

Technique

This is a skills-based clinic in which you can practice trail running skills in a supportive environment. Many trail runners have a unique style; we encourage you to maintain your own style while adding or enhancing some skills.

Here are the key skills that will be covered (the more that you can add to your repertoire, the easier it will be for you to run trails):

- Avoid obstacles, jump over them.
- Light on your feet (quiet feet).
- Dance over roots.
- Avoid logs, but if necessary to step on, move balance slightly forward when foot touches log.
- Use core on downhill stairs, like marionette legs. Stay loose.
- Maintain downhill stability through smaller steps, body positioned over knees, not leaning back, keep momentum. Pick a line if possible and stick with it.
- Uphill power hike.
- Pause if you need to stabilize breathing.
- Run uphill on balls of feet, arms pumping, lean into slope if steep.
- At top of grade, keep moving.
- Use high stepping to run THROUGH streams. Check depth before you start as there may be sinkholes!
- Use lateral (side to side) moves where they fit terrain.
- On flat trails, use longer leg extension.
- Control downhill in switchback, use banks if needed.
- On rocks, go light on feet so you are less likely to topple.
- Pass others on left. Say “track” or “passing on your left”.
- Steady forward progress.

Falling

Most trail runners will take a fall at some point. It is not uncommon for racers to take a tumble. Some runners take a fall near the end of a run on easy trail because they are no longer concentrating. The first time, it is a bit of a shock because as adults, we are not used to it and it may be embarrassing. Get over it. Celebrate your first fall. Consider bleeding as a badge of honour.

If the trail is flat, you could drop and roll (if you have forgotten that technique, ask a child to show you how). But if the trail is rooty and rocky, don't drop and roll because you could make it worse if you hit your back against something solid. Avoid putting your arm out straight to break your fall.

If your fall is witnessed by others, you may be responsible for supplying beverages after the run, especially if you had a four-point landing.

Clean up scrapes with water and antiseptic towelettes.

If you hit your head, get someone else to help walk you out. See a doctor.

If you are falling a lot, work on developing core and ankle strength. If you are running in road shoes or hybrid shoes, the sole may be too high; consider getting a lower shoe.

Proprioception

Balance and positioning are important aspects of trail running. You can enhance them by developing better proprioception.

“Proprioception is the body’s ability to orient itself in space without visual clues. The ability to use your muscle, joint, tendon, and inner ear sensory nerve terminals to adjust posture and positioning through stimuli originating from within the body is not “The Force”. It is Proprioception”. Adam Chase and Nancy Hobbs, *The Ultimate Guide to Trail Running*.

Wobble boards and wobble pillows are effective in enhancing your proprioception. With one or two feet, practice moving forward and backward, side to side. Advance to squats while balancing.