

THE RUNNING PERFORMANCE SELF-ASSESSMENT

8 questions every runner should ask.

WELCOME

Improving as a runner isn't just about running more kilometres. Long-term performance comes from balancing smart training, recovery, strength, and consistency.

This checklist is built to help you evaluate your training habits and identify the areas that can have the greatest impact on your running.

1. ARE YOUR EASY RUNS TRULY EASY?

WHY IT MATTERS

Many runners spend too much time training in the "moderately hard" zone, running too fast to recover well, but too slow to maximise the benefits of high-intensity training. While it may feel productive, this approach can limit long-term progress.

Easy running is the foundation of endurance performance. It develops your aerobic system, supports recovery between harder sessions, and helps you maintain consistent training over time.

SELF-ASSESSMENT

Are at least 70–80% of your weekly runs truly easy?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Needs attention

PRACTICAL ACTION

During your next easy run, slow down enough that you can comfortably hold a conversation in full sentences. If you regularly finish easy runs feeling fatigued, consider reducing your pace and saving your energy for quality sessions.

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2. IS YOUR STRENGTH TRAINING SUPPORTING YOUR RUNNING?

WHY IT MATTERS

Strength training isn't just about building muscle; it's about improving your body's ability to produce force efficiently. Well-designed strength training can improve running economy, meaning you use less energy to maintain the same pace. Over time, this can contribute to improved performance while increasing your capacity to tolerate training.

The greatest benefits come from consistent, progressive strength training that complements your running rather than competing with it.

SELF-ASSESSMENT

Do you complete purposeful strength training at least 1–2 times per week throughout the year?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Needs attention

PRACTICAL ACTION

Include one or two strength sessions each week, focusing on quality over quantity. Prioritise compound movements, single-leg exercises, and progressive overload rather than long, fatiguing workouts that may interfere with your running.

3. ARE YOU GIVING YOUR BODY TIME TO ADAPT?

WHY IT MATTERS

Training provides the stimulus for improvement, but adaptation occurs during recovery. Without sufficient recovery, the body has less opportunity to repair tissue, restore energy stores, and develop the physiological adaptations that support long-term performance.

Recovery is not the absence of training; it's an essential part of the training process. A well-balanced programme combines appropriate training loads with adequate recovery to maximise adaptation while reducing the risk of excessive fatigue.

SELF-ASSESSMENT

Does your training plan include regular recovery days and lighter training periods that allow you to adapt to your training load?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Needs attention

PRACTICAL ACTION

Schedule recovery with the same intention as your training sessions. Include regular easy days and consider reducing your training load every few weeks to support adaptation and maintain consistent progress over time.

4. DO YOUR RUNS HAVE A PURPOSE?

WHY IT MATTERS

Each training session should have a clear purpose. Different training intensities stimulate different physiological adaptations, from developing aerobic capacity to improving speed and endurance. When training intensities become blurred, the body may not receive a strong enough stimulus to maximise adaptation or enough recovery to perform well in subsequent sessions.

A well-structured training programme balances easy, moderate, and high-intensity sessions according to your goals and training phase.

SELF-ASSESSMENT

Can you clearly identify the purpose of each run in your training week?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Needs attention

PRACTICAL ACTION

Before each run, ask yourself: What adaptation am I aiming to achieve today? Match your pace and effort to that purpose rather than running every session by feel or habit.

5. ARE YOU FUELING YOUR TRAINING?

WHY IT MATTERS

Training creates the stimulus for adaptation, but those adaptations depend on adequate energy, nutrients, and hydration. Consistently under-fuelling or neglecting hydration can impair recovery, reduce training quality, and limit your body's ability to adapt over time.

Nutrition doesn't need to be perfect, but it should support the demands of your training and your individual goals.

SELF-ASSESSMENT

Do your daily nutrition and hydration habits consistently support your training volume and intensity?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Needs attention

PRACTICAL ACTION

Rather than focusing on individual meals, review your overall training week. Ensure you're eating enough to support your workload, prioritising carbohydrate availability around harder sessions, adequate protein for recovery, and maintaining hydration throughout the day

6. DOES YOUR MOBILITY SUPPORT EFFICIENT RUNNING?

WHY IT MATTERS

Efficient running requires sufficient mobility to move through an effective range of motion, not maximum flexibility. Mobility works together with strength and neuromuscular control to produce efficient movement patterns and to store and release elastic energy through the muscle-tendon system with each stride.

Developing this "spring-like" function depends not only on mobility but also on regular strength training and appropriate running loads.

SELF-ASSESSMENT

Do you maintain sufficient mobility to run comfortably through a full range of motion while regularly incorporating strength work to support efficient movement?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Needs attention

PRACTICAL ACTION

Focus on maintaining functional mobility in the ankles, hips, and thoracic spine, while combining mobility work with progressive strength training. The goal isn't necessarily to become more flexible; it's to move efficiently and make the most of your body's natural elastic properties.

7. IS YOUR TRAINING SUSTAINABLE?

WHY IT MATTERS

Running performance is built through consistent training over months and years, not individual workouts. The body adapts to repeated training stimuli over time, making consistency one of the strongest predictors of long-term progress.

A sustainable training plan fits your lifestyle. When training aligns with your available time, work, family, and recovery capacity, you're more likely to maintain consistency and continue progressing.

SELF-ASSESSMENT

Does your training plan realistically fit your current lifestyle, allowing you to train consistently throughout the year?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Needs attention

PRACTICAL ACTION

Design your training around the time you consistently have available, not the time you hope to have. A realistic plan that you can follow week after week will produce greater long-term adaptations than an ambitious plan that is difficult to sustain.

8. ARE YOU TRAINING TOWARDS A CLEAR GOAL?

WHY IT MATTERS

Effective training starts with a clear objective. Your goal influences how you structure your training, monitor progress, and prioritise different types of sessions throughout the year.

The SMART framework can help you set goals that are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound, providing direction and making it easier to evaluate your progress.

SELF-ASSESSMENT

Have you set a SMART goal that guides your current training?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Needs attention

PRACTICAL ACTION

Write down one SMART goal for the next 8–12 weeks. Then ask yourself whether your current training plan supports that goal. Every training session should have a clear purpose that contributes to your long-term objective.

FINAL THOUGHTS

There is no single workout or piece of equipment that guarantees better performance. Long-term progress comes from consistently applying smart training principles while adapting them to your individual goals, experience, and lifestyle.

If you identified one or more areas marked "Needs attention," don't try to change everything at once. Instead, choose one priority and focus on improving it over the coming weeks. Small, sustainable changes repeated consistently often lead to the greatest long-term improvements.

I hope this self-assessment has helped you reflect on your current training and identify opportunities to train smarter.

If you'd like personalised guidance based on your goals, training history, and lifestyle, I'd be happy to help.