

SYSA Track Practice Plans

How to teach children how to run:

- **Develop Form**

Promote Balance: Utilize drills such as standing and jumping on one foot

Teach children to understand coordination

- ♣ **Concentrate on good posture before speed**

- Relaxed limbs
- Look up
- Loose fists

- ♣ **Build speed and intensity as they master form**

Incorporate equipment: Agility ladders increase good form and proper technique. Once they master the ladder without stumbling, they try to do it faster

Practice running consistently to build speed

Develop a schedule

Run every day at a specific time/place

Resist overtraining

Too much intensity can cause injuries or loss of interest

Condition Muscles

General strength conditioning is part of any running program

Instruct kids to do sit-ups, push-ups, etc.

Make Sure Running Is Fun!

Set up competitions

Kids will run faster if racing other

Make speed training game

Set up obstacle courses, break into teams for relays so they can cheer each other on o Practice with them

Week #1 Warmup

2 laps (1/2 mile jog) followed by 10 minutes of stretching

1. RUNNING FORM AND TECHNIQUE

- a. Keep your head up
- b. Abdominals engaged
- c. Shoulders low and loose
- d. Arms at 90 degree angle, above the waist and swinging back and forth
- e. Maintain a quick and quiet stride
- f. Land on forefoot with feet directly under hips and knees bent at all times

DRILLS Ladder Run (Endurance, pacing, breathing)

- **Skills taught:** This fun game encourages the participants to have fun while working on their endurance, breathing, and pacing.

- **How the game works:** Group at minimum four runners together. Have them run in a straight line jogging slowly at first. The runner at the front of the line is the leader. The leader always sets the pace and the structure. If the person at the front wants to walk, the group walks. If the person at the front wants to run backward, the group turns and runs backward until the next leader reaches the front of the line. Be creative and add themes. If the leader calls out "animals," all the followers have to yell out animal names until the next leader calls out a new theme. After a few seconds of having one person at the front of the line, the person at the end of the line races to the front to become the new leader. Once that person has been the leader for a second or two, the last person in line again replaces the person in the front of the line and becomes the new leader. This continues for a set number of laps around the track, or for a specific time period.

- **Tip:** It may be beneficial to group runners of similar speed for this game. Curves and Straights (Endurance, breathing, pacing)

- **Skills taught:** This is a great game to help middle and long distance runners to develop stamina while having some fun.

How the game works: Perform the curves and straight-aways game with a group of three or more. Determine in advance how many laps you want to complete. If you want to complete four laps, come up with four fun activities to add to your workout. Start by walking or jogging the straightaway. When you reach the curve, you will do something goofy or fun. For instance, if you have two or more participants,

jog in pairs along the first straightaway, then leap-frog over each other along the curves. Other fun ideas for the curves include skipping, cart wheeling, dancing or twirling.

- **Tip:** If your runners want to do something more serious, keep the curves simple by doing power-slides, sprinting, or running backward on the curve.

Week #2 Warmup

3 laps (1/2 mile jog) followed by 10 minutes of stretching

SPRINT FORM

- a. Make sure lead foot is at the starting line and bend knee at 45 degree angle
- b. Hands on the ground, lower head in comfortable position between arms, relax body
- c. Listen for start, raise butt, pull rear leg forward when you hear 'Go'
- d. Pull body in upright position
- e. Keep arms bent at the elbow and pump them up and down
- f. Avoid turning your head g. Run on toes and knees at 90 degree angle to increase pushing force

DRILLS Tag (sprinting, endurance, breathing)

- **Skills taught:** This classic game is great for encouraging your runners to continuously run, sprint, and breathe in an intense setting where they can also have some fun.
- **How the game works:** Designate a playing area that should be appropriate for the number of runners that are participating. One of the runners is the tagger. He or she then chases the other runners with the intent to tag them. If the tagger touches another participant, the "tagged" runner is now it. This new tagger then runs after the other participants to try and tag them. The game continues for a designated time period.
- **Tip:** If you notice the tagger getting tired, feel free to switch it up even if they do not tag someone. Or, to make the game even more exciting, designate two taggers to chase the others. *Tortoise and the Hare (Speed, "kicking", and endurance when fatigued)
- **Skills taught:** This games encourages the runners to push themselves to achieve greater speed, even when feeling fatigued – simulating a race environment.

