

TRAILRUNNING FOR DUMMIES

By Lis(t)a Coaching



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01

TRAILRUNNING
TRAINING
PRINCIPLES

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PACE DOES NOT COUNT

A lot of road runners who start with trail running make the mistake to focus too much on their pace. However, pace is not important in the mountains.

The definition of trail running goes as follows: "running over uneven terrain, most of the time with elevation gain". Consequently, there are a lot of sub categories of trail running. Because trail running in high alpine mountain area is totally different than running on

forest trails. They do have one thing in common: the uneven terrain.

Because of the occasional 'obstacle', it is almost impossible to hold a steady pace. Also with the elevation gain/loss, it makes it difficult to really train on your heart rate zones or paces.

Therefore most trail runners train on effort. I recommend keeping a diary and noting down after every training sessions how you felt during/ afterwards to track your progress.

THE 4 R'S



REST

This is one of the most underrated ways of recovery, but one of the cheapest & most effective ones. During our sleep, our body will focus on repairing the damaged tissue, balance our hormone levels & improve our mental health. Stretching is also a very effective way of helping your muscles recover, because it will improve the blood flow and thus oxygen to your muscles. If you want to learn more about this, don't forget to **[check out this video.](#)**

RESTORE

When you are running, you will be losing fluids (even in cold weather you sweat). And even more if you are in high alpine area, because you won't notice it as much as to when you are on sea level. Our body is 70% made out of water, so it is key to ensure a proper hydration before, during and after a race or training. Focus on drinking enough to improve your recovery and if you feel like you need a bit more than water, don't hesitate to add some electrolytes (or salt & lemon) to your water. In **[this video](#)** I am sharing some more (mountain) hydration tips.



REPLENISH & REPAIR

Our main energy source are carbohydrates and during exercise we deplete this source. Knowing that you need carbs not only for exercising, but also for your brain to function, it is crucial to replenish your body with the lost energy.

When you are exercising, your body will create little muscle tears and by eating enough protein, your body will be able to repair these tears and prepare you for your next training session. Ideally you try to eat a snack after your training that is composed of a 3:1 carb: protein ratio.

CONSISTENCY & CROSS TRAINING

Training on a regular basis and building your base gradually is a key to keep improving and to also stay injury free. Incorporating cross-trainings into your routine will ensure that you don't get bored AND will also help you stay injury free.

Consistency is one of the most important things when it comes to running. Once you have build-up your mileage slowly, it is also important to keep running. If one day you decide to stop running for a couple of weeks/ months, you will notice that a lot of your progress will be gone. So showing up to your training sessions is one key element in order to improve your running performance.

Sticking to a routine might become boring so try to keep it interesting with incorporating cross-trainings into it, such as strength training. Including strength training has numerous of benefits, which I explain more in depth in [this blog post](#).

Don't focus too much on only running, but make your training schedule fun so it's easy to stick to it.





TIME ON YOUR FEET

Want to train for an ultra? GREAT! But just do it with cautious AND don't forget that you don't only need to train your running performance (biggest mistake I made in the beginning...)

Huh? What did you just say? Yes, training for an ultra marathon does include a lot more than only training your running performance. It also includes nutrition (more about that in the next chapter) and hiking!

If you are participating in an ultra marathon, changes are pretty high that you will be hiking (a lot). So it makes sense to also include it into your training plan.

My biggest mistake in the beginning was to only focus on running and not on the total time that I will be on my feet.

So when you train for ultra's, include some long hikes into your training plan too to get used on being out for a long period on time on your feet.

CHAPTER

02

NUTRITION
IN THE
MOUNTAINS

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THE BASICS

Many trail runners, including myself in the beginning, make the mistake of only focusing on the 'healthy' aspect of food. For obvious reasons, this isn't bad, but if you are a trail runner your body will need more than just 'some healthy food'. It will need a lot of food before, during and after to help you to keep going AND stay injury free.

As a trail runner, you use a lot of energy to get up those mountains. If you don't fuel your body enough, you will end up being injured or you won't have enough energy to do your training sessions. Furthermore, food is needed for recovery purposes. Think mostly about food such as blueberries and salmon which are high in antioxidants and in omega-3 (help to improve recovery and fight inflammation).

And let's not forget about our immune system; As a (trail)runner, you are more likely to be suppressing your immune system during heavy training weeks. In order to not get sick, it is really important to focus on getting in enough fuel.

But what to focus on when you shouldn't focus on 'just healthy food'?

Easy, and you have already read it: fuel enough. This means that before, during and after a run you need to think on how you can best replenish the calories you are losing. The primary source of fuel are carbohydrates and they can also be found in fruits (fructose). So you don't always need to eat sandwiches with honey/ jam before/ after a workout, but also a banana, apple or dried fruits (higher in fructose = sugar) will give you the much needed fuel.

