Improve Form
If you want to stir up debate in your running group, bring up form. Proponents of minimalist-style running and other methods believe that just as there is a correct way to swim or swing a tennis racket, there is a right technique for running. Other experts say the way we run is individual, and messing with it invites injury. But there is some common ground: Both camps agree that certain components of form, such as good posture and proper stride can help prevent injuries. Here's a look at these elements.

PRELANDING
Just before the foot strikes, the brain sends a signal to the muscles to prepare for impact. The muscles contract so they can stabilize the joints. If this line of communication is weak or slow, the muscles won't get this heads-up.

1. **Run with Good Posture**

   What It Means: Upper torso straight, lower back not arched, head directly over shoulders, chin up – shoulders back

   Why It Matters: Poor posture can put excess stress on back and knees. If your back arches, your body weight tends to shift back, making you more prone to overstriding.

   Try This: Strengthen your core and upper body. Practice good posture during the day. Bad postural habits carry over to your run.

2. Swing Arms Efficiently

What It Means: Arms moving forward and back

Why It Matters: Arm swing affects trunk stability. An across-the-body arm swing tends to rotate the shoulders, or cause the trunk to sway, compromising core stability.

Try This: Bend your elbows about 90 degrees and let your arms swing relaxed. Keep your elbows close to your body with your hands loose (holding those potato chips), which helps the entire body relax.

IMPACT
Some studies connect the impact forces of this touchdown phase to stress fractures and other injuries. And while midfoot- and forefoot-strikes minimize forces, experts agree that the greater hazard is overstriding—when the foot lands well ahead of the knee.

3. Land Lightly

What It Means: Consciously landing more softly

Why It Matters: "When we try to run quietly, we make natural adjustments like shortening our stride and landing on our midfoot, which lessens impact forces," says Anthony Luke, M.D., of RunSafe.

Try This: Run in place, letting your knees rise naturally for 10 seconds. Then lean forward and run for 50 yards holding that posture. Repeat three times before you run.

MIDSTANCE

The foot is moving through pronation, and forces are at their peak, which makes this phase the most potentially injurious. Loads as high as 2.5 times your body weight pushing down on unstable hip, knee, ankle, and foot joints can wear down muscle, tissue, and bone.

4. Lead with Your Hips

What It Means: Initiating the running motion from the center of your body

Why It Matters: Running from your hips and driving forward with your knees rather than your feet helps you maintain a tall posture and avoid overstriding.

Try This: Engage your core muscles and imagine stepping over logs while you run.

5. Evaluate Your Cadence

What It Means: Your step rate, the number of footfalls you take in a minute

Why It Matters: A faster cadence can minimize overstriding and reduce forces on the joints.

Should You Increase Yours? Some experts see the value if your easy stride rate is 160 steps or less (a sign of overstriding) or if you're injury-prone. Count every footfall. If you're above 160, not injured, and not overstriding (ask a friend to shoot a video of you and check your foot and knee position), there's little reason to change. If you want to experiment, increase it by five percent.

TOE-OFF

The hip goes into maximal extension; if hip flexors are tight, you're more apt to excessively arch your back.

6. Engage Your Glutes

What It Means: Tapping your butt just for a second or two occasionally as you run is a simple way to remind your body to contract and engage your glute muscles.

Why It Matters: It keeps you thinking about form. Having an awareness of what your body is doing, where your feet are, what muscles are working helps you become a better runner.

Should You Change Your Footstrike?

It depends whom you ask. Some experts believe that landing on your mid- or forefoot, rather than your heel, greatly reduces injury risk, and some data supports that. Others believe there's a strong chance you'll trade one injury for another because landing on the forefoot increases impact forces on the calf and Achilles tendon. Further complicating the matter: Studies show that it's difficult to know how you're striking the ground (you think you're midfoot- or forefoot-striking but you're actually heel-striking, and vice versa).

This is a reason some experts say it's more productive to focus on not overstriding, which is easier to determine on your own. The bottom line: If you're running injury-free, most experts say don't bother changing. But if you're chronically injured, footstrike is another tool that could aid treatment and prevention. If you decide to try it, the transition must be gradual and accompanied by plenty of foot, ankle, and calf strengthening.

7. Avoid Overstriding

What It Means: When the foot lands well ahead of the knee

Why It Matters: Overstriding increases forces on the body, putting excess wear and tear on muscles, joints, and tissue.

Try This: Focus on where your foot is landing in relation to your body, and land as close to your body as possible. Your lower leg should be vertical when your foot first contacts the ground. When you run, rather than reaching with the foot, drive forward with the knee. Since it's tough to overstride when climbing inclines you could eventually incorporate a weekly hill workout into your routine to give you a feel for the correct form.

Find Shoes

Can a shoe help prevent injury?

Yes, shoes can reduce injury risk because they can alter your form and how the repetitive forces of running are applied to your body. For example, research shows that the firmness of shoe cushioning can influence the stiffness of your legs (i.e., amount of bend at the ankle, knee, and hip), which affects how forces impact your muscles, bones, and joints. If you're in a shoe that applies forces in a way that your body can manage and is a good match for your training the shoe can help reduce injury risk.

If you have questions or need assistance with running safely please don’t hesitate to contact us at : info@runnersden.ca or call 604-461-8330