

Quality or Quantity? What's the BEST Way to Train?

Questions:

Will running slow make me a slow runner? Will running faster make me a faster runner?

The short answer for both is: IT DEPENDS. Here's why...

Things to Consider

***What is your ultimate running goal?** To the extent it's important to run for fun and enjoyment (the likelihood of this happening goes up the longer anyone runs to prevent burnout), the slower you run, the more likely this will happen. Conversely, to the extent you want to go all out towards a goal of achieving a PR, the more you incorporate appropriately quicker paces, the more likely this will happen.

***Weight Loss** – You should not try to max out and try to lose weight at the same time. Changing your eating habits and restricting calories (even a little) will take energy out of you when it comes to the demands of training hard for a race. It makes more sense to scale back accordingly and incorporate all kinds of cross training (much of what can be intense since it works different muscles and still doesn't beat you up like hard running does) to ultimately burn more calories while keeping the injury/overdoing it risk lower.

***Injury Status** – You should not try to max out if you're recovering from an injury or dealing with a chronic one. To run faster, your feet need to strike the ground harder to propel your body forward faster, thus increasing the beat down you give your body. While running faster is easier on the ego, the risk of injury and overtraining go up accordingly.

***Timing/Stress** – Depending on how much is going on in your life should determine how much to give to training.

Here's how some prominent training programs answer this question of Quality vs. Quantity

Program	Paces	Notable Characteristics
Brooks-Hanson	Long Run = MP + 45-60 sec. Intervals = 10K pace Tempo = MP – 10 sec.	-Longest run up to 16 miles, but compensate with moderate to semi-long runs the day before and after. -More strength based with 6 runs/wk and the last several weeks having the 'speed' workout be just a little under MP and an MP workout on Thursday *You won't ever go too fast or slow, from 10K pace to MP+1:00
F.I.R.S.T. Furman Institute of Running & Scientific Training	Long Run = MP +15-45 sec. Intervals = 5K – 30 sec. Tempo = 5K + 20-35 sec.	-Much more aggressive intervals than any other program (30 sec. per mile faster than most) and long runs that average 30 sec. per mile faster than most programs -Quality over quantity with 3 runs/wk + 2 cross training days *Hard to run as fast on intervals as recommended while going faster on long runs can wear you down – Definitely do NOT run more than 3x/wk
Daniel's Running Formula	Long Run = MP + 1:30 Intervals = 5K pace Tempo = 5K + 35-40 sec.	-Can get very complicated with multiple pace changes for the 2 weekly quality runs designed to address multiple aspects of performance. Flexible with 4-7 runs/wk *All other runs complement the 2 main workouts for endurance and strength/speed. Very manageable to follow with more conservative long run pace and moderate tempo and interval workouts.
Jeff Galloway Run/Walk	Long Run = MP + 2:00 Intervals = MP – 20 sec.	-Long Run quantity over quality with up to 28 miles and 3-4 runs/wk. -Very little marathon pace or speed workouts – race 2x/mo. instead. -Famous for advocating walk breaks as best way to perform *True long run endurance dominant with undervalued walk breaks
Pete Pfitzinger & Scott Douglas	Long Run = MP + 45-1:45 Intervals = 5K pace Tempo = 5K + 35-40 sec.	-A balance of quantity & quality with recovery runs at MP + 2:00 -Lots of marathon pace miles on long runs up to 16 miles every 2-3 wks. but none in final month *Similar to Daniel's except a more aggressive long run pace
John "The Penguin" Bingham	Long Run = MP + 1:30-2:30 Intervals = no faster than MP	-Conservative schedule with 4 runs/wk + 2 cross training days and relaxed running *Meets the niche of those looking for a very safe way to train with a time goal in mind
Hal Higdon	Long Run = MP + 45-90 sec. Intervals = YASSO 800's Tempo = 10K + 10 sec.	-Long run up to 20 miles (even for advanced) compared to 22 for most other programs. *A simplified version of Pfitzinger and Daniel's with slightly more conservative intervals and also encourages walk breaks

The Kenyan Way	Long Run = Progressive / run by time, not mileage Intervals/Tempo = Varies Recovery = MP + 3-4 min. / run by time, not mileage	-Kenyans are the most intuitive runners. They push when they feel good (going harder than scheduled), but conversely, they'll back off and rest if they don't. - They do lots of hills and most of their running off road to work on strength. Their easy days are much easier than anyone else's and they ALWAYS start super slow before finishing super fast *If you're willing to do the very conservative things (super slow warmup, recovery runs, and resting in place of a run as needed), then this can be a fun way to challenge yourself when you're feeling good
Runner's Edge	Long Run = Progressive Intervals = 5K – 10 to 15 sec. Tempo = 5K + 20-30 sec. Recovery = 5K + 3-4 min.	-Balanced and adaptable with multiple levels of 3-6 runs/wk and 3 quality runs (not as aggressive as F.I.R.S.T.). All runs are based on 5K (or 2 mile time trial) current pace, with the long run starting out at MP + 2 min. and picking up to MP+ 30 sec. (outside of MP miles) *A collection of key aspects on what works best from the above programs – a 'Super' program

The safest solution for the most people is a balance between Quantity and Quality with a shift towards one or the other depending on your situation. If your weakness is speed (you can hold a pace forever, but cannot go faster), focus more on quality and vice versa if your weakness is endurance (you run a fast 5K, but bonk in a marathon).