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Cross country workout plan beginners

Working this energy system can take many forms. Some runners like steady tempos of three to five miles. Some like to do cruise intervals, which are simply repeat one- and two-mile runs at tempo pace with a shortened recovery. If you don't have a GPS watch, you can run for time instead of distance. When in doubt, the best way to determine pace is by effort. "Comfortably hard" is often thrown around as a descriptor, and in many ways, it captures the fact that a tempo run should be challenging without being overwhelming. Sample Workout #1: 2 x 2 miles @ tempo pace (3:00 recovery between intervals) Racing over hill and dale requires an ability to climb and descend hills well. While sprinting downhill can overburden the quadriceps and increase the risk of injury, running uphill provides numerous benefits. Not only does it force your body to work ancillary muscle groups and develop power by working against gravity, but it also does this with decreased impact forces, as you land with less force running uphill than on the flats or downhill. I frequently prescribe hill repeats to my cross country runners for these reasons. The increased gradient makes running more difficult, so I keep the intervals shortish; 400 to 600 meters is usually sufficient. These runs don't need to be on an excessively steep hill, as doing so changes normal running mechanics. A four- to eight-percent grade is perfect. The recovery is quite nice, too — an equal jog downhill to where you started. Sample Workout #2: 8 x 400m hill repeats (400m jog back recovery) Because of its unchanging nature, it can sometimes be challenging to simulate what you'll encounter in a cross country race. A workout consisting of two tempo runs with a series of hill sprints in the middle can give you the chance to adapt to these inconsistencies. Start with a 10- to 15-minute tempo on flat terrain. After a three-minute jog, begin a series of hill sprints. These hills can be shorter and quicker than those in workout 2; 200m hills are perfect. Sprint these powerfully and with excellent form. Jog back for recovery. After doing six to 10 of those, return to the flat terrain and run another 10- to 15-minute tempo. Not only will this ensure you can change pace and climb powerfully, but it should show you that you can still run a pretty fast even on tired legs. Sample Workout #3: 2 miles @ tempo (3:00 jog); 8 x 200m hills fast (200m jog back recovery); 2 miles @ tempo pace One of the most beautiful aspects of cross-country running is that it's not just you against the competition and yourself; it's also you versus Mother Nature. Which means you need specific cross-country training to be successful. Running over a variety of surfaces—from dirt and grass to mud and asphalt to gravel and everything in-between—you'll find sharp turns, short steep hills, long cambered sections, logs to jump, creeks to cross, and bridges to negotiate. This all combines to constantly disrupt your rhythm much more so than a race run on an even, flat surface. Whereas, for most runners, track and road races are largely dictated by pace, cross-country racing is largely dictated by effort. Even on the rare occasions that they're available, mile splits are mostly meaningless in cross-country. Trying to maintain pace through constant changes of footing, elevation, and direction can cause a midrace tie-up that's painful to experience and can result in a placing far lower than your fitness merits. Instead, the goal is to learn to employ a steady effort rather than to set an even pace. "A well-planned cross-country course will do everything possible to disrupt your stride, your pace, and your focus," says Pete Magill, author, coach, and five-time USA Masters Cross-Country Runner of the Year. "So the trick is to stop worrying about stride or pace. Find an effort level that you're confident you can maintain, then make that your guide."You can learn what that effort should be—and teach your body to maintain it—with cross-country training tailored to the demands of racing. This content is imported from {embed-name}. You may be able to find the same content in another format, or you may be able to find more information, at their web site. Successfully training for cross country follows the same basic training guidelines used when preparing for road races or long track events. Long runs, tempo work, and long and short intervals interspersed with maintenance and recovery runs are the basic building blocks of training.For cross country, however, you'll need to incorporate terrain, elevation, and course changes that mimic what you'll encounter on race day. By regularly tackling the sorts of rhythm breakers cross country throws at you, you'll adapt and learn how to dole out the appropriate effort for the length of the race you're running. The more course-specific your preparation, the better. "The thing I'll do is scope out the course we want to run our best on and try to mimic that course with some of our workouts," says Armando Siqueiros, who coached Jordan Hasay to a Foot Locker national title at Mission Prep High School in San Luis Obispo, California. "We'll run our fartlek or repeats over different 'parts' of the course. The kids can then imagine themselves running over the terrain they'll be racing on."Joe Vigil, who coached Deena Kastor and many other national cross-country champions, agrees with this approach. "If possible," he says, "survey the courses you're racing and duplicate the challenges of the course as much as possible within your surrounding geography. Make it tough, as hard as you can make it, then run a weekly workout on it hard."Join Runner's World+ for more training tips! ¶¶¶¶¶How to train for a cross-country race Here are the key elements to take into account when designing cross country-specific workouts.1. Crush hillsSome cross-country courses are pancake-flat, but these are the exceptions. Part of the appeal of cross country is that most races take place in parks or on golf courses, places of peace and tranquility, most of which feature some slight to severe elevation gains and losses. Spending time becoming proficient at going up and down is the surest way to faster race times.The San Luis Obispo chapter of the Asics Aggies Running Club uses several workouts to adapt to the ups and downs of cross-country.Workout 1: Find a mile-length course (roughly) that is gradually uphill, preferably on a softer surface off the asphalt. Run the uphill portion at race effort to build strength. Once at the top, take a three- to five-minute recovery jog before heading back downhill, focusing on being fast and efficient. Do 3 to 6 repeats, depending on your weekly mileage. The idea is not to run the downhill as fast as possible—instead it is to run fast, but controlled.Over the course of a few weeks of doing these, the times on the uphill sections improve steadily, as expected, but most people see a dramatic improvement on the downhill sections. Early in the season, the difference in times between the uphill and downhill