



written by Mike Croft

A handbook for primary
school teachers

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Running

Do you like to run?

Many people dislike running. It is hardly surprising as by the time we reach our early teens most of us will have been subjected to a variety of experiences apparently designed to prove how unpleasant and pointless running can be.



Do you remember how cross country runs were only undertaken on miserably cold wet days when the weather was deemed unsuitable for other activities. “Twice round the field before we start!” The dreaded prelude to a favourite games lesson. Worst of all, running aimlessly round the school grounds has traditionally been seen by staff and children as a form of punishment!

The negative profile given to running is a lasting one. Many committed sports enthusiasts follow their pursuits with a built in aversion to running. “I don’t mind chasing round after the ball but I can’t handle just running”, is a typical reaction.

What's the point?

The fact is that successful and satisfying participation in almost every Physical Education activity in the National Curriculum depends upon a basis of skills and state of fitness most easily and effectively acquired by following a well designed programme of running. Footwork, speed, balance, stamina, turning etc are the foundations upon which good performances are built.

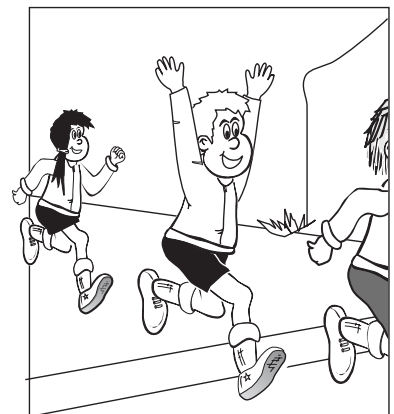
Run for your life?

Parents and teachers are increasingly aware of and anxious about the health of our children. Recent studies have revealed that unless regular sustained energetic activity becomes a part of the lifestyle of today's youngsters they will become a generation of adults with serious health problems. Unlike some sporting activity running is accessible to all, and provides a simple route to the sustained aerobic activity necessary to keep the cardiovascular systems of the body in good shape.

How can the 'Let the Children Run' handbook help?

The aim of the handbook is to provide primary school teachers with a programme of imaginative and exciting activities which will enable them to involve and interest all children in their classes from Y1 to Y6 in developing running skills and a positive attitude to energetic pursuits and healthy lifestyle.

The accent is on fun and involvement. There are opportunities for the youngsters to be responsible for planning routes, recording times and monitoring their own progress. The children will be encouraged to observe, question and make decisions about their development, thus deepening their understanding of the way in which their "body machine" responds to exercise, rest and recovery.



Safe and Sensible

The enjoyment of all athletic activities requires adequate preparation with respect to safety and sensible practice, these considerations apply to running no less than in any other healthy activity. It should also be remembered that the National Curriculum requires children to be taught about the safety risks of wearing inappropriate clothing, footwear and jewellery and why particular clothing, footwear etc are worn for different activities.

- **Wear sensible clothing:**

Wrap up on a cold day (tracksuit, jumper, long trousers, etc). Take off extra clothing when you are warmed up - put them back on as you cool down.



- **Wear sensible footwear:**

Trainers are best - most children seem to have them.

- **Warm up your body:**

The children should learn to stretch and warm up gradually before any vigorous activity (see '**Know Your Machine: warm up/stretching**').

- **Run on safe surfaces:**

Wet playgrounds may be slippery - be careful on corners. Fallen leaves can be deadly! Grass is less punishing on the feet/legs than Tarmac. Steep slopes or banked areas could be dangerous. Steps are to be avoided.

- **Is the route safe?**

Open windows are very dangerous. Collisions on blind corners can cause problems. Beware of car parking/entrances/driveways, a possible source of danger.

- **Know the route:**

Children need to be sure of the route they are following. Maps may be used to explain the course and locate problems/dangers. Ideally the children could walk or jog the route together as a warm up (see '**Course Planning**' section on routes/maps).

