

### 3 Keys To Finding Your Natural Running Stride

When I think back to when I was at school, my worst nightmare was running. I hated it, even more than football and rugby which I don't like even today. So I never thought that I'd be any good at running... until I found out the trick that I'm about to share with you now. I realised that running was an important part of my cardio-vascular exercise, and that I needed to find a way to make it a little bit easier for me. When I used the treadmill, I was getting way out of breath way too quickly (less than 10 minutes, and that included 3 minutes fast walk to warm up). And yet I could go on the rowing machine for 20 minutes and hardly even notice it. So something was wrong with my running technique. Not knowing what to try, I just varied everything I could: speed, incline, the length of my stride, the height of my stride, and so on. And these are the three tricks to running that made the difference for me:

1. Don't be afraid to INCREASE your speed!! I realised that I was actually running too slow! I've naturally got a long stride (I'm just over 6 foot tall), but when on the treadmill I was taking tiny little strides. Why? Because if I'd run at my normal stride, I would have run into the front of the machine. By increasing the speed of the machine, I was able to stretch my stride out to a better length for me, which made my whole running style much more fluid, and therefore easier on me.
2. Don't be afraid to INCREASE your incline! If you aren't using an incline when running, then you are effectively running downhill. This is because the tread itself is helping your legs' motion, rather than you actually pushing yourself forward. Similarly, if you run downhill, it's much easier because you don't have to push yourself up in the air as much to gain the forward distance you need. So add a little incline to you run - not much, just enough that you can feel the extra push. Not only does this simulate running on flat ground, it also makes your motion more natural. Running downhill and running on the flat produce variations in your stride that make you more or less efficient. So by increasing your incline, you induce a more natural style to you movements.
3. Remember to focus on your breathing. The final key is related to the other two. As my stride increased, and my effort increased, I found that my rate and depth of breathing changed so that I took one full breath cycle for every 3 steps. And that felt more natural than previously. Sorry that's not a very scientific explanation, but "feeling natural" is about as best as it gets :-). So there you go. Three keys to more efficient running, which you can experiment with. Some of this advice might sound odd (if you're running out of breath quickly, why make the running harder?). But with the principle of finding a more efficient pace for your body, it makes sense. And by the way, almost overnight I doubled my running from 10 minutes to 20, with no real problem, and over time I increased to 45 minutes with a couple of 1 minute breaks to stretch and drink water. I can go more, but I start to get bored and also run out of time at the gym!

### About the Author

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