

TOP TIPS FOR YOUR FIRST RACE

For advice on how to prepare for your first race, personal trainer Paul Warwick-Munday (www.fitnessfigures.co.uk) has these tips.

BE POSITIVE
Try to picture yourself coming through the finish line at the end of your first race. Imagine how great you will feel.

GO SLOW
Often this is as simple as upping your walking pace to power walking, which is about 4.5 miles per hour. Jogging is just an extension from this, so you can always revert to this stage in your training.

MAKE A PLAN
If you have a plan that fits your lifestyle, it will be easier to achieve your goal.

FEEL LIKE A RUNNER
In other words, take yourself seriously. Every runner started where you are at some point. The moment you come back from your first decent training run, you'll already be a runner. Remember, you will get faster and will be able to run further than you have done before. The sky's the limit!

Having only started running with any real frequency six months ago, I'm pleased to announce I recently crossed the line from 'beginner' to 'runner'. To prove my commitment to the cause, I've even added 'running' to my hobbies on Facebook. I'm hardly a veteran yet, but after being told by the gait analysis expert at Brooks Running that my virtually brand new trainers already needed replacing (they're a few months old, but in my mind anything that costs more than £100 should last an entire lifetime), I feel justified in calling myself a bona fide runner.

Despite working for a running magazine, my passion for pavement pounding didn't happen overnight. It took a few months of perseverance before I got to the stage where I considered myself hooked, and I've only recently started to feel genuinely anxious

if I miss out on a run.

Friends often ask me what the secret is to falling in love with running, and I still find this hard to answer. The first few times that I coughed and spluttered around the park were agony. But then little by little, my fitness improved, my bum shrank, and before I knew it that after-run buzz became infectious. But despite running several times a week, until very recently, I still considered myself a weekend jogger.

The clinch

It was competing in my first race that finally sealed the deal. I signed up for a 5K under duress from the girls at work, and vowed to take it slowly and just enjoy the day.

The race atmosphere was exciting, but it was

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only once I'd been informed that I'd made it round in a not-too-shabby 28 minutes that I realised why people put themselves through the torture of long-distance running.

Anyone can do it

So I finally realised that, if little old Fatty (my nickname as a child, thanks mum) could run 5K, then the possibilities were endless!

Admittedly I haven't actually run any races since (baby steps), but the fact that I did pretty well without pushing myself to physical extremes has sky-rocketed my running confidence. I've since signed up to a few more races this year, and my first marathon next spring.

So to anyone nervous about starting running or signing up to their first race, just go for it! If Fatty can learn how to run, so can anyone. ☑

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