



KIDS RUN THE NATION

PROGRAM GUIDE FOR TEACHERS,
COACHES, AND PROGRAM LEADERS

ROAD RUNNERS CLUB OF AMERICA | WWW.RRCA.ORG





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ABOUT THE RRCA

The Road Runners Club of America (RRCA) is the oldest and largest national association of running organizations and runners dedicated to growing the sport since 1958. The RRCA champions the development of community-based running clubs and events that serve runners of all ages and abilities in pursuit of health and competition. The RRCA's vision is to see organized and active running clubs and events established in every U.S. community. Learn more at www.RRCA.org.



INTRODUCTION

The Road Runners Club of America (RRCA) launched its children's running program in 1986 in response to the growing national concern for children's health in the United States. Originally developed by a team of experts, including Olympic marathoner Don Kardong, the program has evolved into a print and digital curriculum called **Kids Run the Nation**. In 2007 the RRCA established the **Kids Run the Nation Fund** and began distributing grants to youth running programs across the U.S. Learn more about the fund on page 30.

The **Kids Run the Nation** program is a gender-inclusive, turnkey program designed to meet the Physical Activity Guidelines (PAG) for Americans outlined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), which can be found on page 6. The Society of Health and Physical Educators (SHAPE America) stresses the importance of physical literacy—the ability, confidence, and desire to be physically active for life. **Kids Run the Nation** aims to introduce the sport of running to young people and encourage them to adopt running as part of a healthy lifestyle in order to meet PAG recommendations and to become physically literate.

We invite teachers, coaches, and program leaders to use these materials in the classroom, as part of a before- or after-school program, or to develop community-based youth running clubs or programs. You don't have to be a runner to lead a **Kids Run the Nation** youth running program; you only need to be someone interested in helping children get the physical activity they need to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

WHY RUN?

▼ **Running is a sport for all ages.**

Children learn to run at an early age, and many adults continue to run long after they qualify for AARP benefits. Running programs exist for both children and adults, and running is a sport in which every family member can participate.

▼ **Running is the most accessible sport.**

No matter where you live, work, or go to school, you can find safe places to run. Youth running programs, running clubs, and organized running events can be found in nearly every U.S. city and town.

▼ **Running is the perfect exercise.**

Running strengthens the body's heart, lungs, muscles, and bones. Taking part in vigorous exercise like running for the majority of the 60 minutes of recommended daily physical activity will result in improved cardiorespiratory fitness, as well as stronger muscles and bones.



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HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

As used in this guide, the term **program** refers to all variations described below. Program leader describes the responsibilities of a teacher, coach, or program director. **Participant** includes children participating in the program.

This **Kids Run the Nation** program guide is designed to help teachers, coaches, and program leaders develop a youth running program that can be implemented as a physical education or classroom wellness curriculum, a before- or after-school program, or a community-based youth running program. Existing youth running programs are encouraged to adopt the **Kids Run the Nation** curriculum in full or incorporate elements of the educational modules and running activities into their established approaches.

The core objectives of the **Kids Run the Nation** program are to develop new cognitive, physical, and social skills:

- ▼ **Cognitive:** Develop physically literate kids engaged in an organized, goal-oriented running program that combines instruction on key running concepts with practical demonstrations of and participation in running activities.
- ▼ **Physical:** Develop the ability to walk or run for 30 minutes several days per week. Participants can demonstrate proper running form and stretching techniques. Preschool, kindergarten, and elementary age participants should engage in running activities for at least 30 minutes in each program session; middle school- and high school-age participants should run for 45–60 minutes per session.
- ▼ **Social:** Develop character skills, such as good sportsmanship, perseverance, keeping a positive attitude, setting and achieving goals, and understanding the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

The **Kids Run the Nation** curriculum is divided into 10 modules, which can be taught during one-hour sessions over 10 weeks. Each session is designed to include 20 minutes of educational instruction followed by 30 minutes or more of running. Participants should engage in running activities every other day to absorb the concept of regular physical activity. While the curriculum focuses on participation, it touches on the competitive aspects of running in its final module as preparation for fun runs or races.

Kids Run the Nation emphasizes participation in the sport of running as part of a healthy lifestyle, regardless of pace, experience, or ability level. It's designed for participation by program leaders as well, by demonstrating running techniques and concepts and engaging in running activities alongside participants. Program leaders are encouraged to create an inclusive, accessible environment for all interested children. *Disabled Sports USA* (www.DisabledSportsUSA.org) offers resources on adapting the sport of running for participants with physical disabilities. *The American Association of Adapted Sports Programs* (www.AdaptedSports.org) partners with athletic associations and schools to provide wheelchair-based competitive athletic opportunities for children with physical disabilities.

Sample Weekly Program Schedule

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Provide an educational lesson with corresponding running activity.		Review Monday's lesson and repeat Monday's running activity.		Preview the next educational lesson and repeat Monday's running activity.

HOW TO START A KIDS RUN THE NATION PROGRAM

A youth running program is a great way to engage kids in a healthy activity that's fun, social, and physically beneficial. Youth running programs can take place during any season and at any time of day. Most are offered as before- or after-school programs, recess activities, as part of a physical education curriculum, or as a summer or winter club during school vacations. Although designed to cover a 10-week period, the **Kids Run the Nation** program may be extended or shortened, depending on your timeframe and goals. Youth running programs may originate from a number of sources:

- ▼ An adult running club may offer **Kids Run the Nation** to youth members as a club program. If an RRCA member club supports a youth program, those program activities are covered by the umbrella of the adult club and therefore covered by the club's RRCA insurance. If an adult club has a youth program, those young runners should be considered junior members or family members of the club.
- ▼ A youth running program may be formed as an independent, youth-only running club. These clubs are typically formed as nonprofit running clubs with a governing board of parent volunteers. A school, Parent Teacher Association (PTA), or community group such as a YMCA or other organization may set up a youth running club. If a group of parent volunteers, a PTA, or community group elects to establish a youth running program, it may join the RRCA as a member club and be eligible for benefits such as federal nonprofit tax-exempt status, liability insurance, accidental medical coverage, directors and officers insurance, sexual abuse coverage, and more. A youth running club would follow the same procedures for developing a running club and pay the same annual fees as an adult club.

Anyone may use the royalty-free, RRCA-trademarked name **Kids Run the Nation**, along with the **Kids Run the Nation** logo, for branding and marketing purposes (www.rrca.org/membership/rrca-branding). There are no fees or special certification requirements to use the curriculum. When communicating with parents and guardians of potential program participants, use the sample letter found here: www.rrca.org/our-programs-services/programs/kids-run-the-nation/resources/templates.

As a turnkey program, our hope is that program leaders are able to focus their time on working with kids and getting them to fall in love with the sport, rather than worrying about curriculum and activity planning. Our only requirements are that:

- ▼ Your program be insured through the RRCA or another provider
- ▼ Parents or guardians sign a waiver for every participant
- ▼ You screen your program volunteers

For more information on starting a **Kids Run the Nation** program, including working with partner organizations, establishing goals, and recruiting volunteers and participants, visit www.rrca.org/kids-run-the-nation/curriculum.

