

Fartlek Training

By Dave Holt

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Using Fartek Running for Recovery

After the long distance run, fartlek brings pep back to your legs gently. Two days after a long run, do 100 to 400 meter striders over varying terrain. A soft surface is best, and will prepare you for the more formal speed work 4 days post long run.

Using Fartek Running for Aerobic Conditioning

All distance running trains your aerobic conditioning, but fartlek brings in those reluctant fast twitch muscle fibers. Fartlek will help to fire up the fast twitch fibers and get the entire muscle into action.

Using Fartlek Running to Increase Milage

Do not do a slow mileage build-up. All training should be done at or above 60 percent of maximum heart rate. You're probably better off aiming for 70 percent to guarantee the cardiopulmonary system is adequately stimulated.

If you are adding a four mile run each month to get from 60 to 80 per week, the first, third and fifth should be a fartlek run. You only need to start with 6-8 strides. Build to one and a half miles of gentle speed play at half marathon race pace. This minimal fast running will aid your running form and eliminate the addition of junk miles to get to your weekly milage goals. As I stated above, fartlek will stimulate all of your muscle fibers. If your main race goal is the 5k, once you've gotten accustomed to the increased mileage, you can bring the last few strides down to 5k pace. After a year or so, by changing one stride a month to this pace, most of the speed play can become 5,000 meter race pace.

When to do Fartlek Running?

You can run these gentle fartlek sessions the evening after a long distance run, (unless it was longer, or faster than you are used to); or the morning before your evening 5 miles of track repeats. Fartlek running will loosen you up for both situations.

The Benefits of Fartlek for Masters Runners

Fartlek running keeps your legs strong as you go through the masters running age groups. It can be used to gain or maintain leg strength. The speed play stimulates endorphins and promotes good health and proper healing.

Fartlek Running for Recreational Runners and Joggers

Recreational runners will find fartlek training to be the easiest way to incorporate speed work into their 10 to 20 miles a week.

A Word about Fartlek Pace

Use appropriate pace and distances for a more formal session. Longer repetitions can be done at marathon or 10k pace and shorter repetitions can be done at 5k pace.

If you would like to incorporate fartlek training into a hard training session, do the repetitions for the same time interval and pace as you run at the track or but run them through the forest or a park for a change of pace. Let your perceived intensity and breathing guide your speed.