

Proper Running Technique Improves Performance

Many people say that running is easy, you just go out and do it, right? Unfortunately, much of what the vast majority of distance runners know about running technique is wrong. Paying attention to your running form is serious and is a major player in how effective a runner is at what they do, regardless of skill level. Improving running form will increase your efficiency and reduce your chance of injury.

Distance running with proper technique requires a concerted effort and involves the entire body. The feet should strike the ground as close to midfoot as possible under a bent knee after the leg has begun to swing back under the body. This means the strike is directly underneath the body (not in front) and the runner's center of gravity should be positioned directly over the foot.

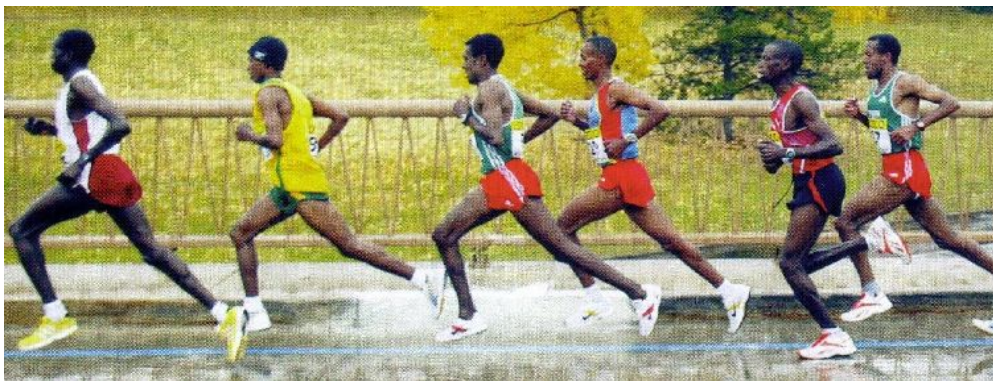
To help the legs drive straight and the foot to strike underneath the center of gravity, the arms should go forward and back with as little side to

side sway as possible and the elbows should never cross forward pass the torso. The upper body should carry over your foot leaving your feet to push off and extend behind your center of gravity. The chest should push forward slightly as your arm pumps backward while your hips and knees extend to engage a powerful propulsion. Hands should stay near the chest with a short, compact arm swing.

In short, "Feet flat, Arms Back, Chest Forward." Remember that changing technique will require time and effort and a change in mechanics which will initiate a change in which muscles are used.

For more information, I recommend reading Tom Miller's book *Programmed to Run* which pulls together a good deal of observation and research to arrive at logical conclusions that can be grasped by any runner, beginner to elite.

-KG Harper



Note in this picture of elite African distance runners leading a race the elements of proper technique that are consistent with each of them: head looking forward, slight forward lean, arm angle of 90 degrees or less with emphasis on a powerful back drive and high relaxed recovery, foot contact near midfoot underneath the center of gravity with push off well behind, and all momentum going in the forward direction.