

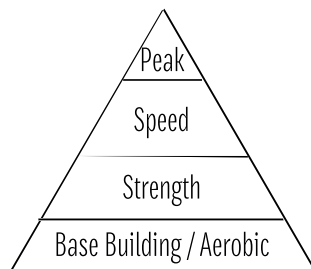
What is Base Building?

Base building, also known as maintenance mode, is the period of training in between races, when you are not adhering to a specific training plan. After a brief recovery period immediately following a marathon or the end of your racing season, you will shift into base building mode for 4-12 weeks.

The purpose of base building is just as the name implies, as it is training dedicated specifically to increasing your aerobic base. Base building will:

- increase your body's tolerance to the physical stress of running,
- thus reducing risk of injury
- increase your fatigue resistance and improve your endurance
- prevent overtraining by focusing on easy runs
- maintain or improve body composition
- build strength and correct muscular imbalances
- prepare you for the physical and mental demands of race-specific workouts before you begin training.

While lots of easy running may sound boring to you, consider base building as the fundamental period upon which all other training is built. A popular image that running coaches use is a pyramid, which visualizes Arthur Lydiard's training method of transitioning from base to peak. Base building forms the foundation of the pyramid and you build your race-specific speed just as a pyramid builds up to a point from the bottom.



What Do You Do in Base Building?

1. High Volume of Easy Running

The primary focus of base building is running a high volume and high frequency of easy miles for your fitness level. Volume refers to your overall weekly mileage and frequency indicates the number of days per week that you run. So, a high volume and high frequency plan for most half marathoners and marathoners will feature running 4-6 days per week and 30-40 miles per week.

Rather than monitoring your pace as you do during race training, you should focus on running by effort during base building. Maintain a comfortable effort, which will vary in pace from day to day. Use perceived effort or a heart rate monitor to gauge your effort. If you regularly rely on your GPS to determine your pace, use the base building opportunity as a time to break the Garmin habit. You can still use your Garmin during your runs, but set the screen so you don't see your instant or average pace during your run so you learn to rely on your breathing and perceived effort.

Of course, high mileage varies for different runners, based on your current fitness, how injury-prone you are, and what your goals for your next training cycle are. Just as you would during race training, you can gradually progress your mileage and include step-back weeks. The chart below shows an example base-building mileage progression for beginner, intermediate, and advanced runners based on average weekly mileage.

Base Building: Weekly Mileage Progression

Week	Beginner	Intermediate	Advanced
1	18 miles	30 miles	50 miles
2	22 miles	34 miles	55 miles
3	25 miles	38 miles	60 miles
4	15 miles	27 miles	45 miles

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2. Early Season Speed Work

While most of your miles should be done at a comfortable pace, you can still speed up to a small degree during base building! A small amount of fast running goes a long way in terms of speed maintenance and development. Strides, hill sprints, and short fartlek runs will keep your mind engaged and your fast-twitch muscle fibers working! After 2-4 weeks of only easy running, try one of these workouts below once a week.

Short Fartlek: After warming up with 10-20 minutes of easy running, run for one minute at a hard effort (5K-10K effort). Run easy for one minute to recover, and then repeat 1 minute hard, 1 minute easy for a total of 10 intervals. Run easy for 10-20 minutes to cool down.

Strides: Run easy for 30-60 minutes. After you complete your run, run very hard (85-95% effort, a “comfortable” but not all-out sprint) for 20-30 seconds. Rest for up to one minute and repeat for a total of 4-6 repetitions.

Strides: Run easy for 30-60 minutes. After you complete your run, find a hill with roughly a 6-8% incline (moderately steep). Sprint up the hill as fast as you can for 8-10 seconds, focusing on maintaining an upright posture, proper arm swing, and quick and short steps. Walk or jog back down the hill to recover and repeat 5-10 times.

3. Stability and Mobility Exercises

Joint mobility, a strong upright posture, and balance may not immediately seem to aid in running, but all of these are important for proper running form and injury prevention. Yoga and Pilates will improve all of these, thus making you a better runner. Both of these workouts also strengthen your core (which includes your abs, back, and glutes), which will help you avoid fatigue and a deterioration of form during long runs and speed work. Schedule at 1-3 sessions per week during your base building period, starting with once per week if you were not practicing regularly.

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4. Strength Training

When it comes to selecting a strength training program, what you will be consist in doing will be the best workout for you. From boot camps to barre workouts and from barbells to kettlebells, you can choose from a wide variety of workouts that will correct muscular imbalances, boost your metabolism, and to strengthen your bones and muscles against possible running-related injuries.

During the base building period, you should try to include at two 15-30 minute strength training sessions per week. There are numerous strength routines across the internet, or you can develop your own workout using some of the runner-specific exercises below.

- Step Ups with Bicep Curls
- Squats with Overhead Press
- Pushups
- Planks and Side Planks
- Single-leg Bridges
- Supermans/Back Extensions
- Lunges: forward, reverse, lateral