- **How the game works:** The tortoise and the hare game is played with at least two people. The slowest participant starts by jogging around the track. When he or she has completed a quarter lap, the second participant should start chasing the first. Depending on how many people are playing, continue starting new runners as each previous runner gets to the quarter-lap marker. The goal is for each successive runner to try to catch the runner that started before him or her, while the runner that started first tries to prevent himself from being caught. Because you will be working hard, rest after each lap before starting again for about 60 seconds.

- **Tip:** For sprinters or runners of shorter distances, reduce the distance to 200M, and have them start when the runner in front of them is only 10-15 meters ahead. *Ultimate Frisbee (endurance, sprinting, breathing)

- **Skills Taught:** This game helps your runners to develop endurance and breathing, and also work on their sprinting abilities.

- **How the game works:** Divide the players into two equal-numbered teams. Play starts when one team throws the frisbee to the other team (similar to a kickoff). The game then begins with offensive players trying to move the frisbee past a goal line, while the defense tries to block passes and stop them. Players are only allowed to move the disc forward by passing and catching it; they can only take two steps forward after catching the disc. If the frisbee drops to the ground for any reason, possession changes over to the other side automatically, and the offense and defense reverse roles. Play either for a certain amount of time, or to a certain score. The game is intended to be fast paced and players usually really enjoy it.

- **Tip:** Make the goal lines closer or further apart to increase or decrease difficulty. Also, this game could be great for a warm up game.

Week #3 Warmup

3 laps (3/4 mile jog) followed by 10 minutes of stretching

LONG JUMP

- a. Determine the take off foot
 - b. Visual focus should be straight ahead
 - c. Eyes should be looking up at a 45 degree angle from horizontal
- How to Long Jump

- Find dominant foot

Have coach gently push you from behind. The foot that steps forward is the dominant foot

- Count your steps and run at the pace you are expecting to run towards the jump. Count every time dominant foot hits the ground

- Mark place where you land

- Get in Position. Place foot in center of the track and ask someone to check your position

- Run down the track. Take long, fast strides and Look straight forward to keep back straight

- Jump vertically when you come to the board, your speed will carry you.

Shoot your chest out when jumping. Look into the sky with arms in the back of your body. Land with arms and legs in front of you

Throw body weight forward when landing, Use remaining momentum to do so. Try not to fall backwards.

How: Athletes stand at the take off board/marked line, with feet shoulder-width apart and knees bent.

Swing both arms backward and then thrust them forward and upward while jumping explosively off the balls of both feet. Jumpers should land on both feet, thrusting the body forward at landing. Repeat this drill 20- 30 times.

Three-Step Long Jump

- As a rule, righties takeoff on the left foot and lefties on the right foot, but there are exceptions. Take three brisk running strides before jumping. The right-handed jumper takes one brisk step with the left foot, one with the right and then one more with the left. On the third step, the takeoff foot should be on the board, with the knee bent. Both arms should be thrust upward while jumping explosively off the ball of the foot. Emphasize landing on both feet with a forward thrust so that the jumper falls or hops forward. Use this method for a while before moving to the full running long jump.

Week #4 Warmup

3 laps (3/4 mile jog) followed by 10 minutes of stretching

4. Legs and Feet

a. Focus on increasing body awareness and control while developing purposeful movement.

DRILLS *Springy Feet

- Helps students learn to land on their midfoot rather than on their heels or toes. This will help make running more enjoyable and for the student to progress in speed.
- First, demonstrate how to run on your heels, then toes. Point out where the ball of your foot is. Tell students to touch the ball of their foot and imagine there is a spring in there that will push them. Have students try three types of running: Tippy Toes, Heavy Heels and Spring Feet.
- What to watch for: Midfoot striking the ground first, Heel can lightly touch the ground after midfoot does, Foot springs forward, Student is light on feet.

High Knees

- Helps students strengthen muscles that help them lift their knees and prevent plodding. Can help lead to a more natural, longer stride and faster running.
- While standing in place, arms at sides, lift knees up and down to thighs are parallel to the ground.
- Add an arm swing while maintaining a slow pace for your high knees.
- Pair students up and have one student do High Knees while the other stands in front of him, holding hands motionless at a good target place where the knee should hit.

