

1 *WHY* *RUN?*



CHAPTER 1

Reasons to Run

All the Motivation You Need to Get Running

There are dozens and dozens of great reasons to run, ranging from weight loss to enhanced creativity. Coming up is a list of reasons that will inspire and motivate your running program.

You are reading these pages because you have decided to begin a running program. Or perhaps you are returning to one after a long layoff. You might want to lose weight. You might want to lower your blood pressure. Or you simply might want to begin feeling better than you have, which is one of the best reasons of all.

Only one problem: You're worried that running might be hard. And I'm not going to lie—I'm not going to tell you that running is easy. But I will guarantee you this: There is no shortage of good reasons to begin running, all of which are best understood and appreciated by each of us individually. In other words, I know what the benefits are, but only *you* can decide which ones are most important and most rewarding for you.

Recently, the *Runner's World* magazine editors decided to celebrate all the many reasons why we love running. We gathered in our conference room, surrounded by giant, autographed photos of the great ones—Roger Bannister to Carl Lewis, Grete Waitz to Joan Samuelson—and we let our thoughts tumble out. Pretty quickly, we came up with more than 200 reasons why we love running. When we ended the brainstorm, we were still going strong. On the following pages is the distilled list—the essence.



I hope you'll find the list inspiring and motivating. I'm sure you'll find many benefits that you would like to make a regular part of your life. So read on, and then take a little run. You'll be glad you did.

1. Running is the oldest, purest, simplest sport. Adam and Eve chased each other around the Garden of Eden. More than a million years ago, early African hunter-gatherers logged 10 miles a day on the high East African plains. The ancient Greeks staged running events in their original Olympic Games, and it was the marathon that stole the show at the first modern Games of 1896 in Athens. Running is the biggest worldwide fitness activity. And the best. Okay, I'm biased. But trust me—I know what I'm talking about.

2. It makes you feel better every day. This doesn't mean that running will totally immunize you against depression, heart disease, or diabetes. Or any of the other illnesses that running does, in fact, offer protection from. But I can guarantee that you will always feel better after a run. And that's powerful medicine.

3. The running community is so inclusive. One of the leading writers/speakers/personalities in running is a guy named The Penguin. Another, Jeff Galloway, is a one-time Olympian who tells us to go ahead and walk during workouts and races. And nutrition wizard Liz Applegate, Ph.D., says it's okay to eat chocolate. Is this a great sport or what?

4. You can go for the burn. Running offers endless competitive opportunities, from sprints to ultramarathons. We human beings love to challenge ourselves. It's coded somewhere deep in our DNA. Which explains why we're always trying to shrink the size of the silicon chip, build solar-powered vehicles, develop protein-packed strains of rice, and run new marathon PRs.

5. Or you can go nice and easy. You don't have to run fast to have a great run, and you don't have to set a personal record to enjoy a race. You get as many mental and physical



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benefits from a slow mile as you do from a fast mile. I have a friend who likes to say, “I’ve never had a bad run. Every run is its own reward.” Good attitude. I heartily recommend it.

6. Running gives you great legs. One of the women staffers at *Runner’s World* admits that she doesn’t have the same overall shape as those Victoria’s Secret models. “But I’ve got much nicer calf muscles,” she says. I’ve run with her. And I have to agree.

7. You don’t need an instruction manual. If you can walk, you can run. If you run a little bit more, you can enter a 5-K. A little more, and you’re headed for a half-marathon. Easy as that. Sure, this and other books about running are filled with useful stuff. But you know what I like best about running? It’s so blessedly simple. The books are merely for reassurance and inspiration.

8. It’s the world’s-best weight-loss exercise. Period. End of discussion. Every single weight-loss expert advises two things: exercise and sound nutrition. Running is the king of the calorie-burning exercises, and it’s easy to do, any time, any place, any season.

9. You can run errands while you’re running (and exercise the dog, too). Have a goal in mind when you set out to run—a target destination. I know someone who returns videos to Blockbuster and books to the library on an every-other-day jaunt that also takes her to the post office for pickups and deliveries. And every dog owner I know takes Fido to the park for frequent romps.

