

The Essential XC Runs & Their Purposes

Run Type	Purpose
Easy Run	The easy run is the bread and butter of any quality training program. During your easy runs, you are building your aerobic base which is your overall capacity to run for an extended period of time. Think of this as building your engine and making it large. We aren't revving our engines or going full speed just yet, we are growing our engine from a little boat engine to a large truck engine! You should be able to talk during these runs. If you are out of breath, uncomfortable, or unable to talk, you are running too fast. It may feel silly at first to run super slow, but your easy pace will get faster over time. The key to these is running slow and doing it consistently!
Long Run	The long run is an incredibly important part of training. Not only does it extend your weekly mileage and also build your aerobic base, but it trains your brain. Running for a long time, even easy, is very mentally taxing. By forcing yourself to push forward, you are practicing mental strategies that you may need to use during a tough spot during a race. These runs should also be run at a comfortable, conversational pace!
Tempo Run	Tempo runs are runs that are run at 60-70% effort. You will be running faster than your easy runs (unable to talk) but slow enough that you can maintain comfortably.

	The purpose of the tempo run is to train your threshold or your anaerobic capacity. They help you become comfortable running at a “comfortably hard” effort. Think of it as dipping your toe in the pool of what your race pace effort will feel like! When done correctly, you will see your easy pace start to go down!
Progression Run	A progression run can be thought of as a more structured tempo run. Where a tempo run will ask for you to run a certain amount of time within a certain pace threshold (i.e. 30 minutes at 7:00-7:30/mi), a progression run can neatly organize your workout. You might do the first 10 minutes at 7:30, the next at 7:15, and the next at 7:00. This workout will help your body learn how each pace feels and practice controlling your pace.
Intervals	Intervals are a classic workout that train speed and help you envision a short burst of very hard effort. These are run at about 80-90% effort, but are very short. You may be asked to run 6-8 reps of 400m or 800m around the track at a very difficult effort. This will sharpen your speed and turnover and help simulate what the last 400m of a race might feel like for you as you finish strong. It is important for your body to get used to what it feels like to give that much effort.
Strides	Strides are a great way for us to rev our engines without putting forth too much effort. Strides are fast, short accelerations that will be done after some easy runs. During strides, we focus on improving our running form and practicing control of our speed. Like intervals, strides help simulate a

	hard effort for our bodies, which is important to practice.
Fartleks	Fartleks are a dynamic blend of fast and easy running. They are very focused on pace and speed control. They also work to simulate recovery for your body. A typical fartlek workout might look like 1 minute running at 70-80% effort, 1 minute walk, 2 minutes running at effort, 2 minute walk, 3 minutes running at an effort, 3 minutes walk, 2 minutes on, 2 minutes off, 1 minute on, one minute off.