



One small step

How to make the mental leap from jogger to runner

At some point you will inevitably start to refer to yourself as a runner – not a jogger. You might not even notice when this happens, but the ‘R-word’ and its connotations affect how you see yourself, and how others view you too. Any sportsperson will tell you that half the battle is mental. These five tips will help you make the leap.

Get an objective

“The first step is often to set a goal,” says clinical sports psychologist Dr Victor Thompson (sportspsychologist.com). “This can be a race, or just completing a certain distance.” Whether it’s running a mile without stopping or getting around your first 5K, an objective stops any aimless drifting. Measuring improvements gives further psychological boosts. For more information about getting started with free, informal 5Ks, visit parkrun.com.

Spice up your runs

It’s nice to run on a whim, whenever the sun’s out and you’ve got free time. But drawing up a schedule – and committing to it – will make you feel less like a ‘dabbler’. Personal trainer Liz Fulford (fitnesstrainingspecialists.co.uk) says: “Varying speeds and terrains and building up distance opens up a whole new world of running.”

Buy decent running kit

Just one smart running outfit changes your self-perception in a way that baggy washed-out cotton won’t. As Fulford says: “Well-fitted kit makes the world of difference. Instead of being distracted by chafing, or heavy wet clothes, you can concentrate purely on running – in comfort and style.” Look for wicking material to draw sweat away.

Rethink your food

Take in better food and you’ll reap the benefits of better

energy output. As sports nutritionist Matt Lovell (fourweekfatloss.com) says: “What you put in your mouth will affect the performance of your cells and body. Understanding this is essential to any athlete’s development.” You are becoming an athlete now, so chuck out those chips, follow our fuel tips, and be kind to your body. A scrapbook of healthy recipes will help keep you on track.

Get social

“I can resist everything except temptation,” said Oscar Wilde. If none of your friends exercise, it’s all too easy to agree, and replace training with an impromptu pub session instead. Mix with other runners to get inspiration, support and maybe tap into competitive instincts you never knew you had. An army depends on ‘esprit de corps’ – check out your local running clubs to find your own running comrades.



Q How can I get rid of the ‘dead’ feeling in my legs?

A You may be feeling lingering fatigue from recent workouts. Avoid ‘heavy legs’ by starting every run with a two- to three-minute walk. Begin running two or three minutes slower than your usual pace. Run for one minute, and then walk one minute, for a total of six minutes.

If that feels extremely easy, shift to two minutes running and one minute walking. Then if the deadness creeps in, slow down and take more frequent rest breaks. Jeff Galloway, running coach (jeffgalloway.com)



Email questions to rwedit@runnersworld.co.uk

Try this...

MARK YOUR PROGRESS

Use a permanent marker to note your finishing time and the date of a race on the back of your finisher’s medal – more decorative than a logbook, this is a great way to track progress.



Say What?

RUNNING TERMS EXPLAINED

Elite sprinters’ power comes from **fast-twitch muscle fibres**. These produce explosive bursts of energy, as opposed to slow-twitch muscle fibres, which are linked to endurance runs.