

Running Form

by Tracy Y. Thomas, MA, H/F I, CSCS



Head slightly tilted with eyes looking at the ground between 10 and 20 feet ahead. Jaw and neck should be relaxed.

Breathe through the mouth

Arms: Elbows bent at 90-degree angle, with the arms relaxed and coming to "V" at the height of the sternum on the upswing, and brushing past the waistband of the shorts at the bottom of the swing. The arm should hinge freely at the shoulder for a minimum amount of torso rotation.

Shoulders relaxed and square or facing forward, not hunched over. Rounding the shoulders too far forward tends to tighten the chest and restrict breathing. Keeping shoulder square also prevents excessive torso rotation.

Hands gently cupped as if holding something between the thumb and forefinger. Tight fists cause tightness in the arms, shoulders, and neck, creating a choppy, uncomfortable stride.

There should be a slight forward-lean from the ankles to allow gravity to help pull you forward. Leaning back from the waist or running too upright is not only less efficient, but leads to tight hamstrings.

Keep leg, knee, ankle and foot in line—pointing forward. Avoid a loping overstride that creates too much of a float between footfalls and then a braking action upon foot strike. Your legs and feet should always feel relaxed.

Foot strike over longer distances should start with the midfoot striking the ground directly below or a bit behind your center of gravity and then roll through to the front of the toe. Landing on the very back edge of the heel means you have overstrided and are creating a braking action which can cause injury and is a waste of energy. As soon as the foot strikes the ground, "pick up your foot." This is much easier than concentrating on a "push off." Please reference ChiRunning by Danny Dreyer for further explanation.

Jen Rhines

**When running on uneven surfaces/trails, a correct, relaxed foot strike is important for keeping balance and when running on uneven surfaces, one's balance can be thrown off resulting in compensatory arm movement for stability.*