sections will usually be between 20 and 30 seconds. By the end of the season, the difference is more like 30 to 40 seconds, indicating greatly increased proficiency in running downhill.Workout 2: This involves doing tempo runs that start with a gradual uphill for 800 meters, then turning around and running 800 meters downhill, and repeating the sequence for the length of your normal tempo run. Maintain a tempo effort—strong and steady, but controlled—throughout. In the last few weeks of the season, increase the intensity by running the uphill at cross-country race effort while keeping the downhill at tempo effort.Workout 3: This is a tempo run over rolling hills or on grass, dirt, or wood chip trails—anything but a flat, even asphalt surface. (And don't even think about doing these on a track during cross-country season!) Siqueiros had Hasay do many of her tempo runs on an 800-meter grass field made up of two fields separated by a small hill. Each 800 has a short steep uphill and downhill to negotiate. Plus it's on grass, similar to the courses found in California.Watch: How to Best Run Hills 2. Tackle Dirt, Grass, and MudUneven terrain, soft dirt, thick grass, and mud all require additional energy to negotiate. Your knee lift is higher; the energy needed to maintain form on uneven surfaces is greater; your push-off is stronger; and the energy returned from the push-off on soft surfaces is much less than the track or roads—all of which necessitates additional attention if you're to become proficient."I train for things I can improve and ignore things I can't," Magill says. "You can't directly train to be better at running through mud, but you can run hill repeats and long hills to improve knee lift, which, in turn, helps you with both hills and, voila, running through mud on cross-country courses."Magill does 50 percent of his running on trails, too, saying that doing so regularly utilizes all the muscles associated with a varied and choppy stride. Plus, trail running is beneficial to practice focusing on where your feet are landing. Siqueiros notes, "I'll start off with simple fartlek on secure, even footing. As the season advances, move on to real cross-country courses or surfaces. I'll also just do some of our regular intervals, 400s, 800s, or mile repeats over cross-country courses and terrain, grass, dirt, or even sand." Given the increased muscular strength needed for effective cross-country running, some supplementary work will help you train and race more effectively. In particular, focus on your core, hip flexors, and lower legs. Magill offers the following exercise to address all these areas. "I'll lie on my back, hold up one leg, and draw the alphabet with my foot to reintegrate all the muscles in my lower legs to better handle the uneven terrain of cross country," he says. This exercise also requires a great deal of core and hip flexor strength to accomplish. Eccentric strengthening exercises of the Achilles tendon are also helpful, particularly for masters athletes who may have several years of mostly running in heeled shoes on level terrain behind them. 3. Nail a Fast Start For championship meets, the starting area is specified to be no less than a 300-meter straight line until you meet your first turn or narrowing. Not all courses provide a free and clear 300 though—most provide less. Even if you have the full 300 meters, the imminent narrowing dictates a key rule of cross-country: You must be able to get out quickly and efficiently from the gun without undue stress. Being left behind at this stage puts you at a disadvantage as the course narrows and passing becomes more tactical. Do you need to be in the lead at the first turn? No, but you don't want to be last either. You want to get yourself in the best position possible without killing yourself to do so. To prepare for this, Kara June, third at the 2008 national club cross-country championships, will do intervals of 200 to 400 meters on a flat grass field. She'll do 6 to 12 repeats at a pace that's 5 to 10 seconds per 400 meters faster than her cross country race effort. This effort is plenty fast enough to improve her mechanics, efficiency, speed, and strength such that she can establish a solid position for herself the first 200 to 300 meters of a race and be able to settle into the race without undue stress or strain.4. Master obstaclesMost courses will have an obstacle such as a narrow bridge, a sharp turn around a tree, a single-track path, even a creek crossing at a key point that will force runners to slow into and accelerate out of the obstacle to maintain position. The athletes in the top positions are at a significant advantage as they have a clear path around or over these obstacles. As you move back in the pack, the slowing into each obstacle is more severe as a greater number of people attempt to negotiate the obstacle. Similar to being at the end of a traffic jam, those at the back lose precious time, and they're then forced to sprint with greater effort after the obstacle to try to regain position, thereby putting even more of a premium on developing the ability to repeatedly slow into an obstacle and accelerate out efficiently. On her 200- to 400-meter grass intervals, June runs a square circuit. Unlike a track, where the shape of the 400 is an oval with gradual turns, her grass 400 is literally square, with 100-meter segments on all four sides and a sharp 90-degree turn at each corner. She runs these at a pace significantly faster than her target race effort, plus she is forced to slow into and accelerate out of each corner, learning the relatively quick 5 to 10 steps acceleration often needed to regain contact or establish position.Cross country race strategiesAn important part of cross-country racing success is adapting your strengths as a runner to the various courses you'll face, minimizing your weaknesses. Additionally, patience and confidence in your race strategy are key virtues. "What I first try to do is to let the kids know that a cross-country race is a race to the finish line—we talk about the ebb and flow of a race," Siqueiros says. "I remind them what happens in the middle or beginning does not necessarily reflect what happens at the end. Therefore, don't panic if things don't seem to be going your way." Magill agrees, saying that when your effort level is disrupted, calmly, and patiently climb back up on the horse. Then, return to the proper effort level without exceeding that effort level to do so. "I've fallen twice in masters national cross-country championship races," Magill says. "In the first race, I tried to hurry back to the front of the pack and ended up dying, eventually finishing 30 seconds behind the leader. In the second race, I was patient; I returned to the correct effort level, caught the leaders a mile later, and won the race." This content is created and maintained by a third party, and imported onto this page to help users provide their email addresses. You may be able to find more information about this and similar content at piano.io

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