10. Running gives you more energy. This is one of my favorite things about running, and one of the more difficult to explain. I call it the energy paradox, because most people assume that running tires you out. Which seems a logical assumption. But it’s wrong. In fact, runners report having more energy than nonexercisers. No one knows why, but it’s as if the oxygen coursing through your veins reinvigorates your body, powering up your physical capabilities.

THE BEST WAY

Q: What’s the single best reason for beginning a running program?

A: The best reason is the one that’s most compelling to you. It could be that you just had your first child, and you want to make sure you stay healthy and vibrant enough to enjoy a long life with your child. It could be that your doctor has told you that you need to lose weight. It could be that you have just lost your job, and you need to begin a positive, active routine to ward off depression. Don’t worry about anyone else’s reasons for running. Find the ones that have the most meaning in *your* life.

Eat yourself fit

Running improves your diet. It’s true: When you begin to exercise regularly, you eat fewer harmful fats and more of the recommended nutrients, according to a 7-year, 10,000-person study published in a major medical journal. Exercise and diet: the one-two punch that can help you knock out any weight problem.



11. Running gives you a quiet, reflective time to say your prayers and give thanks. At *Runner's World*, we hear this all the time from our readers. For every proponent of social running, there's someone else who favors "time out" to be alone with his or her thoughts. I see no reason to pick sides. As far as I'm concerned, both solo running and group running are great activities.

12. Running helps you reach creative breakthroughs.

Writers, musicians, artists, CEOs, software engineers, and many others use running to solve mental blocks and make must-do-it-today decisions. Wrote prolific author Joyce Carol Oates in the *New York Times*: "Running! If there's any activity happier, more exhilarating, more nourishing to the imagination, I can't think what it might be." The Greek mathematician Archimedes reached his "Eureka!" moment in a warm bath. Many of us reach it in a warm sweat.

13. Oprah runs. She finished the 1994 Marine Corps Marathon in 4:29:15 and made the cover of *Runner's World* the following April. It was our best-selling issue ever, and inspired untold thousands of Americans (especially women)

“In a world so crowded with activities and responsibilities that it’s difficult to make time for anything, running gives you a terrific workout in just 20 to 30 minutes.”



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to begin running. One of her producers, Lisa Erspamer, followed Oprah's example, lost 90 pounds, and has finished several LaSalle Bank Chicago Marathons. If Oprah can do it, so can you.

14. It's a positive addiction. The expression was first made popular by William Glasser, M.D., in his 1976 book *Positive Addiction*. Dr. Glasser wrote that you can replace a harmful addiction—such as smoking, alcoholism, or overeating—with a positive one like running. Result: You're a happier, healthier person. And at *Runner's World* we've heard from thousands of runners who have followed this precise path.

15. Running is a presidential sort of thing to do. Bill Clinton ran. And President George W. Bush, who completed the 1993 Houston Marathon in 3:44:52, used his daily treadmill run to offset the job stresses of his position. I have this fanciful notion that one November a presidential candidate will run the Marine Corps Marathon in Washington, D.C.—2 days before the national election. And when she does, she'll get my vote.

16. Running gives you another excuse to get in a hot tub. First, you ice any sore leg muscles for maybe 10 minutes. Then you slide into the steaming, frothy waters. Ahh, the perfect therapy. Just be sure to have a chilled bottle of Gatorade or your own favorite sports drink nearby.

17. Running is a family affair. It's all-inclusive. Many races have events for everyone in the family, ranging from a Diaper Dash to a 5-K race to a walk event. And it's easy to plan an exercise activity for the whole family. The smallest tyke can clamber into his baby stroller, fit parents and grandparents can take turns pushing, and Junior can follow along on his new two-wheeler.

18. Running is like a best friend—always there, always dependable. We all go through phases in our lives—times when we run more, times when we run less. Your job gets too busy. Maybe you go on vacation. That's fine. Running adapts



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itself easily to your ebbs and flows. Best of all, when you need it more, it's always there for you. It always comes through.

19. Running improves your time management. Whether loosely lodged in your mental schedule or typed into your Palm Pilot, your daily workout is a focal point to your day. It helps you organize everything else you need to do. Often into B.R. (Before Run) and A.R. (After Run) time frames. Hey, whatever works.