RRCA FUNDamentals OF YOUTH RUNNING



*The Road Runners Club of America promotes the following guidelines for youth running. These guidelines are based on the 10 developmental principles that guide training and racing for young distance runners outlined in **Training for Young Distance Runners** by Larry Greene, PhD and Russ Pate, PhD, published by Human Kinetics.*

- ▼ **Make running fun.** First and foremost, running should be fun. Encourage children to participate and try their best. Never use running as a punishment.
- ▼ **Emphasize good technique.** Teach youth good form early and help eliminate bad habits such as excessive arm movement, upper body twisting, or over-striding.
- ▼ **Focus on participation and self-improvement.** In elementary school, running should be about participation and developing a healthy lifestyle, not about being the fastest kid in the school or program. Save competition for middle school- and high school-aged students.
- ▼ **Consider individual differences.** Avoid a one-size-fits-all running program. Accommodate differences in abilities within the group. Children mature physically and emotionally at different rates, and this factors into their ability to participate in running.
- ▼ **Limit systematic training and competition before puberty.** Before puberty children are growing and changing rapidly. Excessive, systematic training may interfere with a child's normal growth and cause injury. Between ages 3 and 9, encourage regular exercise, which can include organized running for fun as outlined in this guide. Around ages 8–12, children may enjoy participation in a more organized running program in a systematic training environment that lasts 2–3 months. Around age 12 for girls and 14 for boys, key developmental changes will enable students to slowly increase training distance and duration, leading to participation in a systematic and competitive training environment.
- ▼ **Increase the running workload gradually.** The running workload includes volume (distance), intensity (speed or effort), and frequency (number of days per week). Just as with adults' running training, children should start a running program with a low-volume, low-intensity plan and limited frequency of a couple of days per week. Workload should increase over the duration of the program, but should remain appropriate for the individual runner.
- ▼ **Participate in age-appropriate running events.** Running in a kids' fun run or youth track event can be a great experience for kids. For children 5 and under, focus on "dash" events that range from a few yards to 400 meters. For children 5 and over, kids' fun runs that are ½ to 1 mile long may be considered, but allow for a combination of running and walking. Children ages 12 and over may want to participate in a 5k run. Children ages 15 and older may want to participate in a 10k to half marathon event. Young adults 18 and older may want to participate in a marathon or greater distance. These are general guidelines. The distance a child can physically and emotionally tolerate depends on the individual; however, longer distances (10k and over) should wait until after puberty.

For a printable version of the FUNDamentals of Youth Running, visit www.rrca.org/our-programs-services/programs/kids-run-the-nation/resources/fun-of-youth-running.



U.S. PHYSICAL ACTIVITY GUIDELINES

In an effort to improve the health of all American youth, in 2013 the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services released the *Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans Midcourse Report: Strategies to Increase Physical Activity Among Youth* (health.gov/paguidelines/midcourse/). The report is a five-year follow-up to its 2008 *Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans*, which recommends that children get 60 minutes or more of physical activity per day (health.gov/paguidelines/guidelines/children.aspx).

The 2013 report outlines key findings from intensive research that provides evidence-based recommendations for focusing more efforts on increasing physical activity opportunities in schools and childcare centers. The report recommends running as a beneficial form of exercise for children. The school setting offers a realistic and evidence-based opportunity to increase physical activity through programs like **Kids Run the Nation**.

ADOPT A SCHOOL-WIDE WELLNESS POLICY

Your school-wide wellness policy should:

- ▼ Include goals for nutrition education, physical activity, and other school-based activities designed to promote student wellness.
- ▼ Include nutrition guidelines that promote student health and help reduce childhood obesity.
- ▼ Establish a plan for measuring implementation of the wellness policy, including designation of one or more persons charged with the responsibility of overseeing the wellness policy.

ADOPT A PHYSICAL ACTIVITY PLAN

Your physical activity plan should:

- ▼ Provide opportunities for students to develop the knowledge and skills for specific physical activities.
- ▼ Teach students the importance of energy balance through healthy eating and regular exercise.
- ▼ Ensure students' regular participation in daily physical activity.
- ▼ Teach students the short- and long-term benefits of a physically active and healthy lifestyle.

Goals of a Wellness Policy

- ▼ *Establish healthy eating and regular exercise habits.*
 - ▼ *Reduce childhood obesity.*
 - ▼ *Prevent lifestyle-related chronic diseases.*
-

STAFFING, TRAINING, & FACILITIES

STAFF

Youth running programs wouldn't exist without the commitment and dedication of teachers, parents, school administrators, government and community leaders, program leaders, volunteers, and others who strive to make a positive impact on the health and wellness of young runners. To adequately staff a **Kids Run the Nation** youth running program, we recommend:

- ▼ 1 adult per 15 participants age 6 and under.
- ▼ 1 adult per 20 participants age 7 and over.

Consult local and state childcare regulations concerning any additional child-to-adult ratios for programs. As your program grows, you will need to engage additional program staff.

To find volunteers, start with participants' parents or guardians, adults affiliated with your youth running program, and other community members who value running as part of a healthy lifestyle for children and youth. Reach out to local high schools and colleges to engage track, cross country, and other student athletes to help run your program. Use online resources such as [volunteermatch.org](https://www.volunteermatch.org) to post opportunities and to field inquiries.

TRAINING AND EDUCATION

Program staff and volunteers should have a basic understanding of:

- ▼ The program content and schedule.
- ▼ Program policies and procedures, including emergency preparedness and incident and injury reporting.
- ▼ CPR and First Aid.

While no formal training or certification is required to oversee or staff a **Kids Run the Nation** program, various educational opportunities are available for staff and volunteers interested in learning more about youth running. The RRCA provides a one-hour presentation about key concepts related to coaching a youth running program at www.rrca.org/our-programs-services/programs/kids-run-the-nation/resources. Both the RRCA and USA Track & Field offer formal coaching certification programs for those looking to advance their knowledge. Additional resources include:

- ▼ National Academy of Sports Medicine Youth Exercise Specialization.
- ▼ Positive Coaching Alliance.
- ▼ National Council on Youth Sports.

Program leaders are encouraged to complete the United States Olympic Committee's free SafeSport training, which covers recognizing misconduct in sport to ensure a safe environment for all athletes: training.teamusa.org/store/details/1.

Visit www.rrca.org/our-programs-services/programs/kids-run-the-nation/resources/staff-volunteers for additional continuing education opportunities.

FACILITIES

A quarter-mile track is the perfect area of activity for middle and upper grades (3–8), but it's not required. For the lower grades (K–2), you may want to use a small area on the playground, in the gym, or a multipurpose room. Programs located in parts of the country with extreme weather conditions may elect to hold their programs indoors. Shorter running areas for K–2 kids allow for positive reinforcement when the participant is counting the number of times a running distance is repeated. If a track is not available, a running area or track can easily be marked on a playground using cones or distance markers. Or you can use cornstarch to draw lines in the grass for a track. The area should be a circle or oval approximately 220 yards to a quarter mile in circumference that allows for continuous running or walking.

You can measure a running area on a bicycle with an odometer, a wrist-based or handheld GPS device, or using an online mapping tool to assist with marking and approximating the distance. Your local high school coach may be willing to lend you a measuring wheel. If no other measuring device is available, measure the length of your stride and count paces to determine the distance.

1 – WALKING & RUNNING

KEY CONCEPTS

Competitive (based on the word compete) – To race with another for a prize or to win

Noncompetitive – Not to compete or race against another

OBJECTIVE

Participants learn the concepts of walking and running.

LET'S LEARN!

Kick off the first lesson by explaining to participants that they are beginning a 10-week running program to help them develop a lifelong love of running as part of a healthy lifestyle. As a participation-focused program, it's not about racing each other during the running activities; it's about having fun while participating in the sport. Emphasize that the concepts they learn over the next 10 weeks will help them be better runners today, next week, when they're in high school, and beyond.

ASK PARTICIPANTS:

- ▼ What do you know about running?
- ▼ Do your parents or guardians run? What about your siblings?

Talk to participants about your personal running experience in a positive light, basing the complexity of your discussion on the ages of the participants. Respond to any expressed anxiety or negative feelings about running by reinforcing the idea that running can and should be fun. It's a healthy activity that can improve kids' moods and concentration, helping them do better in school.

REVIEW THESE CONCEPTS:

- ▼ **Walking** – Moving across a surface at a slow to moderate pace by taking steps so there is always one foot on the ground
- ▼ **Running** – Moving swiftly so that both feet leave the ground during each stride
- ▼ **Jogging** – Running at a leisurely, slow pace
- ▼ **Sprinting** – Running at full speed

Demonstrate each term after explaining it to participants. Ask them to demonstrate their understanding by actively engaging in each activity.

The RRCA recommends using the term running to refer to the activity at any speed. Running can also be used to describe forward movement by other means, such as in a wheelchair or with other assistive devices.

LET'S RUN!

Lead participants to the track or designated running area. Choose 3–5 of these dynamic stretches for a warm-up to prepare for the session's running activities:

- ▼ jumping jacks
- ▼ marching in place
- ▼ skipping
- ▼ high knees
- ▼ butt kickers
- ▼ toy soldiers
- ▼ walking lunges



Review the concepts of walking and running and explain that every beginning runner starts with a combination of the two. Assure participants that this applies to all ages and all grades in every school!

