



Fitness Facts

How to Successfully Run To The Finish Line Of Your First Race

(NAPSA)—As temperatures rise, more and more recreational joggers consider participating in 5K and 10K races. If you are comfortable jogging at least a mile—and completing a running race has always been one of your goals—but you are not sure where to begin, here are a few tips to help you get started and safely cross the finish line.

It is always smart to consult a physician before starting any training program. Then choose and register for a local race. Runs benefiting charities are great places to start, as they tend to be less competitive and include many beginners. Check with a local running club, running magazines or the Internet for a calendar of events in your area, keeping in mind that race day should be at least eight weeks away to allow for adequate preparation.

Next, make sure you have the appropriate clothing, including shoes, socks, shirts and shorts. A properly fitting pair of running shoes is essential for comfort and to reduce your risk of injury. Generally with a higher cost pair of shoes you will notice the difference they offer in shock absorption and durability. To prevent blisters and discomfort, avoid wearing socks made with cotton and instead stick with materials designed to wick moisture, such as Coolmax fabric.

The clothing you wear will depend on the weather conditions. As with socks, avoid cotton-based clothing and use fabrics that pull moisture away from your skin. If it is cold, wearing three layers is a



good idea. The first layer should be lightweight and fit right against the skin. The middle layer serves as an insulator (fleece is a good choice), while the third layer is designed to shield you from the elements. Do not forget to protect your hands, head, face and eyes, as well.

In warm weather, wear clothing that will breathe and evaporate water quickly. Although your favorite cotton T-shirt is great for daily activities, it will undoubtedly get drenched with sweat, feel heavy and be a hindrance during the run.

The best place to purchase shoes, socks and clothing is a specialty running store where the staff is knowledgeable and will be able to answer your questions.

Armed with the appropriate gear, you are now ready to set up a training program. It is important to get advice from fitness professionals so you do not over-

undertrain and injure yourself. Fitness professionals at your health club, leaders of local running clubs or running books are good sources to help you get started.

Weather conditions can dictate when and where you run. On hot, humid days, consider running before the sun rises or just as the sun is setting. Steer clear of the middle of the day when the sun's rays are the strongest. Many runners purchase home treadmills so they can run inside on extremely hot, rainy or snowy days.

For training to be most effective and to minimize risk of injury, be sure to incorporate a proper warm up and cooldown. Drink plenty of fluids before, during and after runs to help you safely finish and prevent dehydration.

Remember that taking days off from running and incorporating different workouts are just as important as accumulating miles. Ideal cross-training options for runners include swimming, cycling or working out on total-body elliptical cross-trainers. Runners typically appreciate these machines because they are low-impact on the lower-body and offer a challenging cardiovascular workout. Life Fitness's X5 and X5i total-body elliptical Cross-Trainers even allow exercisers to adjust the stride to a walk, jog, run or sprint.

Following these simple suggestions will help you cross the finish line of your first race with a great sense of accomplishment and should inspire you to lace up those shoes for many more.