

Practice These Three Tips. These three tips work together; they're not isolated factors. Try this standing up: Lift your chest and shift your hips; you should feel yourself roll off on your toes. Lining yourself up properly generates forward momentum. By running in proper alignment, you reduce wasted motion. You're directing energy and generating power in the right direction while using the momentum you've generated.

WEEKLY FORM WORK

Form work will improve your running if you practice it twice weekly, year-round. A man in his '70s taught me the value of this one summer. Dr. Miguel Dobrinski celebrated his 74th birthday with us at our Tahoe Trails running camp. He was impressively active and joined us in all our activities. But during the form sessions when accelerating or bounding, he could barely get off the ground. I didn't want to offer false hope and frankly explained to him that it was probably too late to build spring into his legs.

The following year, in our first form session, what did we see but a bouncing Dobrinski in the mountains! As he celebrated his 75th birthday, he explained that he had practiced his accelerations regularly. He had restored 30 years of bounce in one year.

FORM ACCELERATION GLIDERS

When done every 3 days or so, these little "pick-ups" will warm up your legs while they improve your running form. These are not sprints, and are not hard to do. Your mission is to play with your momen-

tum, while running with less effort. The acceleration part is easy to do on a short stretch of downhill. Simply pick up the turnover of your feet (not your stride length) on the downhill, propelled by gravity, touching lightly with your feet. As you "coast" onto flat ground, maintain that increase without any significant effort. Then let the momentum gradually decrease, back to your easy running pace for that day. Your goal is to glide very smoothly, even with a quicker turnover.

The Procedure

- Warm up with at least 10 minutes of slow jogging.
- Stop, shake shoulders, arms, head until they feel relaxed.
- Take a deep breath, exhale, and keep the forward chest orientation.
- Push hips forward with hands on butt.
- Roll off on your toes and "lift off."
- After you've established your momentum, glide for several strides (by just coasting on your momentum, and resting the running muscles).

Each of these offers you a chance to work on more efficient running form.

- Keep the legs relaxed throughout the warm-up, the gliders themselves, and afterward.
- Ease into the gliders, using downhills as the accelerations. If you don't have a downhill available, accelerate by shortening the stride, picking up the turnover rate of the legs, and then relaxing as you glide.
- Start with 3-5 gliders and increase by 1 or 2 each session to a maximum of 10 or 12.

- Two of these sessions per week will help to reinforce form improvements mechanically.
- You can use these as a warm-up before hills, speed sessions, or races. You may also do them during your recovery and maintenance runs each week.

Why? Running accelerations with good form teaches you to run faster. Through repeated outings, you get in touch with your body mechanics, and stay in touch. You instinctively become aware of inefficiencies and learn to correct them.

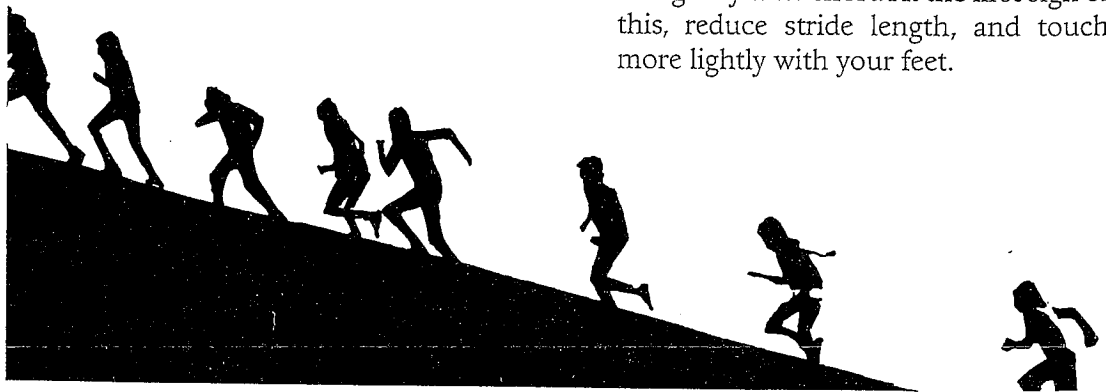
When? Twice a week, year-round. The idea is to set aside these periods to concentrate on form and not worry about it constantly. You needn't always be preoccupied with form. You may use the form accelerations as warm-ups for a hill workout, speed session or race; or simply put them in the middle of a normal run. A common practice is to run one on Tuesday, another on Thursday.