EARLY GRADES (K-2)

Tell the runners: “We will count to 20 three times. The first time we will count to 20 while walking 20 steps. The second time we will count to 20 while running 20 steps slowly. The third time we will count to 20 while running 20 steps quickly.” Adapt the length of time to match the abilities of the individual or group.

MIDDLE GRADES (3-5)

Tell the runners: “When I blow the whistle (or say Go), you will walk for 45 seconds. When I blow the whistle again, you will run at a slow pace for 30 seconds. When I blow the whistle a third time, you will walk for 45 seconds. Finally, when I blow the whistle a fourth time, you will run at a fast pace for 45 seconds.” Adapt the length of time to match the abilities of the individual or group.

UPPER GRADES (6-8)

Tell the runners: “I will blow the whistle every minute. Begin by walking for the first minute. When you hear the whistle the second time, run at an easy pace for one minute. On the third whistle, run at a fast pace for one minute.” Adapt the length of time to match the abilities of the individual or group.

FOR ALL GRADES

Repeat the walking and running cycle for the duration of the running period, adapting the duration to match the abilities of the participants and to let the children walk during the running portions as needed. Encourage participants to run for a portion of the activity. Encourage children to drink water as needed.

For the final running phase, choose a short distance and instruct students to run as fast as they can (or sprint) the selected distance. Allow time for a short walking cool-down after the sprint.

After the running activity, return to the classroom or have a seated discussion outside. Ask participants how they felt during the walking and running segments. Some participants may say they ran too fast and had to walk or stop for a break during the running portion. Remind them that if they slow down during the running phase, they will be able to run for a longer time.

Motivate me: Focus on fun. Lead by example. Encourage success by teaching children to try their best. Never use running as a punishment. Remind participants often that it's okay to walk.

2 – WARM-UP, PACING, COOL-DOWN, & STRETCHING

Review these terms:

Walking, Running, Jogging, Sprinting, Pace/Pacing

OBJECTIVE

Participants learn the elements of a running activity: warm-up, pacing, cool-down, and stretching.

LET'S LEARN!

Review the high points from Module 1 and introduce the concept of good form. Good form needs to be taught and reinforced. Discuss how the heart and lungs react during the walking and running phases. Most participants will report that their heart and breathing rates increased. This will lead you toward the concepts covered in Module 3.

WARM-UP

Inform participants that all good running activities start with a warm-up. Warming up is important because it prepares the body for exercise. Remind participants that in Module 1, each running activity started with the walking phase. This was actually a warm-up that prepared their bodies for the running phase.

PACING

Pace is defined as running at the same speed over a period of time. Pacing allows participants to run farther or longer without getting out of breath or having their heart rate get too high. Explain that all participants run at different paces. Encourage them to find a running pace that's comfortable for them.

Describe and demonstrate the following paces for participants:

- ▼ **Conversation pace** – An easy, gentle pace that allows you to carry on a conversation
- ▼ **Tempo pace** – A swift, sustained pace that's faster than conversation pace; also referred to as threshold or steady-state pace
- ▼ **Race pace** – A person's maximum pace for a given distance; it's faster than conversation pace and tempo pace

Use a stop watch
or cell phone to
time pacing
activities



COOL-DOWN

After running, tell participants that cooling down is necessary to slow their breathing and heart rates. The cool-down may be at a slower running or walking pace, or a combination of both. This is a good time to drink water.

STRETCHING

Why stretch? The Mayo Clinic cites these benefits that participants may experience from stretching before and after activity:

- ▼ Stretching increases flexibility and improves the joints' range of motion.
- ▼ Stretching improves circulation by increasing the blood flow to your muscles. Improved circulation speeds recovery after running.
- ▼ Frequent stretching promotes better posture by keeping your muscles from getting tight and helping you maintain proper alignment.
- ▼ Stretching may relieve stress by relaxing muscles that become tense during times of stress.
- ▼ Stretching should not be considered as a warm-up, as stretching cold muscles may result in injury.

Engage in a dynamic warm-up like the one outlined in Module 1 or warm up by walking or running slowly before performing static stretches at the beginning of a session. Close each session with static stretches.

GOOD STRETCHING FORM

- ▼ **Warm up first.** Stretching your muscles when they are cold may injure them. Stretch after warming up and/or at the conclusion of a running session when your warm muscles are more receptive to stretching.
- ▼ **Target major muscle groups.** For running, focus on the calves, thighs, hips, and lower back.
- ▼ **Don't bounce while stretching.** Bouncing is also referred to as ballistic stretching. It can cause small tears in the muscle, which cause pain and can actually make you less flexible.
- ▼ **Practice static stretching.** Slowly go into the stretching position using a fluid motion and holding the stretch.
- ▼ **Hold each stretch for 30–60 seconds.** It takes time to lengthen tissues safely. Have participants count slowly out loud as they stretch each muscle.
- ▼ **Practice pain-free stretching.** Participants should feel tension in their muscles when they stretch. If it hurts, they have pushed the stretch too far.
- ▼ **Breathe.** Don't hold your breath while stretching. Instruct participants to breathe deeply in and out while they count slowly.

For more information about stretching, review the Mayo Clinic's resources at www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/fitness/basics/stretching-and-flexibility/hlv-20049447.

KEY STATIC STRETCHES

Standing Calf Stretch

While facing a tree, wall, or bench, have participants stand with their back leg straight and their front leg slightly bent. Lean toward the tree, wall, or bench to stretch the calf of the straight leg. Remind participants not to lock their knees while stretching.

Seated Hamstring Stretch

Have participants sit with their legs out straight in front of them. Have them try to touch their toes or beyond, keeping knees slightly bent while stretching the hamstring.



Kids demonstrate the seated hamstring stretch

Standing Hamstring Stretch

Have participants stretch their hamstrings by standing with their feet shoulder-width apart. They then bend forward at the hips, touching their toes while keeping their knees slightly bent. For a variation of this stretch, have participants lean toward and touch their left foot, then their right. This activity also stretches the lower back.



Standing Quadriceps Stretch

Stretch the quadriceps (quads) by having participants stand and shift their body weight to one leg. Bend the other leg backward at the knee, grabbing the ankle and pulling the foot into the gluteus (butt). Remind participants to keep their standing leg slightly bent and their back straight. Suggest that participants concentrate on a spot on the ground to keep their balance. Some participants may need to hold a chair or a friend's shoulder to stay balanced.

Seated Adductor Stretch

Have participants sit with their knees bent outward so the soles of their feet touch. Tell them to lean forward slowly to stretch the inner thigh muscles, called the adductors.

Standing Oblique Stretch

This stretch helps the torso's side muscles (the obliques), which are used for breathing. Standing with a straight back and head held high, have participants place one hand on their hip so the elbow forms a right angle. Lean to the other side, sliding the straight arm down the body toward the knee. Remind participants to lean sideways, not forward or backward.

Delayed Onset Muscle Soreness (DOMS)

Explain to participants and their parents or guardians that it's normal to feel muscle soreness and/or joint stiffness for a few days after the early sessions of a running program. According to the American College of Sports Medicine, delayed onset muscle soreness (DOMS) is probably due to tiny tears in the muscle fibers caused by exercising specific muscles. DOMS usually develops 12–24 hours after exercising, as opposed to acute muscle soreness, which develops during exercise. DOMS may peak 24–72 hours after exercise.

Help participants determine whether the pain they feel is due to DOMS or to an injury sustained while running or engaging in another activity. Encourage participants with DOMS to stretch on the days they don't attend the program. Injured participants should be evaluated by a medical professional and receive permission before returning to running.

LET'S RUN!

Have music or a whistle on hand for this activity. Take participants to the track or other designated running area and lead a 5-minute dynamic warm-up, drawing from the suggested exercises in Module 1. Follow the warm-up with a few minutes of easy walking. Review the concepts of walking and running at different paces by having participants demonstrate each activity over the course of a half lap or more. Finish with a short distance at race pace (a sprint), then move into the concept of pacing.

Pacing

Mark off a distance of 10–20 feet. Explain the concept of pacing to participants in grades K–2 by asking them to cover that distance in a certain length of time, such as 10 seconds, while you count out loud. Next, ask participants to cover the same distance in half that time. In this situation, their pace increases while the distance remains the same. Pace is also referred to as the rate of movement. A pace of 4 miles per hour is faster than 3 miles per hour, as you are covering a greater distance in the same amount of time.

