

Stay focused

For advice on how to keep your running fresh, Cat Dugdale, a personal trainer and founder of female-focused fitness group SUPERchick (www.iamsuperchick.com) has these tips:

PLAN A NEW ROUTE

If you've lived in the same area for some time, running routes can become mundane and you forget what it's like to enjoy running as an adventure.

SET A CHALLENGE

Try to complete a certain distance in a certain time – your body and mind will relish the challenge. This is great for your motivation – and your fitness levels.

JOIN A CLUB

According to a study by the University of Oxford, we produce more endorphins when we exercise in a group than alone. So, look into your local running club – whether you're a beginner or a seasoned runner, having someone to chat to while training can be a lifesaver when running boredom strikes.

FIND A FRIEND

Run with someone new. Team up with a colleague from work or a friend from the gym and run together for the first time – you'll be naturally curious about how you compare.



FOR MORE FROM RHALOU, READ HER INSPIRATIONAL BLOG AT WWW.WOMENSRUNNINGUK.CO.UK/RHALOU.OBYX

It's all in the mind



Online editor **Rhalou Allerhand** debates how to make long runs exciting

Determined to embrace my new career, when I joined the *Women's Running* team I threw myself into running and it has since become a part of my daily routine. But despite tentatively making the crossover from wobbly-legged beginner to bona fide runner, I'm still painfully aware of the big fat gulf between running around the park for half an hour a few times a week and 'real' running. A 26-mile gulf to be exact!

I've achieved the bit where you put your trainers on and dash out of the door for half an hour, and I've even managed a couple of 5K races. But suddenly the September issue has snuck up on me, my training has hit a plateau and the only thing I'm running out of is excuses. I have almost a year to train for my first marathon, but I was still hoping to at least gradually up my mileage from my usual 5K jaunt to something a little closer to 26 miles. But no matter how hard I tried,

once I completed the same running circuit I've been doing for months now, my legs ceased to work.

Be it baking, backgammon or bounding round the park, I tend to get bored if I do anything non-stop for more than 30 minutes, so upping my running game was proving rather difficult. I just couldn't fathom running for that long without falling over, dying or absentmindedly stopping off for ice cream.

Apparently it's all in the mind, and the mental challenges of long-distance running can be just as difficult – if not harder – than the physical ones. So if the main obstacles are in my mind and (partly due to my day job) I've always got running on my mind, maybe the clue lies in getting out of my mind?

With this in mind (or not, as the case may be), I endeavoured to spend lots of time not thinking about running, by using cunning distraction techniques. These involved listening to new music, trying out new running routes and, most importantly, dragging my girlfriends out with me to distract me from my feet.

I'm on week two of my trial, so I've only managed to up my mileage a small amount, but it's certainly injected a bit more fun into my running, which must be half the battle! I'll keep you posted on my progress. ■

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