Have students see how many knee lifts they can do in 10 seconds; switch

• What to watch for:

Knee lift is parallel to the ground

Taking off and landing on the balls of the feet

Looking straight ahead

Tall posture with no backward lean

Monster Run

- Students see different stride lengths as they learn how to avoid the over stride and under stride.
- First, demonstrate a very long stride. Have students try this, as well. Call these 'monster steps'.

- Have students run a lap in small groups using the monster stride. Give them a time when they cross the finish line.
- Next, demonstrate what a baby step looks like. Have students run with small, baby steps, around the track and make sure to give them a time when they come through the finish line.
- Last, demonstrate a proper running stride, taking a medium step with feet landing directly beneath hips. Have students run a lap around the track while giving them their finish time.
- Explain that the correct stride will be the fastest time.
- **What to watch for:**

Feet landing beneath hips.

Week #5 & #6 Warmup

4 laps (1 mile jog) followed by 10 minutes of stretching

RUNNING DRILLS

• **RELAYS**

Place several soccer balls - one for each group of children - 30 yards away from the starting line of the children. Each child runs to the ball, around it and then back to the group - TAGS the next person - who then does the same until all on the team have run. Variations should be done by having them first run around the ball from the left, then from the right side. Do this typically 4 times - twice from the left, twice from the right.

Variation: Each child starts from a KNEELING position, first on the right knee, then on the left knee. Repeat 4 times, twice on the left knee and twice on the right.

Variation: Leaders of the lines start by LYING ON THEIR BACKS, heads facing the balls. When hands are tapped, they turn over and then start running. For variety, have the children roll to the right or to the left, according to instructions.

Variation: Set a ball out about 30 yards from each line of children and a SECOND BALL or animal at 60 yards. Have the children do activities around or over each object before returning and tagging the next in line. This adds distance to the drills and relays.

- **DRILLS** The drills begin with a straight line of children; they individually run over and around a line of evenly separated soccer balls, or objects, and then return to the end of the line. Begin with six selected items and work up to 15 over a period of several weeks.

DRILL 1: The balls should be less than three feet apart. Children run over the balls quickly, one at a time, in a running motion. When finished, they go back to the end of the line. Repeat.

DRILL 2: The balls should be about two feet apart. Children jump over the balls with legs together. Moving the arms helps with momentum. When finished they go back to the end of the line. Repeat.

DRILL 3: The balls should be about three feet apart. Children swerve through and around the balls. When finished, they return to the end of the line. Repeat.

DRILL 4: High Knees - The balls should be about three feet apart. Children bound over the balls with alternating legs, lifting knees as high as possible. Repeat.

SUPPLEMENT drills 1 - 4 by doing push ups, sit ups, jumping jacks, etc. between drills. Also, have the children run around the field, track or designated distance between drills, to add endurance.

- **Run Game**

Depending on the size of your team, line the players up either in one or two straight lines. Begin jogging around the perimeter of the football field, or from goal post to goal post. Increase the difficulty of an otherwise ordinary jog by having the person at the back of the line sprint to the front at the coach's whistle. When that player reaches the front of the line, he then slows down to the jogging pace, and another coach's whistle signals the next player to run from back to front.

- **Terrible 20's**

Split your team into two groups and place each group on a separate goal line. Group A does 20 push-ups, on their coach's count, then sprints 100 yards to the other goal line. Meanwhile, at the same time, the other group, Group B, is doing 20 sit-ups on their coaches count before sprinting 100 yards. Group A then will do 19 sit-ups and sprint 100 yards as Group B does 19 push-ups and sprints 100 yards. Each group will work their way down to zero, alternating push-ups and sit-ups with 100 yard sprints in between. You can cut this down to as low of a number as you'd like to start with, according to age.

- **Butterfly Running Game**

This game is designed to help keep your kids in shape as well as entertained. Find an open field or playground and set up cones in the shape of a butterfly. This butterfly can be as large or small as you want, although it should be big enough to let kids run and jog around it for a decent amount of time. This particular butterfly shape should be symmetrical, with a straight line down its center. This center line is called the "sprinting lane" while one side of the butterfly is the "jogging lane." The other side of the butterfly will be the "walking lane." Have your kids start to jog around one side of the butterfly shape, then have them sprint down the center of the butterfly before walking around the other side of the butterfly. Have them run on the course until tired.