Participants in grades 3–8 may better understand the concept of pacing. Divide participants into groups of 4–6 individuals of similar ability. Have them run at an easy conversation pace for a few minutes, giving them a time or distance goal that they can accomplish at this easy pace. Model pacing by running alongside them and remind them not to run faster than you.



Line Sprints: Instruct the runners in each group to form a line, running at a conversation pace until the leader yells Go! At that point the runner at the back of the line increases their pace to go to the front of the line and take over the leader position. Repeat until all runners have experienced both conversation pace running and faster running to illustrate the difference in paces. Don't let participants run to the point where they feel they have to walk.

Musical Laps: Play a game of Musical Laps, explaining that it's like Musical Chairs. Play a song (or blow your whistle) and tell participants that if they finish a lap or specified number of laps before the song stops, they are running too fast. Repeat the game, reminding participants to slow or speed up their pace as needed to complete the designated number of laps when the song ends.

Continue by alternating walking and conversation pace running for a few minutes. Tell participants that when the music starts or you blow your whistle, they should run at their conversation pace. When the music stops or you blow your whistle, they should start walking. Make sure the music's beat isn't too fast.

Pacing can be a difficult concept to teach. By mixing walking, easy conversation pace running, more demanding tempo pace running, and race pace running (sprinting), students will feel the differences among the activities and better understand the endurance required to sustain each for a given distance or time.

3 – RUNNING PHYSIOLOGY & FORM

OBJECTIVE

Participants learn about basic running physiology and form.

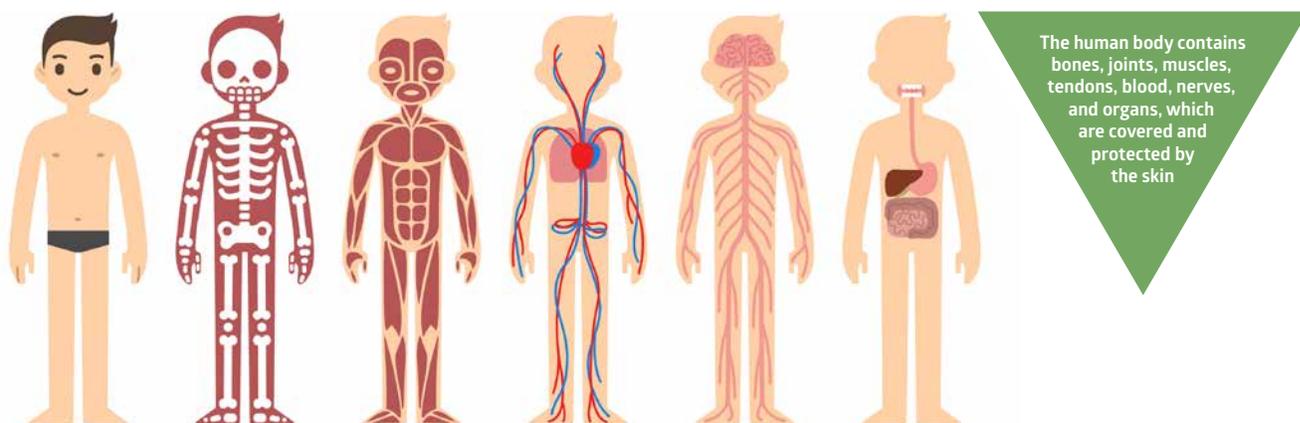
LET'S LEARN!

Start by reviewing the concepts taught in Modules 1 and 2: warm-up, walking, running at different paces, cool-down, and stretching. Remind participants that they've already completed two modules of the 10-module program. Reinforce math concepts by discussing these numbers as a fraction or a percentage (if age appropriate). Also mention that eight modules remain. Review a calendar to show participants their progress through the program and to reinforce the idea that running can be a regular activity. Review the days of the week and months of the year with participants in younger grades.

Talk about how running benefits all parts of the body. Discuss these concepts of basic anatomy:

- ▼ **Skin** is the body's largest organ, covering and protecting our internal organs, muscles, bones, and more. It also regulates our body temperature.
- ▼ **Bones** form the body's skeleton. There are many bones of different shapes and sizes that make up our skeleton. Some bones, such as the ribs, protect organs.
- ▼ **Joints** are found where two bones meet. The knee is a joint.
- ▼ **Muscles** are the bundles of tough tissue that pull on a particular bone or body part to make it move.
- ▼ **Tendons** are tough, cord-like tissues that connect muscles to bones.
- ▼ **Blood** carries important nutrients through veins and arteries to the organs, bones, muscles, and tendons. It also removes waste from the body.
- ▼ **Nerves** carry signals to and from the brain.
- ▼ **Organs** are a group of tissues that perform specific functions. For example, lungs are organs by which we breathe.

For anatomy and physiology lessons, visit www.kidshealth.org.



The human body contains bones, joints, muscles, tendons, blood, nerves, and organs, which are covered and protected by the skin

RUNNING FORM

Although running is, for the most part, a natural activity for children, proper form should be taught from the top down—from the head to the feet.

Head: The head should be in the neutral position. Don't look up, side to side, or down at your feet; look forward with the face relaxed. Have participants stand and look forward while discussing head position.

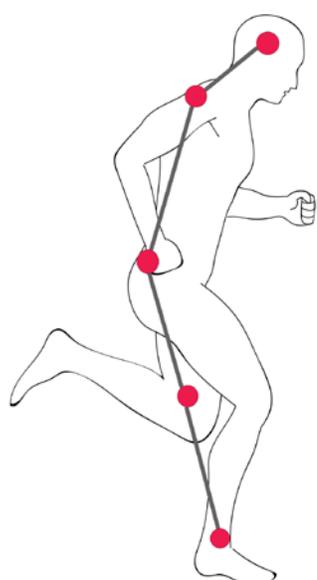
Shoulders: The shoulders should be relaxed, not hunched forward. Shoulders should not move much while running nor should they be tensed up.

Stomach and Back: The back should be straight, in an upright position, not hunched over or leaning forward. The stomach should be pulled in using the abdominal muscles so it's in line with the rib cage.

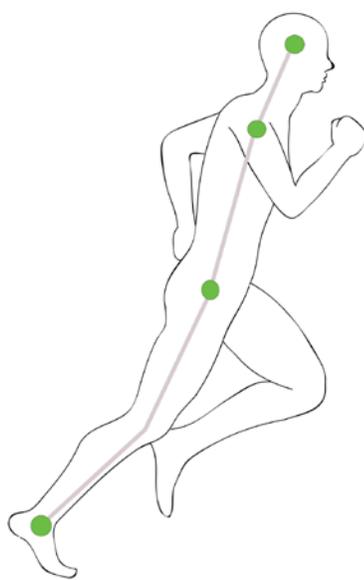
Arms and Hands: Bend the elbows at a right angle close to each side of the body. The arms should not swing excessively nor should they be locked in place. The hands should stay in line with the forearms and be cupped loosely, not clenched. Demonstrate this position and ask participants to do the same.

Legs and Feet: The legs do most of the work in the sport of running. Hips should be in line with shoulders with the pelvis tucked under; the butt should not stick out. Knees should point forward and should not rise above hip level. Toes should point forward.

As participants' form improves, their gait becomes more efficient, and the act of running becomes easier. Proper form also helps prevent injuries.



running
incorrect



running
correct

The runner on the left is displaying poor form, with a drooping head, hunched shoulders, and the butt sticking out. The runner on the right shows good form, with the head pointed forward, relaxed shoulders, and the pelvis tucked under.

LET'S RUN!

Repeat the running activity from Module 1. Before participants begin the walking phase, ask them to place two fingers at the side of their neck near the shoulder to find their pulse. Ask them to count the number of heart beats while you count off 15 seconds. Then have them multiply that number by 4 to calculate their resting heart rate in beats per minute. Assist students with calculations as needed. Discuss how the heart beats more slowly when they're resting and faster when they're walking or running.

Review proper running form, then start to alternate walking and running at different paces as described in Module 1. Ask participants to focus on how their breathing changes during each phase. Have them check their heart rate following the activity to note the difference in heart rate while resting and after exercising.