A RUNNERS PLATE

The plate below is an example of how a (trail) runners meal can look like. Overall you should focus that 50-60% of your macro nutrients come from carbohydrates, 20% of protein and the remaining of fat. Don't forget that vegetables and fruits are also important to get in all the needed vitamins & minerals.



FUELLING DURING TRAINING SESSIONS

As a trail runner, you need to learn how to fuel your body constantly. Doing 20K in the mountains is totally different than on the flat and can take up a whole day (depending on the type of terrain). So it is key to learn to properly fuel and that's why you often hear trail runners saying that they are also 'training their stomach'.

The most common reason during (ultra) trail marathons for runners to step out of a race is because of stomach issues. The two biggest reasons are 1) the stomach is not trained enough to consume +90g/carbs/hour or 2) the trail runner has gone so much into a caloric deficit that the body is 'shutting down'.

So how can you train to avoid this kind of situations?

By training your stomach by already using all the products that you also want to use during your training sessions. Try to switch up your fuel with a 2:1 fructose ratio (for every 2 pieces of carb, 1 piece of (dried) fruit) to avoid stomach problems.

This can look like this:

1h: 1 gel + 1 bar

2h: 5 dates + 1 gel

3h: carb mix + 1 banana



CHAPTER

03

TRACKING PROGRESS
IN THE
MOUNTAINS

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ROAD TO CHAMPION

Road runners have it fairly easy with tracking progress. They can use their heart rate, and speed as parameter, but how can you track your progress as a trail runner?

Spoiler alert: as a trail runner you will also need to do some kilometers on the flat. So if you want to see if your endurance is going the right direction, you can still use your heart rate and speed. However, if you want to see if you are also making progress in the mountains, I would focus on the following details:

1/ Give your trainings a score based on how you felt during/ after each sessions. Don't know where to start? Take a look at the next page.

2/ Pick one 'benchmark' route and do this route after every 6 weeks again. Write down the timings of each climb and analyse where you can improve.

3/ Record yourself in the beginning of your training and at the end and analyse your running technique. Example: downhill starts feeling more demanding than usual? Train your quadriceps more.

HOW TO MAKE A TRAIL RATING

As I was saying previously, it is important to hold some kind of training diary (or use a training software such as Coachbox*) where you note down how you felt after every training session.

Tracking your progress for trail running isn't as easy as road running but it's also not that complicated. Let me explain it to you how it works;

1/ Take the time after every training session to evaluate yourself. Make up 5 questions/ parameters that are important for you (can be how you felt during the downhill/ uphill/ flat, how did your nutrition go, ...)

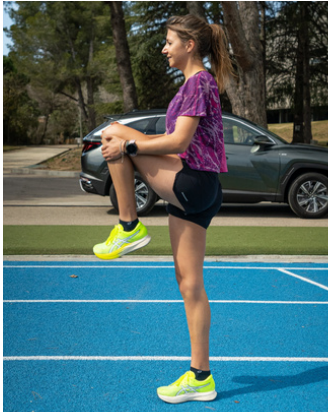
2/ Answer each question honestly and see how much you earn with every answer you give.

3/ Calculate your giving points.

4/ If your score is +5, you did a decent sessions and should be proud of yourself. If your score is below 5, try to go back and find the reason why you scored this low. Did you start with low energy? Was there a lot of heat and did you not drink enough? ... Having a low score doesn't mean it was a bad session, it can actually be a very helpful session, once you put in the effort of finding out WHY it was so hard.

Feeling...	Points earned/ lost
Excellent	+3
Good	+2
Looking forward to your next training	+2
Tired	-1
Annoyed	-1
Hungry	-2
Nauseous	-3

NEVER FORGET



WARMING-UP

Nowadays it is very common to be seated all day and then, when the time comes to finally be active again, people start working out without a proper warm-up. But because your muscles have been in a static position for a prolonged period of time, changing them to a dynamic situation too abruptly can result in injuries. A warming-up doesn't need to be long, as you can see in [this video](#).

LISTEN!

If your body is giving you signals of a possible injury, listen to those signals. Don't keep pushing, because you are more likely to make it worse. Have pain? STOP. Feeling too tired to workout? STOP. If you want to have long-term results, you need to learn how to work with your body instead of against it. Especially ultra trail runners can experience this since they are training for many hours on a weekly basis but also have a job, family, ...



PATIENCE

I am not the best to say this, but patience is what will help you achieve all your goals. Progress isn't made in one day, but through consistently showing up and putting in all the work (training well, fuelling enough, taking your recovery serious, ...).

Give your body time to adapt to new training impulses and learn to also enjoy the progress instead of only focusing on the end result.





HOW I CAN HELP YOU IMPROVE?

Easy! Follow my IG page [@listacoaching](#) or my Youtube channel [@listacoaching](#) or [become a member](#) of my Whatsapp Community where I occasionally share tips & tricks + personal experiences.

xo Lisa