20. Running is honest. The distance and the stopwatch don't lie. The winner isn't determined by a group of nationalistic judges assigning point scores for form, clothing, and hairstyle. You get back what you put into it. In today's complex, political world, that's a refreshing thing.

21. You can use running to help others. Some runners collect the coins they find on the side of the road. The super-fast win decent paychecks to support their families. But many more runners turn their health, fitness, and determination into fund-raising efforts for the less fortunate. In the last decade or so, the Team In Training program has raised \$350 million for leukemia and lymphoma research. Many other health-related charities have launched similar efforts.

22. Running increases your appreciation for the environment. You crave fresh, clean air when you run. You long for soft trails, towering trees, pure water. You have plenty of time to ponder the big questions. You resolve: Save the Earth. It's a lovely place.

23. Running lets you set new goals (and reach them). It's so easy to measure. Last month you could only run a mile at a time. Now, 2 miles. Progress like this leads to great satisfaction—and the desire to set and reach another goal. Some runners set distance goals. There are those who aim for faster times. Some want to run in all 50 states. Others want to lose 50 pounds or live long enough to see the grandkids graduate from college. Pick any goal, no matter how small, as long as it has meaning for you. Then go for it.



When you run, you crave fresh, clean air. You long for soft trails, towering trees, pure water.

24. It's a great way to explore new places—cities or wilderness. I know lots of runners who go out for a run as soon as they arrive in a distant city. This energizes you after a long drive or flight, helps reset your biological clock to the new time zone, and gives you a great way to get oriented to the city's basic layout. Same goes for a country trail.

25. Running makes you look younger. I can't prove this, as the federal government refuses to fund vanity research. But go to any road race and look around at the vigorous, well-toned runners. As Roberta Gibb, the first woman to run the Boston Marathon (in 1966), recently said, "People look at me and think I'm in my thirties or forties. My doctor says I have the physiology of a 30-year-old." Gibb was 59 when she said this.

26. Running gives you a legal high. And a healthy one, too. After all these years, the "runner's high" remains a fairly elusive subject, at least to scientists. No one is quite sure what causes it or why, and most runners would admit they don't feel a high on every run. Just often enough to make it very rewarding.

27. Running teaches discipline. And that's a good thing. It will serve you well in almost everything you do. In field after field, research has shown that the most successful people are the ones with a modest amount of talent and a tremendous amount of discipline. Practice makes perfect, both in running and in life.

28. Running has been fair to women. It embraced them long before Title IX came on the scene. Sure, women runners had to stage a few sit-down strikes, but they had far more problems with officials and anachronistic rules than with their fellow runners. Heck, the guys were happy to be surrounded by women in shorts. This receptiveness has encouraged tens of millions of women to begin running.

29. Women rule, genetically speaking. The late George Sheehan, M.D., counseled runners interested in fast performances to "choose your parents carefully." Turns



Use running to help you explore new places. For example, it's a great way to find your way around a distant city after a long drive or flight.

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out he was half right. The mitochondria in your muscle cells are known as the cells' "powerhouses" because they control energy production. And all your mitochondrial DNA came from your mother. Dad didn't contribute. So if you want to run fast, choose your mother carefully.

30. Running will build your daughter's confidence and self-esteem. She'll be more in control of her life. Healthy result: She'll be less likely to have sex or to get pregnant at an early age. The Women's Sports Foundation announced these study results in 1998, and they apply to girls in all sports. Especially lifetime sports like running.

31. Running is sweaty. And sweat is sexy. And that's all we're going to say on this subject.

32. Running improves your regularity. This is why the portable-toilet industry loves runners. But it's a good thing for you, too, as it may be one of the primary reasons why runners have a low risk of colon cancer.

33. The last-place finisher gets the biggest cheer. And deserves it. It makes perfect sense. After all, he or she has been running longer than anyone else in the race. We like the way spectators and other runners applaud the back-of-the-packers. Fred Lebow used to do it at the New York City Marathon, and we've seen Grete Waitz at the New York finish line on several Monday mornings welcoming Zoe Koplowitz, the perennial last-place finisher.

34. Size doesn't matter. In fact, small guys and gals may have an advantage, thank you. In a sports world too often dominated by steroids, 7-footers, and 300-pounders, it's nice to turn the tables now and again.