4 – WHERE YOU’RE GOING: Setting Goals

Run Your City, State, or Country

Geography runs are a valuable multidisciplinary curriculum opportunity. They link your running program to other topics participants are learning in school. A geography run can supplement lessons in geography, history, geology, measurements, and more.

To develop a geography run, work with participants to select a route on a map through your city, your state, the U.S., etc. Determine the distance of the route and translate the distance into the number of laps or miles the class will need to collectively run. Count and log the laps or miles run by the group and plot their progress along the selected route. Discuss the corresponding starting point, points of interest along the route, and ending point along with related facts.

Use an online tool like Google Maps walking directions or MapMyRun.com to create your route and determine the total mileage needed by the group to complete the route.

OBJECTIVE

Participants learn to set goals that apply to a running program – and life.

LET’S LEARN!

Review the high points from the previous three modules. Tell participants that you’ve introduced them to the most important elements of running: focusing on participation rather than competition, warming up, practicing proper running form, pacing yourself while walking or running, cooling down, and stretching several days each week.

SETTING GOALS

Explain to participants that goal setting is a lifelong activity that’s not specific to running. Goal setting can be applied to many areas of daily life. Goals help us define what’s important and help us set priorities. Discuss the difference between a wish and a goal: “I wish I were a professional athlete” vs. “My goal is to run for 20 minutes without walking.”

Discuss different types of running goals:

- ▼ Running for a certain time without stopping
- ▼ Running for a certain distance without stopping
- ▼ Running a certain distance over a certain time (called a speed goal)
- ▼ Training to finish a running race



Runners in the Countdown to Fitness program set a goal of running the final mile of the Space Coast Marathon

Does the group have a goal? Work with participants to establish a collective goal they can work toward for the duration of the program. Goals could include running a marathon over the course of the program; collectively running across your city, state, or country (see above); training for an end-of-program fun run or local 5k race; or any number of other goals specific to your program. Determine how many loops of your running area constitute one mile so that participants can use different ways to count laps as they run.

Set up a **Kids Run the Nation** online portal to manage your program; communicate with runners, parents, and guardians; and track the group’s progress. Details about this free platform are provided on page 29.

Effective goal setting includes:

- ▼ Establishing a starting point and identifying a desired and attainable ending point
- ▼ Developing a plan for progressing from the starting point to the end, including a way to measure progress
- ▼ Staying positive and focusing on the goal
- ▼ Having a plan in place to overcome challenges to success

STARTING A RUNNING JOURNAL

Work with each participant to identify a personal goal, such as a specific number of laps or miles to complete by the end of the program. Or, discuss a group goal. Introduce the idea that participants will keep a running journal to document their progress toward their personal or group goal. Have them write the goal on the first page of their journal and indicate the number of weeks or months participants will work to achieve the goal.

Physical journals may take the form of a running-specific journal, a small spiral notebook, or several sheets of paper stapled together. Alternatively, participants may use the running journal feature offered in the **Kids Run the Nation** online portal or another online tool such as a blog, message board, or shared cloud document to track their experience and progress. Module 5 covers running journals.

LET'S RUN!

Discuss the distance of one lap around the track or designated running area and how many laps it takes to travel one mile. For the warm-up, tell participants to walk X number of laps rather than having them walk for 2 minutes. Mention that running duration can be measured using time, distance, or both. Next, tell participants to run X number of laps or have them tell you how many laps they think they can complete in 30 minutes. Make sure the number of laps is realistic for the group. Grades K–2 may be able to run only 1–2 laps of a track. Some participants will need to combine running with walking. Encourage all participants to keep moving if they need a break from running.



To keep the activity fun and not just a lap-running exercise, have each participant ring a bell as he or she completes a lap. Or provide them with a clue to solve a puzzle by the end of the run. For example, if you have them run four laps, provide a clue per lap like (1) big, (2) gray, (3) tusks, and (4) Africa after each lap. The answer at the end of the run would be elephant. Consider relating the puzzle to a subject participants are currently studying in school such as geography, history, math, etc.

For each lap a child completes, give them a sticker to place on an index card or a popsicle stick. Or punch a hole in a lap-counting card to help them keep track of their laps. Tell them to count the number of items they have accumulated by the end of the run and to note the number of laps or total distance in their running journal. For large programs, consider commercially available lap-counting systems that can also be used to time races and fun runs.

After the running phase, tell participants to walk X number of laps for the cool-down. Ask them, "Who can tell me how many laps you ran today? Add up the warm-up, run, and cool-down laps." Tell participants to remember this number for the next module. After the cool-down, complete a few of the static stretches introduced in Module 2.

Throughout your program, encourage young runners by promising small rewards or prizes for reaching certain milestones such as 1 mile, 5 miles, 10 miles, a half marathon (13.1 miles), 20 miles, a marathon (26.2 miles), etc. Commonly used incentives include stickers, inexpensive trinkets, water bottles, t-shirts, and Toe Tokens™ from Fitness Finders®.

Visit www.rcca.org/our-programs-services/programs/kids-run-the-nation/resources/incentives for more ideas or to purchase **Kids Run the Nation**–branded awards from Fitness Finders.

5 – WHERE YOU’VE BEEN: Keeping a Running Journal

Review These Terms:

Journal – A record of ideas, experiences, or reflections for private use

Log – A record of performance

Review the Elements of a Running Journal:

Name, Time of day the run occurred, Weather conditions, Distance or duration (time) of the run, Thoughts about the run, Terrain, Body monitoring

OBJECTIVE

Participants learn how to keep a running journal.

LET’S LEARN!

Review the key elements of a running session: warm-up, a well-paced run with proper form, cool-down, and stretching. Ask participants to call out their personal running goal or the group goal established in the last module. Ask, “Do you remember how many laps you ran last week? How far did you run?” If they don’t remember, this is a good opportunity to highlight the content of this module: keeping a running journal.

KEEPING A RUNNING JOURNAL

One reason to keep a running journal is to record how far or for how long participants run each day. Instruct participants to also keep track of how many days they rest – days they don’t run – so they can be sure to run at least three days per week.

Explain that many runners keep a journal of their daily running exercise. Some runners also write down how they felt about the run, describe the terrain (hilly, flat, track, trail, etc.), comment on the weather, and more. Outline and discuss the key elements of a running journal and why it’s important to document each item.

Sample Running Journal Entry



My Running Journal

Name: _____

Today’s date is <u>September 18, 2017</u>		I ran at <u>3:30</u> <u>AM</u> <u>PM</u>	
The weather outside was			
<u>Sunny</u>	Cold	Snow	
<u>Cloudy</u>	Rainy	Other: _____	
<u>Hot</u>	Windy		
I ran for <u>1 1/2</u> miles / <u>20</u> minutes			
My run was <u>fun. I talked to my friends while I walked and ran. I practiced</u> <u>running at an easy pace, not fast.</u>			
I learned about <u>why I should write in a running journal.</u>			

Young runners can use fill-in-the-blank running journals, while older runners can use blogs or blank notebooks to track their progress



Download the editable running log document from www.rrca.org/our-programs-services/programs/kids-run-the-nation/resources/templates to add your program's name and logo and to customize the writing prompts. Insert the pages into a three-ring binder or staple the pages together to create a booklet for each participant.

Older runners may prefer a digital running journal in the form of a blog, message board, or shared cloud document to track their experience and progress. Kids may also use the running journal feature included in the **Kids Run the Nation** online portal (see page 29).

LET'S RUN!

Review and repeat the running activity from Module 4. Be sure to allow time for participants to record the number of laps completed in their journals.

After the running phase, tell participants to walk X number of laps for the cool-down. Ask them how many laps they ran today, adding up the warm-up, run, and cool-down laps to reach a total. Tell participants to remember this number for the next module. After the cool-down, complete a few of the static stretches introduced in Module 2.

If the group has a collective distance goal to run your city, state, etc., be sure to share a fact about a location on your run for each lap. Work with participants to not only log their personal distance but also log the results of the group as a whole.

6 – NUTRITION & HYDRATION FOR A HEALTHY LIFE

Review These Terms:

Carbohydrates – Molecules of sugar that provide energy. Carbohydrates are found in a wide variety of foods such as breads, rice, milk, and potatoes. The body breaks down carbohydrates into the sugar the body needs for energy.

