, even if you’ve never had any interest in racing. A [goal](#) keeps you invested and motivated to stick to your training regimen on those days when you’d rather not run. Your goal could be as simple as logging a certain number of miles each month or in the calendar year or you could be [going for a PR](#) in your next marathon. Write it down, and keep it somewhere you’ll see it before every run, so you’re reminded why you’re running.

It’s easy to think being a runner only means putting in miles pounding pavement. But really, you’re a runner 24/7, and you want to remember to [treat your body like a runner’s body](#). That means eating plenty of healthy, whole-food based meals, [fueling properly before, during and after your training](#) and [staying hydrated](#) throughout the day. It also means getting 7–9 hours of [sleep every night](#) — making sleep the [easiest, cheapest performance enhancer](#) around.

Let’s get something straight: If you [toe the line at a race](#), you might not win. Sure, it’s great to hit your goal time and stand on that podium, but you need to have a healthy relationship with racing.

Even if you don’t end up on that podium or reaching your goal, what were other wins from the day? Maybe you dialed in your nutrition strategy or had the best-feeling last mile you’ve ever had. Maybe you out-sprinted someone at the finish line, or maybe your child told you that she was proud of you. Always look for that silver lining, and a race will never go ‘badly.’



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One of the fastest ways to enjoy running — and get faster! — is to find a [crew of like-minded runners](#) to hang out with. They'll be the friends who understand you, whether you're talking about nipple chafing and pre-race port-a-potty emergencies or discussing dealing with injury or sharing tips on [how to tackle a certain hill interval](#). Share that love of running, and it will come back to you tenfold.

Whether you work with a coach or follow a training plan, you're more likely to be invested in your training if you know why you're doing a certain workout — and if you can tailor it to your specific needs. Knowledge is power, and knowing why each run or workout matters can really help change your mindset and your ability to get the workout done. You'll also end up with more efficient training if your coach understands — or your [training plan on MapMyRun](#) reflects — your needs, not just what you heard you should be doing.

Covey's last habit is to always be improving and striving for more — in short, don't get stale. From a fitness perspective, that might mean adding intervals, [doing more strength training](#), signing up for a [weekly yoga class](#) or [adding a few extra walks](#) sprinkled in with your weekly runs. Continue to tweak and improve your nutrition and the time you switch off the lights to go to bed.