35. You can do it with your significant other. Running is a great activity to share with a partner. Even if your paces aren't perfectly matched, you can make time for those runs when one of you slows down and both of you simply enjoy each other's company. Lately, I've been hearing more about

“Every run is a journey. You never know what you'll find.”

WEBWISE

For information on all running-related topics, you can't beat *Runner's World's* extensive Web site and running forums (including a Beginners Forum). The best all-around running Web site.

www.runnersworld.com

couples who make one or two running “dates” a week, and I’ve been seeing proof of this in my own workouts in a local parkway. That’s the romance of running.

36. Running is efficient. In a world so crowded with activities and responsibilities that it’s difficult to make time for anything, running gives you a terrific workout in just 20 to 30 minutes. If presidents can make time to run, the rest of us can, too.

37. Running doesn’t require much equipment besides shoes, shorts, and a shirt. Everyone’s got them, and that pretty much completes the equipment list. Toss on another layer when it gets chilly. Strip down somewhat when it gets warmer. Run barefoot on the beach. Count the waves. Feel yourself slip into the “zone.” With no equipment weighing you down, it’s easy.

38. Running is child’s play. Every child runs, then stops, then runs again. It’s not a workout. It’s play. And when you run, you can return to this kind of play. Wrote running’s philosopher-king Sheehan: “There are as many reasons for running as there are days in the year. But I run because I am an animal and a child, an artist and a saint. Find your own play, and you will become the person you are meant to be.”

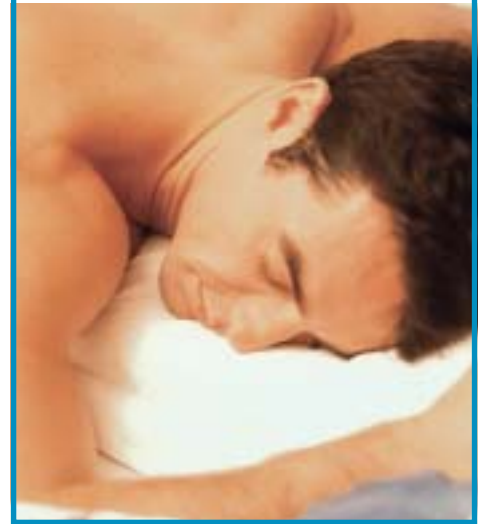
39. It’s okay to walk. Just like the child. Run for a while. Then walk for a while. Smell the roses. Look for the blue jay’s nest. Feel the soft earth compress beneath each footfall. Run some more. Keep at it for 30 minutes. Call it a workout. Call it being alive.

40. Running helps you sleep better. Recent national health statistics show an alarming downward trend in the average amount of sleep we’re all getting. Alarming, because this can only lead to lower productivity, more accidents, and more disease. No matter—running helps you get a good night’s rest.

41. Running makes you smarter. I first started to notice this line of research more than a decade ago. At the time, frankly, I barely believed it myself. But the first study has

Sleep smarter

A 1998 study in the Archives of Internal Medicine concluded that exercise could be used to help people with sleep disorders. Hit the roads regularly, and also try to hit your pillow for 8 hours a night.



“Today’s run could change your life in a way that you could never have imagined when you were lacing up your shoes.”

produced a steady stream of follow-ups, all concluding that running is good for the brain. The most recent update: Japanese researchers found that a 12-week running program significantly improved the reaction times and memory skills of their subjects.

42. Running makes your baby smarter. We know—sounds amazing, doesn't it? But this was the conclusion of a study conducted a few years ago at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland. Head researcher James Clapp, M.D., author of *Exercising through Your Pregnancy*, found that the 5-year-old children of women who had exercised during pregnancy scored significantly higher on an IQ test than the children of women who had remained sedentary through their pregnancy. So be a generous mom—go for a run.

43. Running gives you several recycling outlets. You can donate your old T-shirts and shoes to an organization that collects them. One group collects and sends shoes to Africa. Nike grinds up old shoes and reuses the rubber from their outsoles to build new running tracks. Or make your T-shirts into a quilt that commemorates races you've run. I know someone who uses those marathon "space blankets" to wrap birthday and special-occasion presents. Pretty snazzy.