Proteins – The body's fundamental building blocks. Proteins are essential; they provide energy and aid in the development and repair of muscles. Protein can be found in meats, eggs, beans (legumes), milk, and more.

Fat – Protects your organs and keeps your body warm. Fats in foods provide energy. Eating foods with a small amount of fat is part of a healthy diet.

OBJECTIVE

Participants learn the concepts of healthy eating and hydration.

LET'S LEARN!

This module provides you with a general outline of important concepts in nutrition and hydration and offers a number of trusted resources for additional information.

Discuss with participants how eating a healthy diet is an important part of being a runner. Without proper hydration and nutrition, your body won't function well. Take this opportunity to briefly review the parts of the body used in the sport of running. Tell them that the body needs vitamins and minerals, carbohydrates, protein, fat, and water to work well.



Ask participants why we eat. What is food composed of? How do different foods affect our health and our performance in our youth running program? How do we choose what foods to eat?

Talk to participants about the need to eat a variety of healthy foods each day and to limit the amount of junk food and sugary beverages they consume. Introduce MyPlate, developed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture in 2011 and widely used to teach nutritional concepts to children and adults. The MyPlate icon shows what foods should be included in each meal and translates the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans into easy-to-understand recommendations. Grains, fruits, and vegetables cover about three-fourths of the plate and illustrate the recommendation that 45–65% of calories come from carbohydrates like whole grains that contain no added sugars or saturated fat. Visit www.ChooseMyPlate.gov for additional lessons and resources on children's nutrition.

Teach kids that not all foods are created equal. While two foods may have the same caloric content, they may differ significantly in nutritional value and be high in fat, sodium, or added sugars compared to other, healthier foods.

Teach the energy balance concept. Energy balance is the relationship between the calories of the foods and beverages consumed (energy in) and the calories burned by engaging in daily activities (energy out). Tell the participants how important it is to eat healthy foods and be physically active for 60 minutes or more every day.

Review the Healthy Weight Commitment Foundation's Energy Balance 101 curriculum and Food for Thought lessons for more ideas:

www.discoveryeducation.com/teachers/free-lesson-plans/togethercounts/module4.cfm

www.togethercounts.com/sites/togethercounts.com/files/downloads/K_Thru_5/Lesson_2.3_FoodforThought.pdf



The MyPlate icon illustrates the recommended proportion of each food group that makes up a healthy daily diet
Credit: USDA Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion

Ideas for Healthy Eating

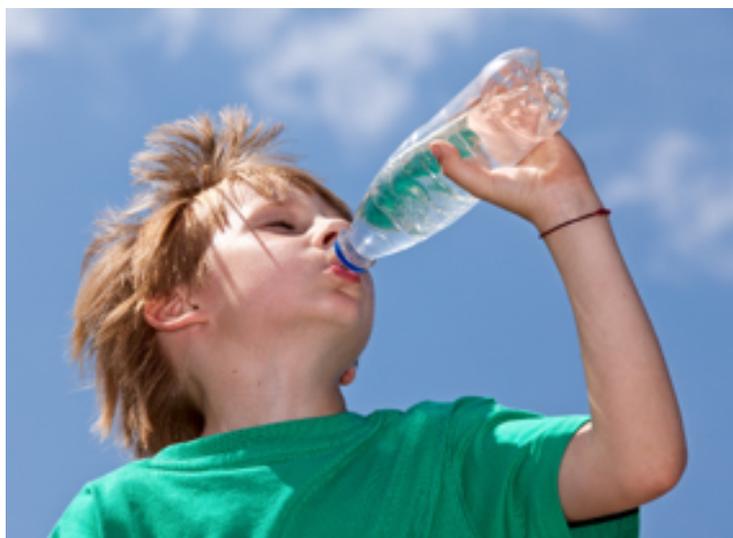
Here are some tips for healthy eating:

- ▼ Fill half of your plate with a variety of fruits and vegetables.
- ▼ Eat lean protein like white meat chicken, beans, eggs, or nuts.
- ▼ Eat whole grains like brown rice and oatmeal.
- ▼ Incorporate low-fat or fat-free dairy such as milk, yogurt, and cheese.
- ▼ Quality does not equal quantity. Be mindful of recommended portion sizes.

HYDRATION

The body is made up primarily of water (about 60%), and water consumption is key to maintaining a healthy body. Demonstrate this to your program participants. Set out four glasses of water and one glass of dried beans to represent the human body, helping them to understand the concept that three-fifths of the body is water.

Discuss the importance of drinking water throughout the day and especially before, during, and after exercise. The body loses water when we sweat and when we exhale. To demonstrate this, have participants breathe on a window or mirror to see the condensation that forms on it. Explain that when a body has adequate water, it is hydrated, and drinking water is an important way to keep the body hydrated.



Dehydration occurs when the body doesn't get enough water, which negatively affects the body's performance. Pour out one of the glasses of water to show that it's missing from the body. Teach participants how to check their own hydration level by monitoring the color of their urine when they go to the bathroom. If their urine is dark yellow, like the color of apple juice, they should be drinking more water. The lighter their urine, the better hydrated they are. This may cause participants to giggle, but it will teach them the importance of body monitoring.

This discussion on hydration presents a good opportunity to talk about sugar-sweetened beverages like sodas, juices, and sports drinks. Most of these beverages contain a lot of calories, many have caffeine, and many have a high sodium content. Caffeinated beverages in particular can lead to increased dehydration due to their diuretic properties. Research published in the journal *Pediatrics* found that energy drinks offer no benefit to children, and experts recommend that kids avoid such beverages. Encourage participants to drink several glasses of water each day and to eat a balanced diet to ensure proper hydration and nutrition.



LET'S RUN!

This module offers a few options for running activities that you can complete all in one session, or spread out over multiple sessions.

Run MyPlate

Create a circle of cones, labeling each cone for a section of the MyPlate diagram. Have participants run from cone to cone, identifying the food groups associated with each section of the plate. For example, at one cone the students will yell "whole grains," "breads," or "pasta." As they move past the next cone, they'll yell "fruit" or "bananas" or "mangos," followed by "vegetables," "broccoli," or "spinach" at the next cone, etc. Place one cone farther away from the circle to represent junk foods. Have participants run to the distant cone to symbolize the extra energy needed to burn off these foods and to make the point that the intake of these options is unhealthy.

Healthy Food, Junk Food

Our game, Healthy Food, Junk Food, is a modified version of the children's game Red Light, Green Light, and uses images of healthy foods to cue participants to run and unhealthy foods to cue them to stop. Show the kids an image of a green pepper, apple, or glass of milk and encourage them to run, making the connection that these types of foods make the body work better. Show pictures of candy, soda, or cake and tell the students to stop running. These foods interfere with the body working well.

Eat Healthy, Pass It On!

Using plastic toy food, conduct a relay run that uses each piece of food as the baton. Tell participants that by passing the healthy food to the next runner, they are demonstrating the importance of sharing healthy living practices with other people. Have participants yell "Eat healthy! Pass it on!" at each relay hand-off.

If your group has a collective mileage goal of running your city, state, or country, share an important fact about a location on your run at the end of each lap or activity. Be sure to work with the students to log their personal distance and also log the group's results.

7 – RUNNING SAFETY

PEDESTRIAN SAFETY



Stop at all stop signs to be sure it's safe to cross the street.



Yield to all oncoming traffic. There may be a stop sign, but you should be sure the vehicles stop before you cross the street.



Cross the street at designated crosswalks. Be sure to obey crosswalk signals.

OBJECTIVE

Participants learn how to stay safe while running.

LET'S LEARN!

In addition to the concepts outlined in the previous modules, it's extremely important to teach running safety to your program participants. First, discuss the basic concepts of pedestrian safety. Review common road signs such as stop signs, yield signs, and crosswalks. Talk about how cars and people should react to these signs. Teach participants that they should always run on sidewalks when they are available – it's the law in most jurisdictions. Emphasize the importance of stopping, looking both ways, and listening when crossing roads. This is also a good opportunity to review stranger danger when running outdoors, especially with participants in older grades who may be allowed to run on their own.

