

Race Strategy

Training

- You should do the majority of your training on trails to develop stamina and technique for trail races. You need to learn where to place your feet and how to handle different terrain.
- Strength and speed are needed for a race. With longer trail runs, you'll develop strength. For speed, add track workouts to your program and practice running fartleks (speed play) or tempo runs for about 30 minutes (if you want to run fartleks on trails, pick easy flat ones).
- Cross-training is highly beneficial. Incorporate fitness sessions to strengthen your quads and glutes. Add squats, lunges, and leg raises too. Use a stationery bike or mountain bike.

Preparation

- Know your route. **STUDY THE MAP.** Run the course if you can.
- Get your gear ready before race day.
- Weather watch. Make sure your clothes match conditions on race day. If you are travelling, take a variety of clothes.
- Tell your support network where you will be and at what time. In a long race, the presence of friends and family has a very positive influence and gives you something to look forward to.
- Devise ways to trick yourself into working harder when you are tired; have some mantras ready for race day.
- For your first long race, don't worry if you don't sleep the night before; your training and adrenalin will carry you through.
- If your ankles have been weak, consider wearing ankle braces for the race (practice with them).

Race day

- Do very brief warm up run.
- Pee before you start.
- Start **EASY**, save energy for later.
- Eat early, eat often. Your reserves will run out about one hour after you start, so make sure you have food and water.
- Pay attention to your foot placement; leaves may hide rocks and roots. Practice your skills as you run, especially when you get tired.
- Watch for race markers and flagging! Don't rely on the person in front of you to know the right way. You don't want to waste time figuring out where you are.
- Practice bursts of speed at corners to gain distance on your competitors.

- Mud that is dull in colour is likely to be firmer; shiny mud may suck you in.
- Move to the right so that faster runners can get by. Ask others if they want to pass.
- Make sure you wear your broken-in trail shoes and clothing on race day.
- You won't make time on uphills but you can on downhills.
- Live "in the moment" and trust that you can complete.
- If you come upon a runner who is down, ask if help is needed. (Remember that some people may say they don't need help even when they do.) If there's a problem, note where you are, and then let the people at the next aid station know what happened. Offer extra clothes, or bandaids or survival blanket if you have one. If a person is in serious trouble, stay with that person until help arrives.
- Relentless forward motion (RFM).
- Stay loose. Have fun.

The Mental Race

- Use visualization. See yourself succeeding.
- Getting there is as important as the race. Enjoy the process.
- Food helps you enjoy long runs.
- Positive self-talk is essential. Praise yourself. Think about the miles you have put in and remember that you are an athlete.
- "Post to post" when going gets tough (the next marker, the next aid station).
- Give yourself a reward (eating, walking).
- Replace whiney baby with strong voice.
- Remember that everyone is hurting.
- Talk to other runners and get each other to the finish line.
- You may end up running by yourself so remember to enjoy nature as your buddy.

Runners training for a 25 km race tell me that they could not possibly do a 50 km race; this is simply not true. As soon as you have that goal, you will find the time and the stamina to make it happen. So much of a long distance race is in your head.