

Tempo runs

A quick glance at any available training schedule will probably include tempo runs. What are tempos? What pace should I run them at? What good do tempos do? (If you are one of those athletes following his or her own schedule, and don't know when to fit in your tempos, or you just don't do them, then I would very strongly advise you to either get online and look up a free schedule offered by any of the running magazines, take a clinic, or hire a professional fitness trainer, such as Vic, to make a schedule for you. Don't try to re-invent the wheel. Get a proper schedule for your target event and you will avoid over or under-training- James).

You have warmed up and your body is ready for a tempo workout, but are you? Many runners avoid tempos because they think of this as hard work or think they can't do it, and of course it is a harder run than an easy run. However if you are trying to reach a goal time, or trying to beat your buddies in the next race, or just trying to improve your fitness and enjoy a different workout, then let's look at what tempo runs can do for you.

Exercise produces lactate ions, we used to call this lactic acid and on easier runs, your body can dispense with lactate quickly. When we kick it up a little...or a lot, we produce lactate at a faster rate. Walk up two flights of stairs and you probably won't be out of breath, but run hard up the same stairs, and how would you feel? The difference is that running hard uses more oxygen and produces more lactate. Tempo runs train your muscles to deal with the increased lactate production and this makes your muscles more efficient. It takes practice, it takes a little hard work, but the benefits will be amazing.

Tempo Incremental Training would start with two miles at tempo pace followed by a rest interval of 2 minutes at your recovery heart rate. Then follow this with another 2 miles at tempo pace and then your cool down. After a hard workout like this do a longer cool down, don't rush! The following week do three 2 mile tempos, include the rest intervals and, as always, the cool down. Week three, you will do two 3 mile tempos, and week four do one 4 mile tempo, and here is where the incremental training moves to pacing. In the 4 mile tempo try to increase your pace by a few seconds per mile, perhaps 5 – 10 seconds faster per mile. Careful, here as you will eventually build up your tempos to about 10 miles and if you go too fast in your tempo, you will likely tire and not complete the workout, or be forced to slowdown in order to complete it. If you go too slowly, then you will lose the benefit of the workout. You may have heard runners obsessing over their running pace and that is why. You need to know the difference between your race pace and your tempo pace and the only way to learn this is through practice.

Too many times our mind dictates how fast we can go, and this is why many runners never bother doing tempo runs. It is easy to put up a mental block that limits your performance. Earlier I asked if you were ready for the tempo workout, because being mentally prepared is half the battle. A good way to mentally prepare is to plan your tempo run with a group of runners of similar ability. That way you can help one another through it and you can all enjoy the benefits. The tempo allows you to focus and pull in the resources of other training you have done. Tempo takes the speed, power and

conditioning and forces you to hold the speed for a little longer than you are used to. This makes the easier runs even easier because the tempos have made you more efficient. Your cardio gains from other workouts payoff here. This also makes you mentally stronger. James and I were noticing that it is amazing how easy it becomes to stride out, to zone out and hold it. Look forward to doing your tempo runs and you too will be amazed at the results.