

FIRST HOME: Catherina with the Flora Women's Mini-Marathon in Dublin, 2004. Pic Sportsfile.



ChiRunning®

Certified Instructor

poor circulation in your legs. Your knees should be bent at a 90 degree angle when you are warmed up and running at a good medium pace.

4 TEMPO: Most people have too slow of a tempo. When you run you want to spend the least amount of time on your legs as possible. The longer you take with each stride, the more time your foot spends on the ground, and the more energy your legs have to expend to support your body weight. Even if it's a split second during each stride, it adds up quickly when you're talking about 1500 steps per mile. Strive to maintain a cadence of 85-90 strides per minute with each leg. If it's difficult to do, shorten your stride length until it feels more comfortable to hold the cadence.

5 BODY SENSING: You must develop a good ability to monitor and sense all of the major muscle groups of your body and to be able to sense tension or tightness in your muscles. Then you need to combine this with the ability to relax isolated muscle groups. This will help you to develop your strengths and make changes in the weak areas of your running form.

6 GOOD MENTAL FOCUS: Making changes takes mental focus. If you want to make adjustments to correct poor or improper movement patterns you will need to use your brain to re-educate your body. When you've felt, through Body Sensing, what adjustments you need to make to your running form, you can then use your mental focus to tell your body what to do, until it has learned the new form and does it

naturally. This can be quite meditative and, if used properly, actually refreshes and renews your mental capacity.

7 GOOD UPPER BODY/LOWER BODY COORDINATION: The general rule is that your upper body and lower body should be doing equal amounts of work. For most runners this 50/50 ratio is tilted one way or the other, resulting in a less than fluid running form. When your upper body and lower body are working in unison rather than against each other it spreads the work of running over the whole body and takes the load off of any single muscle group. It's similar to the principle that work is best done if the responsibility is spread out over many workers.

8 GOOD BREATHING HABITS: Watch a baby breathing sometime. You won't see their chest rise and fall with each breath. Instead you'll see their abdominal area expand and contract like someone breathing in and out of a balloon. This is how we should breathe and it's how you are taught to breathe in any yoga class. It's called "belly breathing" and it's how we should all be breathing all the time. When your breath is shallow, you use only the very upper part of your lungs and don't take advantage of your total lung capacity. Oxygen is what your muscles use to convert stored fuels into usable energy and any reduction in your oxygen uptake will affect your ability to burn glycogen, which is your fuel. If this way of breathing is new to you, you may want to practice it when you're not running so that you can feel what it's like before you try to do it on the run. When you exhale you should pull your belly button in

towards your spine, which will empty the bottom of your lungs. Then, when you relax your abdominals, they'll expand and draw air into the bottom of your lungs which will, in turn get more oxygen into your blood supply.

9 HAVING GOOD BEND IN YOUR KNEES AND ELBOWS: The less you bend your arms and legs, the more work your muscles have to do when you're running. An arm or leg that is bent at the knee or elbow will swing much easier than one that is straight. As you approach your "cruising" speed, your forearms and shins should both be parallel to the ground in mid-swing.

10 STAYING RELAXED: This includes having a good sense of humor and having the ability to observe what is going on within you and around you and responding wisely to those observations. When I'm relaxed I reduce my chances of straining a tight muscle. If I'm not relaxed my muscles will be tighter and will therefore restrict the range of motion in my arms and legs, thus robbing me of the ability to run at higher speeds comfortably. A relaxed runner will spend less time recovering from a race than an inefficient runner who is burning more fuel for the same amount of distance. Good running form doesn't just happen. It needs to be learned and created and worked at constantly. An efficient runner will do much less work over a given distance than an inefficient runner, which translates into an ability to do one of two things: either run more easily at a faster rate of speed or be able to run farther at a slower speed.

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