

**Alzheimer's  
Society**

Leading the  
fight against  
dementia

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The Guide to Better Running

Part Eight - Cross Training

# What is cross-training?

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- ▶ There are 2 types of cross-training or X training we all need to know about.
- ▶ One is your conditioning work, which focuses on strengthening muscles but won't make you fitter. This is your Pilates, core conditioning, weights and floor work such as the plank or press-ups (see the page on strength and conditioning for more). All very important and we need to be strong with a great posture to run well.
- ▶ The other is aerobic conditioning such as swimming, cycling, aqua jogging (yes running in the pool with a buoyancy aid!), rowing and other clever machines. This exercises the heart and muscles and will definitely keep you aerobically fit.
- ▶ Your heart doesn't know the difference between going for a run or X training it just works as hard as you ask it to. You can really boost your fitness towards any running distance with clever X training we promise.

## In detail:

As we have already mentioned, we are always talking about training, writing about training and setting plans. So, like many coaches and writers, I suspect we have become guilty of just assuming you all know exactly what we mean when we say the magic words tempo, fartlek, progression run or X training. On our Charity Training Days the area of X training is always popular and there are lots of good questions.

The truth is there so much jargon out there and so many ways for you all to train. We have already described X training in the glossary and provided examples of the exercises you should be doing.

Now we are going to look at what X training really is and why it could be so important. Many of you will be doing it already as lovers of the gym and classes and for some of you we hope this article explains why you should be including it now in your weekly mix. In future newsletters from Save The Children we will include specific X training sessions and top tips.

Some of us are born to run yet for some of us every run can be a challenge. Those of you who have looked in envy at those elite types who look like they could run all day will know exactly what I mean here. Yet the reality these days is that most of our elite performers (The Paula's and Mo's of this world) all spend hours in the gym completing rehab exercises, lifting weights, engaging their core muscles and exercises aerobically in the pool, on the bike or on X trainer machines etc. These days its not just about running, we have changed and so have our lives.

We used to all have manual jobs and our strength came from our work, home life and generally being busy. As kids we were allowed to play more and even PE lessons were tough. So why is this X training relevant? Well to be honest we are now more fragile than ever before and break quite easily. Three and a half times your body weight is forced through the foot with every stride and we have to change from one leg to the other constantly as we run, unless you have mastered another technique of your own of course! It's not the first stride that hurts you but the body might start to suffer after thousands completed each week. Now interestingly the heart doesn't know the difference between going for a run or X training and swimming, it just works as hard as you ask. The muscles do though as running is totally weight bearing and the hardest form of exercise, yet most natural also. So the clever athlete will run as much as they know their body will allow but X train also in the training week to boost fitness without the risk of injury.

We always recommend the new runner to X train 2 or 3 times a week combined with a couple of runs if possible. This way we can strengthen the muscles and improve posture before increasing the running volume. We also tell runners who are sore from running in recent days to X train instead of following their normal plan therefore reducing the risk of injury and allowing muscles to recover actively.

## Cross-training tips

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Recreate your running plan on the bike, cross-trainer, rower or in the pool swimming or Aqua Jogging if you feel exceptionally sore in the lower limbs after recent hard days.

If the running plan says 45 minutes recovery run this can be easily recreated on the kit listed above. So can 4 x 6 minutes at threshold effort, just work harder and make sure you are at 3-4-word answer pace.

If you're injured the first thing to do is consult a doctor or a physiotherapist. If they say you are able, please still follow your training plan but use X training kit or the pool instead. Don't lose that hard-earned fitness and let's keep going. If you can see a running physio or sports injury expert they will also offer treatment and advice. Make sure though that the X training is also pain free.

Try our core conditioning exercises earlier in this pack once or twice a week for 10-15 minutes holding and repeating each position several times. These can all be completed at home after an easy run and you don't need to belong to a gym or spend hours there!