Review these RRCA safety tips:

- ▼ Don't wear headphones when running. You need to be able to hear cars, pedestrians, animals, and other potential dangers.
- ▼ Run with a group, friend, or family member when possible.
- ▼ Always notify a parent, teacher, or friend of your running route.
- ▼ Run with identification such as a school ID, government-issued ID, or RoadID (www.RoadID.com).
- ▼ Run in familiar areas.
- ▼ Run on sidewalks as much as possible.
- ▼ Run facing traffic if you have to run on the road.
- ▼ Cross the street at designated crosswalks.
- ▼ Wear bright clothing.
- ▼ Dress appropriately for the weather.
- ▼ Wear reflective clothing and/or carry a flashlight, headlamp, or blinking light for nighttime visibility.

Visit www.rrca.org/education to download the RRCA's safety tips, including hot- and cold-weather running tips, trail running safety, and more.

LET'S RUN!

Create an obstacle course to reinforce the concepts of pedestrian safety. The course may be as simple as a chalk drawing on a closed section of a parking lot or an outdoor basketball court. Get creative and make stop signs, yield signs, crosswalks, etc. You may want to use cones, swimming noodles, and other items to lay out your course. Have participants navigate the course, combining running, stopping, jumping, and walking. Instruct them to follow the safety signs, to stop at stop signs, and to slow down and look both ways at yield signs.

If your class has a collective mileage goal to run your city or state, share a fact about a location on your run for each lap of the course. Work with students to log their personal distance as well as class results.

8 – FUN RUNS & COMPETITIVE RACES

OBJECTIVE

Participants learn about etiquette and strategies for running in a fun run or competitive race.

LET'S LEARN!

Running in a kids' fun run can be a great experience and could be one of the goals of your youth running program. Your participants could finish the program-long marathon distance with a 1.2-mile fun run or complete the program with a community- or school-organized 5k.

Review the following RRCA Race Day Tips for Youth Runners with your participants, which are also outlined in the *Running Guide for Kids*. We encourage you to provide copies to your runners as a resource to review with family members and to remind participants of the topics and activities covered in the program.



RRCA RACE DAY TIPS FOR YOUTH RUNNERS

- ▼ Use the bathroom before you start your race.
- ▼ Listen carefully during the pre-race instructions and follow the rules of the race.
- ▼ Line up at the start with your age or pace group.
- ▼ Younger kids should line up behind older kids if the race doesn't have age-group starts.
- ▼ Pace yourself!
- ▼ Don't go out too fast at the beginning.
- ▼ Save some energy for the end.
- ▼ Stay on the race course while running.
- ▼ Don't push slower runners out of your way.
- ▼ Pass other runners safely.
- ▼ Move to the side of the race course if you need to tie your shoe or stop for any reason.
- ▼ It's okay to walk during a running race.

Share and explain with participants the RRCA's FUNdamentals of Youth Running, listed on page 6.

Hosting a Fun Run

Hosting a local kids' fun run or race can be a great experience for your program participants.

All phases of your event will benefit from advance planning. Follow the steps below and allow a minimum of 6–12 months to plan the event.

1. **Date selection:** Select a date that doesn't conflict with other events in the area.
2. **Site selection:** Identify a suitable location for your event with parking, restroom facilities, and other amenities.
3. **Meet with local authorities:** Obtain course and event approvals and permits from local authorities well before the event date.
4. **Insurance coverage:** Secure insurance for the event early in the planning process.
5. **Key race personnel:** Select key race personnel such as the volunteer coordinator, start and finish line coordinators, and others.

Learn more at www.RRCA.org/event-directors.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR YOUTH RUNS

The RRCA recommends that anyone interested in putting on a local kids' run should review the book *Organizing Running Events* by Phil Stewart, available for purchase at www.rrm.com/orders/orderpp.htm.

Consider making your run a kids-only event so parents can volunteer and cheer on participants. If you host a run that invites adults to run with kids, emphasize that the goal is youth participation, as opposed to being a competitive adult race.

Whether your event is youth-only or includes both kids and adults, use multiple starting waves to ensure the safety of younger runners. Allow older kids to start first, followed by younger kids. Adults may start after all kids have crossed the starting line and may catch up with their child on course. Kids wanting to run with a parent may start when the adults start.

Consider the ability levels of all participants, including those using wheelchairs and assistive devices, when developing the course.

Safety is the top priority when putting on a youth run. Ensure your course is designed with kids in mind. Plan a relatively flat course, as most children are accustomed to running on tracks or flat playground areas. Station course marshals at regular intervals to keep kids on course. Develop and communicate plans for efficiently connecting kids with their families at the finish line.

LET'S RUN!

Review the running activity from Module 4 with the kids and repeat it for this module and the remaining two modules. The goal at this point is for participants to run regularly and log their laps run during the program session. Consider incorporating informal baton runs or relay races to add variety. Encourage students to cheer on their friends and celebrate the fun of group running.

Allot enough time for participants to complete their journal entries and/or record their distance online.

9 – COMPETITIVE RUNNING HISTORY & HEROES

OBJECTIVE

Participants learn about the sport of running and its history.

LET'S LEARN!

History of Running

Although the focus of this program is to teach running as part of a healthy lifestyle, it's also a popular sport with a long history. The origins of competitive running date back to the sixth century BCE, with the earliest written history of competitive running dating back to 776 BCE as part of the Olympic Games. For a lesson on the history of the Olympics, the marathon, and the legend of Pheidippides (or Philippides), visit www.marathonguide.com/history/olympicmarathons/prologue.cfm.

RUNNING AS A SPORT

There is a wide variety of racing opportunities in the sport of running. Track and field or athletics events take place in the modern Olympic Games. Track events in a variety of distances are typically raced on a 400-meter outdoor oval running track. Discuss distances such as the 400 meters, 800 meters, 1500 meters, 5k, and 10k.

Road racing is also popular, and these races range in distance from 1–100 miles or more. Races beyond the official marathon distance of 26.2 miles are considered ultrarunning events. Road races can be measured in either miles or kilometers. This is a good opportunity to introduce the two systems of measurement.

Cross country running is a popular competitive sport that typically starts in middle school. It is one of the fastest-growing competitive sports for youth.

USA Track & Field is the governing body for track and field, road running, and cross country running in the U.S. For more information, visit www.USATF.org.

Distance Running Heroes

Heroes in the sport of running are people who not only excel at the sport but also invest their time to improve the sport for others.

Frank Shorter: 1972 Olympic marathon gold medalist and a driving force in the 1970s running boom.

Joan Benoit Samuelson: First female USA gold medal winner in the inaugural 1984 women's Olympic marathon.

Meb Keflezighi: 2004 Olympic marathon silver medalist, 2009 New York City marathon champion, and 2014 Boston marathon champion.

Shalane Flanagan: American record holder in multiple indoor and outdoor distances and a 2008 USA bronze medal winner in the 10,000 meters.

Team Hoyt: Father Dick Hoyt and son Rick Hoyt have completed more than 1,000 races since 1977, bringing light to adaptive athletics.

Learn more at www.RRCA.org/about/history/hall-of-fame.

LET'S RUN!

Review the running activity from Module 4 and repeat it for this and the final module. The goal at this point in the program is for participants to be running regularly and logging their laps run during the program session. Consider incorporating informal baton runs or relay races to add variety. Encourage the students to cheer on their friends and celebrate the fun of running as a group.

Allot enough time for participants to complete their journal entries and/or record their distance online.

10 – PROGRAM REVIEW & RUNNING AT HOME

OBJECTIVE

Participants are able to outline the concepts learned in your youth running program.

LET'S LEARN!

Use this module to review the concepts taught throughout the **Kids Run the Nation** program. This is an appropriate time to present participants with the Running Guide for Kids booklet as a take-home resource to share with family members and reinforce running concepts and activities at home. If your program uses incentives, this may be a good time to present all participants, including the top distance runners and runners with the best attendance, with tokens of participation and achievement.

