

New York Road Runners

Youth Coaching Resources

Elementary Warm-up and Cool-down Activities

Use warm-up and cool-down activities to prepare kids for the beginning and end of running sessions. Young kids are usually limber and don't need to stretch for the same reasons adults do. However, warm-up and cool-down routines are important for two reasons at this age:

1. To introduce the importance and habit of preparing one's body for physical activity
2. To provide a fun transition into and out of "running mode"

Keep in mind that children this age should not be doing strenuous activities that require muscles to be "primed" or that risk injury.

Your warm-up and cool-down routines should include light jogging and fluid stretches. We also suggest a simple breathing exercise for the warm-up routine.

Warm-up and Cool-down Jogs

Warm-up and cool-down jogs are good to include before stretching if you have time. The warm-up and cool-down jogs should be done at a slow pace—walking is okay too—and can be anywhere from 30 seconds to 2 minutes.

Stretching

Stretching routines should be fun and engaging and take kids through a range of fluid movements that build from slow to fast in the warm-up and from fast to slow in the cool-down. Recognize that some kids are more flexible than others and everyone should stretch only as far as is comfortable for them.

Breathing

Our breathing activity helps kids remember to breathe during running. It's also a great mental focusing exercise. The most efficient breathing for runners is belly or diaphragm breathing, where the stomach extends upon the inhale and contracts upon the exhale. Rhythmic breathing is also good. Remind runners to breathe, but don't force a specific breathing method. By discussing breathing and practicing it while standing still, you can help students develop good habits that may translate to their running.

Videos and MORE! available at: <http://www.nyrrf.org/ycr/ars/index.asp>

A full body warm-up and stretching routine

Instructions:

1. Have runners spread out an arm's length apart from each other.
2. Guide them through a series of stretching movements.
3. Start with gentle movements, gradually quickening the pace as you go so energy levels are high at the end.
4. Use these exercises, repeating each one about 3 times, or make up your own movements:
 - Reach up to the sky and down to the ground.
 - Bend over and swing side to side.
 - Do the twist.
 - Jump up and down.
 - Kick your butt.
 - Wiggle & jiggle it out.

Performance Points:

- Demonstrate each movement while you call it out.
- Have fun with it - improvise and create your own routines.
- Include warm-up exercises that keep your kids moving naturally without overstretching or straining.

Training Specifics:

Duration / Reps:

- Do each exercise in the routine about 3 times.
- Spend 2-3 minutes total on the whole "Work-It" routine.

When: At the beginning of running sessions

Benefits:

- Warms-up and stretches the whole body
- Teaches the importance of preparing the body to run
- Focuses kids for the running session

A full body cool-down and stretching activity:

Instructions:

1. Have runners spread out an arm's length apart from each other.
2. Guide them through a series of fluid stretching movements.
3. Use these exercises, repeating each one about 3 times, or make up your own movements:
 - March in place with high knees.
 - Twist gently like a rag doll.
 - Pick apples: reach up and down.
 - Do hula hoops.
 - Do shoulder circles.
 - Wiggle and jiggle it out.

Performance Points:

- Demonstrate each movement while you call it out.
- Do Cool It at a nice, slow, and fluid pace.
- Improvise and create your own routines.
- Include cool-down exercises that keep your kids moving naturally, without overstretching or straining.

Training Specifics:

Duration / Reps:

- Do each exercise in the routine about 3 times.
- Spend 2-3 minutes total on the whole Cool It routine.

When: At the end of the running session

Benefits:

- Cools down and stretches the entire body
- Instills the importance of taking care of the body through cooling down after exercising
- Prepares kids for the end of the session, so they can make an easier transition to whatever comes next

FOUR SIMPLE STEPS TO GOOD FORM

1) POSTURE



- * Stand tall
- * Point toes forward
- * Reach to the sky to reset your posture
- * Run with your head up and keep your gaze directed ahead of you

2) MIDFOOT



- * March in place prior to your run to reinforce the proper midfoot strike
- * Heel striking and overstriding cause braking
- * Landing on forefoot can strain calf & achilles

3) CADENCE



- * Aim for a cadence of 180.
- * To find your cadence, count number of right foot strikes for 20 seconds and multiply by 6
- * Run light, and avoid pounding

4) LEAN



- * Lean from ankles without bending at waist
- * Flexing at the ankle reduces unnecessary muscle strain caused by toeing off
- * Use gravity to your advantage instead of excessive muscle force

COMMON RUNNING FORM

VS

GOOD RUNNING FORM



**Overstriding,
heel-striking,
& bad posture**

cause braking and torque, which equates to inefficient running & leads to many common injuries.



**Quick strides,
mid foot strike,
& good posture**

prevent stress that causes strain & injury, while also making running more enjoyable & efficient.