



STRENGTH TRAINING FOR RUNNERS

Two sessions per week • Build strength, capacity and resilience without overcomplicating it

PURPOSE

A simple 2-session-per-week strength template for runners. The emphasis is lower-limb force production, calf/soleus capacity, single-leg control, posterior-chain strength and trunk stability.

SCHEDULING

Two sessions of 30–45 minutes are usually sufficient. Avoid placing the hardest lower-body strength session immediately before your key run or long run.

SESSION A

Exercise	Sets × reps	Key point
Squat / goblet squat	3×5–8	Controlled depth; progress load gradually
Romanian deadlift	3×6–8	Hip hinge; controlled lowering
Rear-foot elevated split squat	3×6–8/leg	Stable pelvis
Standing calf raise	3×8–12/leg	Full range; pause at top
Seated/bent-knee calf raise	3×10–15	Train the soleus
Row	3×8–12	Upper-back strength
Pallof press	2–3×8–12/side	Resist rotation

SESSION B

Exercise	Sets × reps	Key point
Trap-bar deadlift / hip thrust	3×5–8	Strong, controlled hip extension
Step-up	3×6–10/leg	Drive through working leg
Single-leg RDL	3×6–10/leg	Balance and hip control
Hamstring curl	2–3×8–12	Controlled eccentric
Calf / soleus raise	3×10–15	Progress load or range
Push-up / press	3×8–12	Whole-body tension
Side plank	2–3×20–40s/side	Trunk and lateral hip control

PROGRESSION

Start with roughly 2–3 good repetitions in reserve. When you can complete the top of the rep range with sound technique, increase the load slightly. Do not chase fatigue for its own sake.

DURING HEAVY RUNNING BLOCKS

Reduce strength volume before removing the main movements. For example, move from 3 sets to 2 while maintaining good technique. The aim is to maintain useful strength while minimising interference with key running sessions.

HOW TO PROGRESS THE PROGRAMME

Use the same exercises for several weeks rather than constantly changing them. Track load and repetitions. Progress one variable at a time: a small increase in load, an additional repetition, or improved control and range of motion.

WHY STRENGTH MATTERS FOR RUNNERS

Running is repetitive. Strength training exposes muscles and connective tissues to higher forces in a controlled environment. The goal is not to become exhausted; it is to build capacity that complements your running.

KEEP IT RUNNER-FRIENDLY

You do not need bodybuilding-style volume to benefit. Two focused sessions can cover the major movement patterns while leaving enough recovery for running. During demanding race-preparation blocks, maintenance may be more appropriate than continually increasing gym volume.

RECOVERY

Strength is another training stress. Allow time to recover, particularly after heavy lower-body sessions. If running quality is consistently deteriorating, reduce strength volume before adding more training.

IMPORTANT

This is a generic runner-focused template, not a rehabilitation programme or individually prescribed plan. Modify exercise selection for experience, equipment, injury history and individual tolerance. Persistent or worsening pain should be assessed rather than ignored.

Chris Reader PT • Evidence-based personal training, strength & endurance coaching