- ▼ Review the important differences between walking and running at different paces. Review good running form.
- ▼ Recall the parts of the body used in running.
- ▼ Go over the concepts of warming up, pacing, cooling down, and stretching. Ask participants if they think it's easier to run now, at the end of the program, compared to when the program started. Reinforce the concept that running several days per week will make it easier to maintain their running endurance as part of a healthy lifestyle for years to come.
- ▼ Review the concept of goal setting. Talk about how goal-setting techniques used in the running program may be applied to other aspects of participants' lives. Discuss the goals set by the group and decide if the group achieved those goals. If they didn't, discuss why and how, the importance of setting realistic goals, and how goals may be continually adjusted to meet changing circumstances and to ensure success.
- ▼ Encourage participants to continue writing in their running journals and provide them with additional pages, if necessary. Solicit feedback on the journal-keeping exercise.
- ▼ Review nutrition and hydration concepts such as healthy eating, energy balance, and limiting junk foods and beverages that are high in sugar, caffeine, and sodium.
- ▼ Go over the concepts of pedestrian and runner safety, reviewing street signs and rules of the road.
- ▼ Encourage participants to share their experiences in the running program, both good and bad, with the group as a whole or individually with program leaders. Incorporate feedback into future programs to improve the experience for all.



LET'S RUN!

Review the running activity from Module 4 and repeat it for this final module. Ask participants for their favorite running games and relays from the program and incorporate them into the final running session.

Be sure to leave enough time for participants to complete their journal entries and/or record their distance online.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

SAMPLE PROGRAM BUDGET

Kids Run the Nation is designed to be an affordable program run by parent or guardian volunteers, volunteer coaches, or teachers. You will need seed money to purchase supplies for your program based on the recommended supply list below. If you choose to offer **Kids Run the Nation** as a program organized outside the classroom or school environment, we recommend a fee of \$25–35 per participant to cover costs.

INCOME	
\$30 per participant x 20 participants	\$600
EXPENSES	
RRCA dues and insurance for 20 participants as needed (does not include D&O insurance expense)	\$298
Kids Run the Nation backpack tag @ \$1.25 per participant	\$25
<i>Running Guide for Kids</i> @ \$1 per participant + shipping	\$25
Other participant incentives, e.g., t-shirts, Kids Run the Nation Toe Tokens™, etc.	\$200
Other program supplies	\$50
	\$600

If your program will conclude with a fun run or competitive race, you may include the race entry fee as part of your program fee or have parents and guardians register their children for the race separately and pay the race entry fee at that time. We recommend holding separate registration periods for the program and the race to ensure parents and guardians sign race-specific waivers.

Suggested Supplies

- ▼ Clipboard or binder with printed emergency contact information for each participant
- ▼ Cell phone for emergency calls
- ▼ Plastic bin(s) to store supplies
- ▼ Lap counting mechanism, e.g., popsicle sticks, index cards, hole punch and index cards, stickers, chains, Toe Tokens™, etc., to hand out to participants as they complete laps; or an electronic lap-counting or timing system
- ▼ Cones, signs, or cornstarch for marking a course if no track is available
- ▼ Whistle or bell for getting runners' attention
- ▼ Music player and/or public address system
- ▼ Running logs and writing utensils for students to record their progress
- ▼ **Kids Run the Nation** backpack tags or other participation incentives such as **Kids Run the Nation** Toe Tokens™ from FitnessFinders®.
- ▼ Copies of the RRCA's *Running Guide for Kids* for each child as a take-home reminder of running topics and activities
- ▼ Hydration supplies such as water dispensers and cups; consider ordering reusable branded **Kids Run the Nation** water bottles for each participant
- ▼ First Aid kit

PARTICIPANT AND VOLUNTEER WAIVERS

Program leaders should maintain a current list of participants and emergency contact information for their parents or guardians. RRCA club members are not required to supply roster or contact information for youth members to the RRCA national office, but program leaders should keep this information on hand for administrative and safety purposes.

No child should be allowed to participate in your youth running program without a signed waiver of consent from a parent or legal guardian. For **Kids Run the Nation** programs offered by schools, review your school's waiver or permission form requirements.

Visit www.rrca.org/our-programs-services/programs/kids-run-the-nation/resources/templates to download editable waiver templates in both English and Spanish. Feel free to add your program name and/or logo to the document or use the template as a basis for a program-specific waiver.



CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECKS

The Road Runners Club of America encourages criminal background checks for anyone working with minors such as coaches, assistant coaches, volunteers, or employees engaged in working with youth (legal minors) involved in youth running programs or events. Youth running programs and RRCA member clubs and events are encouraged to adopt our recommended criminal background check policy.

The RRCA has partnered with the National Center for Safety Initiatives (NCSI) to provide an affordable background screening service for our members. All RRCA members will receive a 10% discount on background screening through NCSI. For more information, call (440) 542-9690 or visit NCSI online at www.ncsisafe.com.

All RRCA members that host youth running programs or events should have policies and procedures in place that address how to report abuse. The RRCA has developed and posted online guidelines to assist members in developing an abuse-reporting policy and procedure. Follow each link to download the policy.

- ▼ Sample Criminal Background Check Policy: bit.ly/2b08F49
- ▼ Sexual Abuse and Molestation Prevention and Reporting Policy: bit.ly/2biNIwk

ONLINE PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

Keeping track of your program's participants should not be a burden. From managing rosters to tracking goals, mileage, progress, and incentives, the process should be simple and effective without wasting valuable instruction time. The RRCA has partnered with RunSignUp to develop a user-friendly youth program management portal that includes an online registration and payment system, event promotion, donation solicitation, merchandise sales, and other tools to start or grow your youth running program. Program leaders may instruct participants to track their running progress using the My Running Log feature and they can communicate with parents and guardians via integrated email tools. The platform is optimized for mobile devices and is fully customizable to suit your program's needs.

All youth program leaders are encouraged to use this tool to manage their programs, and programs don't have to be branded as a **Kids Run the Nation** program to use the RunSignUp management system. The system is free if your program is free for participants. If you charge a fee for participants, a credit card processing fee will apply for online registrations.

Visit www.rrca.org/our-programs-services/programs/kids-run-the-nation/resources/tracking-participation for complete instructions on setting up a personalized online portal for your youth running program.



KIDS RUN THE NATION GRANT FUND

Since 2007 the RRCA and the **Kids Run the Nation** Grant Fund have assisted running clubs, schools, and community nonprofits that are interested in implementing or are currently hosting youth running programs.

Grants ranging from \$500–\$1,000 are awarded annually through an application and selection process overseen by a volunteer selection panel. Running clubs, events, or other organizations with the IRS 501(c)(3) designation are eligible to apply. Elementary and middle schools that provide organized after-school running programs are eligible as well. No grants are given to individuals under any circumstances. All applicants must be an official 501(c)(3), school, parent booster club, PTA, or similar entity. The **Kids Run the Nation** grant application period opens August 1 and closes October 1 each year.

Visit www.rrca.org/our-programs-services/programs/kids-run-the-nation/grant-fund for complete application criteria, to read what items grants may and may not fund, and to submit your online application.

RUN@SCHOOL DAY

Held every September, RUN@School Day is an RRCA initiative that encourages children to get 60 minutes of exercise or more each day following the Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans. Teachers, coaches, and parents, and guardians plan fun runs and walks at local schools to celebrate the sport of running, scheduling their events before school, during recess, during physical education class, and/or after school. Visit www.rrca.org/our-programs-services/programs/run@work-day-run@school-day/planning-kit for more information on planning your event.

PRINTABLE RESOURCES AND HANDOUTS

Augment your instruction sessions with free printable resources such as:

- ▼ Labeled diagrams of the bones, joints, muscles, and tendons of the legs, bones of the foot, and important organs and systems used while running
- ▼ Editable punch card and running log templates
- ▼ Printable street signs for pedestrian safety

Download these documents to find links to printable worksheets and other activities at www.rrca.org/our-programs-services/programs/kids-run-the-nation/resources/templates.

KIDS RUN THE NATION MATERIALS

Visit www.rrca.org/our-programs-services/programs/kids-run-the-nation/materials to order these **Kids Run the Nation** materials:

- ▼ Curriculum: *Program Guide for Teachers, Coaches, and Program Leaders*
- ▼ Take-home guide for young runners to share with their families: *Running Guide for Kids*
- ▼ **Kids Run the Nation**–branded incentives such as backpack tags
- ▼ **Kids Run the Nation** Toe Tokens™ from FitnessFinders®

