

Winter Track – Running Outside

The following is based on an article by Stuart Ungar that discusses Winter running. I've expanded in places on what he originally discussed. Remember that when running outside it's not the actual temperature that matters – it's the wind chill.

The Winter mood. It's possible to feel more glum and sluggish during the Winter months. The days are shorter and weather not-so-great. If you feel particularly sluggish at practice, then mention this to a coach, but understand that this is not uncommon during the Winter.

Dress in layers. On most Winter runs, you'll want to wear more than one layer of clothing on your upper body, items you can easily remove or put back on as needed. It'll take some experience to know just how much to wear on certain days, but as you remove layers, you can always set them down somewhere or tie them around your waist and run with them.

- **Base layer:** a great starting point for the typical Winter run is to have a moisture-wicking shirt (e.g. Nike's Dri-fit or Adidas Climacool) as your innermost layer. On colder days, something like Underarmour may be a better base layer.
- **Jacket:** a running jacket can be very helpful during the Winter. Running jackets are lighter and easily removed if you start heating up, but they also tend to have some reflective material, which is good on days when you're still running at 4:30-5:00. A sweatshirt works and it's obviously less expensive, but sweatshirts are a bit more bulky and if it ever rains during a run, sweatshirts are like sponges and can get very heavy.
- **Running pants/tights:** running tights or pants, or leggings are preferable on Winter runs as they add an extra layer but also reduce the effect of wind on your legs.

Protect fingers and ears. In very cold weather, blood flow is concentrated in your body's core, leaving your extremities vulnerable. On typical Winter runs, a relatively thin and inexpensive pair of gloves is fine. On days when the temperature drops even lower, a pair of heavier gloves may be more appropriate. On the coldest Winter days, you'll more than like need to wear two pairs of gloves - a lighter pair of gloves under a heavier pair. Hats and headbands are important items. It helps to have both thinner head gear on the days when it's cold but not quite freezing and a thicker head gear for when it's really cold.

Protect your face. On most days, it's helpful to apply chapstick before your run. Winter cold and breeze can give you chapped and eventually cracked lips. On especially cold days (e.g. below freezing), you may also want to smear some Vaseline or lotion on your cheeks.

Drink plenty of fluids. During the Winter, it's possible to lose much more water than you realize. Cold-weather running supposedly makes you pee more often but you can also lose water from sweating under those extra layers of clothing.

Post-run eating. It's always easy to forget about replenishing lost calories from exercise, but during the Winter, this is especially true. You need to implement a post-exercise eating plan that prevents you from slipping into a caloric deficit – which can create a host of problems.