Studies have shown that running makes your baby smarter. Pregnant women who run are more likely to give birth to children with higher IQs.

To your health

Here's a short list of medical risks that have been shown to decrease with regular aerobic exercise like running.

1. Anxiety attacks (*Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 2001)
2. Arthritis disability (*Archives of Internal Medicine*, 2001)
3. Blood clots (*Arteriosclerosis, Thrombosis and Vascular Biology*, 2000)
4. Breast cancer (*Epidemiology*, 2001)
5. Cognitive disabilities with aging (*Journal of Aging and Physical Activities*, 2001)
6. Colon cancer (*Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise*, 2001)
7. Daily-life disabilities (*Journal of Gerontology*, 2001)
8. Depression (*Psychosomatic Medicine*, 2000)
9. Diabetes (*New England Journal of Medicine*, 2000)
10. Erectile dysfunction (*Urology*, 2000)
11. Gallstones (*American Journal of Gastroenterology*, 2000)
12. Heart disease (*Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise*, 2001)
13. High blood pressure (*Archives of Internal Medicine*, 2001)
14. Hospital visits (*American Journal of Public Health*, 1999)
15. Immunity impairment (*Exercise Immunology Review*, 1997)
16. Mortality (*Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise*, 2001)
17. Obesity (*Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise*, 2001)
18. Osteoporosis (*American Journal of Epidemiology*, 1995)
19. Ovarian cancer (*Obstetrics and Gynecology*, 2000)

THE FINISH LINE

Three things to remember about this chapter:

1. Running is an Everyman sport. It doesn't matter who you are, or what you look like, or how much you weigh. You can become a runner, just as thousands of others have.
2. Running has multiple health benefits, all of which have been proven by medical studies.

It can improve your heart health, extend your life, lower your blood pressure, and prevent diabetes, among many others.

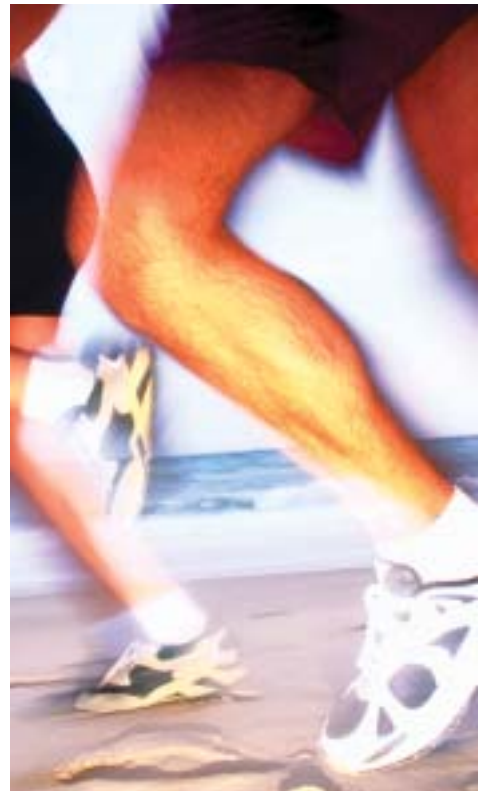
3. Even more important, running is good for your state of mind. It decreases depression and increases energy and creativity.

44. Running shoes make your feet happy. Running shoes are about the most comfortable and healthiest footwear you can buy. Your feet are the foundation to your body. As they go, so goes the rest of you. So be kind to your feet. Wear running shoes on and off the roads.

45. Running is the core fitness activity for just about every other sport. Whether you want to climb Mount Everest (like blind marathoner Erik Weihenmayer) or pitch in the World Series (like Roger Clemens, a longtime runner), running is the place to begin. A recent medical study from Norway carried the title "Aerobic endurance training improves soccer performance." You get the picture. Running makes you better at other sports.

46. Running is full of great quotes from the Bible, great poets and thinkers, modern-day rockers, and plenty of others. The all-time greatest running quote, according to Mark Will-Weber, editor of *The Quotable Runner*: "Bid me run, and I will strive with things impossible" (Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*).

47. Every run is a journey. You never know what you'll find. You don't know whom or what you'll see. Or, even more interesting, what thoughts might flash into your mind. Today's run could change your life in a way that you could never have imagined when you were lacing up your shoes.



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