How Far? 50–150 yards.

How Fast? About your race pace for 5K. This is fast but not all out. Never sprint. Gradually build into this pace, hold it for 30–80 yards, then glide and ease off gradually.

Acceleration Gliders in Six Easy Steps

1. Start your warm-up by walking for 5 minutes, then walking and jogging very slowly for 5–10 minutes, and then easing into your running pace for that day. Warm down by reversing this procedure.
2. Go down! After you're warmed up, use a slight downhill segment of 20–40 running steps to get a little momentum. Be sure to keep the legs and body relaxed throughout, without increasing your stride length. As you reach the flat, coast along with the added momentum, touching the ground lightly with your feet near the surface of the road or trail. If no downhill is available, pick up your leg rhythm by shortening your stride length and gradually increasing the turnover of your feet and legs for 20–30 steps. (Turnover is simply the number of steps you take per minute.)
3. After the first few steps of the acceleration, when you feel comfortable at the faster rhythm, let the stride lengthen just a bit if you wish, but don't let it get too long. Avoid any feeling of tension or over-stretching in the back of your legs.
4. You're now up to speed, so just glide, keeping the feet low to the ground and using very little effort. At the first sign of this, reduce stride length, and touch more lightly with your feet.



5. Continue gliding for between 10–30 steps.
6. Rest by jogging very slowly or walking between accelerations.

RUNNING FORM FOR HILLS

Making Molehills Out of Mountains. Training on hills makes running easier on any surface. Specifically, hill training will:

- Greatly strengthen lower leg muscles and quadriceps, getting you prepared for speedwork.
- Teach you rhythm — probably the most overlooked and crucial ingredient in distance racing. Good rhythm can pull you through periods of tiredness.
- Give you a good hard workout with relatively little pounding.

Erect Posture. Keep your chest out and up. Good posture will help your body mechanics, whether running up or downhill. Try not to compromise the maximum lift from each step by leaning either forward or backward as you ascend or decline. You'll get the greatest push from each step if your main elements—head, chest, hips and feet—are perpendicular to an imaginary horizontal. They are therefore lined up to best defy gravity.

Running Uphill. Hills can be a great advantage to you in a race if you understand a few principles. As your competitors struggle against the force of gravity, you can conserve energy and actually let it work for you. It may be hard to imagine when you're in the midst of a steep incline, but a hill can be a great opportunity.

- *Maintain the successful rhythm* you have established on the flat.
- *Maintain the same effort level.* Don't try to keep up the same pace on the hills as on the flat or you'll soon be worn out. A good check of this "same effort level" is your breathing.
- *Shorten your stride* and let yourself slow down gradually as you ascend. Conserve energy for the rest of the run. Keep your feet low to the ground, treading lightly.
- *Pick up the rhythm slightly* as you near the top. Some runners find a slight increase in arm rhythm helps them do this. Don't increase length or power of the arm swing, just pick up the rhythm. This helps pull you over the top and gets you ready to take advantage of gravity on the other side.
- *Think of running over the top:* You don't want to let down there.

Running Downhill. At the crest, the effort required for each step decreases. Be sensitive to this and gradually let the pace increase as gravity allows.

- *Let gravity do the work.* Gravity and increased rhythm should pull you downhill, with little energy required.
- *Don't let stride length get too long.* If it becomes too long you lose control and must expend energy to slow down. Too long a stride can pound your feet and knees unmercifully.
- *Keep your feet low to the ground, with a light touch.*