

A light stretching routine after a few miles of jogging is an integral part of the warm-up process.



[ COACH CULPEPPER ]

## The Importance of the Warm-Up

BY ALAN CULPEPPER

*Why should I warm up, and what's the best way to do it for a race or workout?*

### NINETY PERCENT OF SUCCESS

in running comes down to a willingness to work hard and sacrifice, and being consistent. The other 10 percent comes down to areas like diet, hydration, stretching and injury prevention. A proper pre-run warm-up routine is part of that 10 percent. It might seem inconsequential, but it can make or break a race or hard workout.

### PURPOSE OF THE WARM-UP

Warming up before a harder session or race is a physiological process that allows the body to be prepared to exert at a higher level of intensity. It's not just a muscular process but a cardiovascular procedure as well.

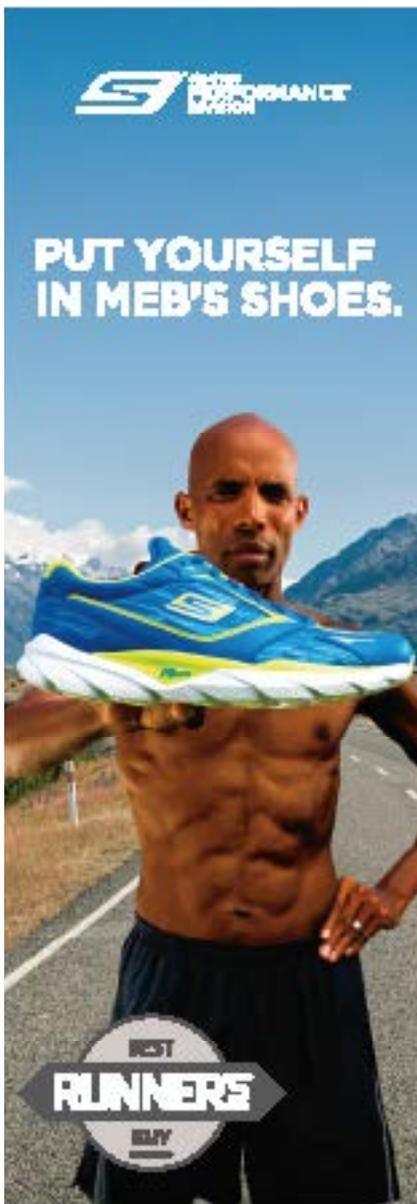
It's common knowledge that a warm muscle performs better than a cold one, but a warm muscle is also less susceptible to injury. As the body warms up and blood flow to working muscles increases, less strain is placed on the tendons, thus

reducing injury potential in the muscle itself and its attachments.

Increased blood flow throughout your body allows for a better transfer of oxygen. Without an increase in heart rate and breathing prior to a workout or race, you will limit the effectiveness of the workout itself. Jumping right into a hard effort spikes the heart rate and puts the body in aerobic shock, and often, the body does not reset until the heart rate drops back down significantly after the workout or race.

### SAMPLE ROUTINE

The key to an effective warm-up is developing a routine that works for you, your ability level and your specific goals. If you are new to running and just getting started with some generalized workouts, a warm-up is still important, but you may not be ready for everything that follows. Walking or jogging, followed by a short period of light stretching is a good start.



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For those of you who are more advanced and engaged in intense training, consider these suggestions.

**JOGGING:** 1 to 3 miles of jogging is the first component. This should be very easy and well below your normal easy day effort.

**STRETCHING:** After the easy jog, perform a few minutes of light stretching. This is not the time to test your flexibility, but rather hit all the muscle groups with some light stretching for 30 to 60 seconds.

**DYNAMIC DRILLS:** Keep it simple, but do a variety of drills, such as high knees, butt kicks and a series of skipping exercises, to put your running muscles through the proper range of motion.

**STRIDES:** Four to six accelerations (but not all-out sprints) for 75 to 100 meters should end your warm-up. A minute of walking recovery should be taken after each one.

#### WHEN TRAINING

For workouts that are close to threshold pace (half-marathon effort), you should work up to the above warm-up. The idea is to get your body used to a 20- to 40-minute routine. If the workout is closer to marathon effort, like a tempo run, then you can shorten it by about 25 percent, including all the elements, by using the early part of the workout itself to finish getting loose. The key is to work into the session and allow your body to fully warm up before pushing harder. As a general rule: The shorter the workout distance, the more critical the warm-up process. For workouts that are 5K-specific, such as 400-meter intervals or 1-mile repeats, a thorough warm-up is necessary.

#### BEFORE RACING

If you were to stand outside the warm-up facility at a major track meet and watch the athletes warm up, you'd see that the sprinters take a good hour before they are ready to race. Even when comparing milers and 10K runners, you will

see a difference in their warm-ups. The more intense the race is going to be from the onset, the more critical it becomes to have your cardiovascular and muscular systems fully warmed up before the gun. For a half marathon or marathon, the warm-up process can be shorter and less intense, but it is still crucial to achieving optimal performance.



#### SAMPLE WARM-UP ROUTINES FOR DIFFERENT DISTANCES.

##### 5K:

20-25 minutes of light jogging; 10-15 minutes of stretching; 10-15 minutes of dynamic drills; 6-8 x 100-meter strides

##### 10K:

20 minutes of light jogging; 10-15 minutes of stretching; 5-10 minutes of dynamic drills; 5-7 x 100-meter strides

##### HALF MARATHON:

12-15 minutes of light jogging; 10 minutes of stretching; 5 minutes of light dynamic drills; 3-4 x 100-meter strides

##### MARATHON:

8-10 minutes of jogging; 10 minutes of stretching; 5 minutes of light dynamic drills; 2-3 x 100-meter strides. The first mile of marathon completes the warm-up.



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