

"If the hill has its own name, then it's probably a pretty tough hill."

***"Hills are speedwork in disguise."* – Frank Shorter**

This topic is hills and the four basic methods of doing hills. What needs to be emphasized here is that hills are a form of developmental speed work that should be incorporated into your base building training phase. By incorporating hills, form drills and later on strides you help create another training adaptation – improved biomechanics and running economy.

Head For The Hills

To race well on hills, you have to train on hills. Try these four great workouts.

By Ed Eyestone Published 04/25/2002

Boston has Heartbreak at mile 21! Bloomsday has Cemetery and Doomsday. The San Blas Half-Marathon has The Strangler. Apparently, just plain running isn't tough enough. So race directors, in their infinite wisdom, have decided we need hills. Big ones. And if they have sadistic-sounding names, so much the better.

Many upcoming spring races will be run on hilly courses. The question is: How should you prepare? According to the principle of training specificity, in order to improve a certain aspect of physical fitness, you must train specifically for it. This means one thing: If you want to turn those looming hills into nothing more than speed bumps, you need to do some hill workouts.

Think of a hill workout as a running-specific weight workout. The exaggerated knee lift, driving arms, and pronounced toe-off necessary to run up hills strengthens you every bit as much as hitting the weight room. Hill running also works the cardiovascular system as your heart tries to keep pace with the increased energy required to fight gravity. Consequently, hill workouts are very taxing and should be done only once or twice a week.

I recommend four basic types of hill workouts. Each has its specific rewards.

1. **Short Hills.** My high school coach affectionately called these "meat grinders." They are relatively short hills of 100 to 200 meters that you repeat multiple times. They can be tacked on the end of an easy run or used as a complete workout. Because these hills are short, you should run them at a fast pace -- almost an all-out effort -- with a walk or slow jog back down the hill as a recovery.

While you can run these types of hill repeats on asphalt, a grass or dirt hill is less stressful to your body. Short hills are important for anyone who wants to develop the explosive strength necessary to run a good 800 meters or finish strong in a mile or 5-K. A sample short hill workout: one to two sets of 10 hill repeats. Walk or jog slowly down the hill after each repeat, and do an additional 5 minutes of jogging between sets.

2. **Hilly Power Run.** It doesn't sound very technical (sorry), but this workout builds strength for a strong marathon or half-marathon. Pick a route that has rolling hills and "push" each hill. By push, I mean you should try not to slow down as you roll over each rise. But don't attack the incline as you do when running short hills.

I like to do this kind of run as part of a 10-mile workout. I pick a canyon road, then work each uphill, catching my breath as I cruise on the flat and downhill sections. This type of continuous hilly power run will be your best weapon against monsters such as Heartbreak Hill in Boston.

3. **Hilly Long Run.** This workout is similar to the Hilly Power Run, but longer and less intense. Run this at your long-run pace, but make sure you have some rolling hills in the last half of the run. When you hit the hills with fatigued

legs, you'll be forced to work on your form. This workout will also build the strength and confidence necessary to race well late in a longer race, whether it has hills or not.

4. **Long Hill Circuits.** This is more of a traditional long-interval workout. The key is finding a grass or dirt circuit that has a number of uphills. The distance of the circuit can be as short as a half-mile or as long as 2 miles. Run the downhill sections at a semi-easy (75 percent) effort to avoid injury. Run the flat and uphill sections at 5-K race pace. Unless you're a Sherpa, do a total of 3- to 4-miles' worth of the circuit, with 3 to 5 minutes of jog recovery between each circuit.

Notice that I haven't said you need to run up Pikes Peak or some other mountain precipice. The problem with that type of extremely long, steep, hill running is that your turnover becomes so slow it's no longer specific to the type of racing you're likely to be doing.