

Many of us started running as a way to have some time to ourselves and to relieve the pressure of everyday life, so it's important not to let running become another stress or something else to worry about in our already full and busy daily schedule. Here are some tips to help ensure that you keep enjoying your running

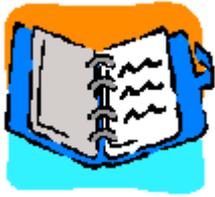
1. Join a running club, it's the best thing you can possibly do. You will meet other people, find new running partners, make loads of new friends, socialise, hear about interesting events and learn from people who have been running for years. For a lot of people, joining Dudley Ladies has been a real life changing experience and they will tell you that while running is alright, it's the people in it that make it.

2. Get yourself a regular running partner and make a commitment to meet them on a regular basis either at the club or outside. This will serve to motivate you and your partner because neither of you will want to let the other down.



3. Set yourself an achievable goal. Make sure that it's something specific, that you can measure your progress, and that it's attainable within a realistic time frame. Visualise what it will be like to achieve your goal and either promise yourself or get someone else to guarantee a treat when you achieve it. At Dudley Ladies, we give every beginner the target of running 3 miles within 12 weeks and then reward them with the promise of a medal, a tee-shirt, a certificate and a good night out to celebrate it when they achieve it.

4. Don't try to stick religiously to a detailed daily programme. Run according to how you feel. If you feel tired then run easy and if you feel strong and full of life then go for it. If you've got some problem or worry that you need to sort out then use your run to mull it over or discuss it with your training partner. If you've had a bad day at work or with the kids and you're ready to pull your hair out, then go for it and run your aggression off in the run. Either way, you'll feel better for it. Your problem's will either be solved or else you'll be too knackered to care when you get back. Use your programme to guide you on the amount of running you are aiming for, and the type of running you should be doing, but don't worry too much if you can't fit in a particular session on a particular day.



5. Keep a running diary. From time to time, we all feel as if we're not getting any better and have self-doubts about whether it's all worth it and why am I doing it, but when you look back at your running diary and you see where you've come from and how you've progressed to what you're capable of now, then that serves as a real confidence booster as well as providing useful information about what works for you.

6. Vary your routes. Don't just run the same old routes every day. Go out and explore your neighbourhood or go out into the countryside with your partner or group. Running is one of the best ways we know of exploring and seeing new areas. Try to find a trail in a forest, or along a river, or a path in a park, so that you are not running on road the whole time.

7. Enter races. You don't have to be a great athlete to run in a race. People of all ages and abilities enter them and they are a fun day out. Make a day or a morning of them and just lap up the atmosphere. Take the family for support and get them positioned in strategic places to cheer you on. For some of the bigger races, they have bands playing, helicopters flying overhead, TV camera's, people being interviewed, various stalls to buy cheap running kit from, and entertainment for the kids and there's usually a real buzz about the place. You meet old friends, make new ones and get to rehearse all your excuses before the race starts ready for when you finish. You can either use them as a very social training run and wave to the crowds as you stride by or you can test your progress over the guaranteed race distance and compare it to the previous entry in your running diary.

8. Try running in the mornings before you go to work. Although many of us are not at our best in the morning, it's a great way of setting yourself up for the day, so that when you get to work, you're wide awake and ready for anything, while the rest of your colleagues are still staggering in half asleep. Use your morning runs to clear your head and plan your day. There is something quite special about watching everything come to life as the sun rises.



9. Introduce other people to running. When you take someone under your wing and run with them, it really boosts your own confidence and self-esteem. You feel so superior and so good about yourself. You're chatting away but they can't talk, you see them struggling, gasping for air and wanting to walk and wonder what all the difficulty and fuss is about, until it suddenly dawns on you that you used to be like that once and that you can't be that bad after all, can you?