- **Supervision:**

If possible teachers should position themselves to observe the whole of the course. If not, they should be on the move so the children feel the 'presence' of teacher at every stage on the route.

Children who are unable to take part in the lesson (for medical or other reasons) can make a very useful contribution as marshals. Seated if necessary, warmly clothed on a cold day, they could direct runner on a difficult corner, check times, note runners names etc.

- **Time to run:**

Give food time to digest after eating. Give children time to recover from running, before eating.

- **Know your children:**

Children with asthma or other long term problems will need careful consideration. Those suffering from colds, coughs, injuries, etc should be employed as marshals/organisers of the lesson. Check the safety of individuals...

e.g. long hair, tied back - inhaled hair is horrible!

Spectacles - will they fall off?

Teeth braces - could be a problem?

Raise the childrens awareness of these issues and give them the responsibility of dealing with their own problems wherever possible.

- **How far**

A rough guide to the maximum course distances to be expected of each age group.

Y2/Y1	300m
Y3	800m
Y4	1,000m
Y5	1,250m
Y6	1,500m

Know Your Machine!

Why is regular exercise good for the body?
What happens when we exercise vigorously?
How do we prepare for exercise?

The National Curriculum requires children to be taught:

- **About the changes that occur in the bodies as they exercise**
- **to recognise the effects of exercise on the body**
- **to warm up and recover from exercise**

Warm up:

Stretching

Stretching before and after strenuous activity will:

- keep muscles and joints flexible
- prevent common injuries
- increase range of motion
- promote circulation
- develop body awareness
- develop coordination
- reduce muscle tension making the body feel more relaxed

How to Stretch

A relaxed sustained stretch - no bouncing!
Begin with an easy gentle stretch - hold for 10-30 seconds. Relax!
Move a fraction further until you feel a little tension - hold for 10-30 seconds
Breathe slowly in a controlled fashion.

Useful stretches



- **Groin stretch**

Place hands on hips. Lunge forward on right foot, turning left foot at right angle. Then shift weight forward over right knee, keeping body upright so that you feel a stretch on the inside of your left thigh. Hold, then repeat with left foot forward.



- **Hamstring stretch (sitting)**

Sit with legs together and straight. Stretch slowly forward to ease fingertips towards feet. Hold, relax, repeat.



- **Hamstring, calf and Achilles tendon stretch**

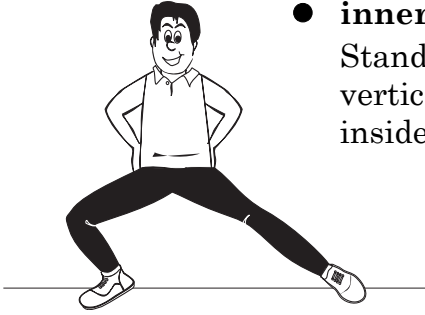
Put arms straight against a wall and lean your body on them at a 30° angle. Put right leg forward, keeping left heel on ground - feel hamstring and calf being stretched. Then bend left knee and stretch the Achilles tendon. Repeat with other leg.



- **hamstring,calf & groin stretch**

Stand in wide stride position. Bend forward leg to stretch groin and hamstring. Hold. Change legs.

Useful stretches



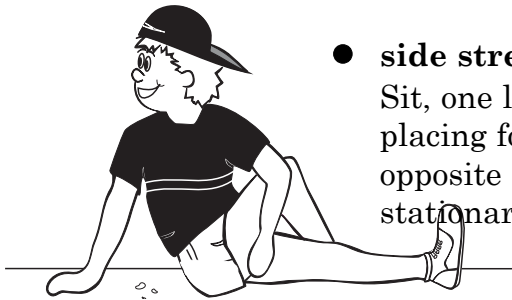
- **inner leg stretch**

Stand with legs well astride. Keeping upper body vertical, bend right knee and dip body, stretching inside of left leg. Hold. Repeat with other leg.



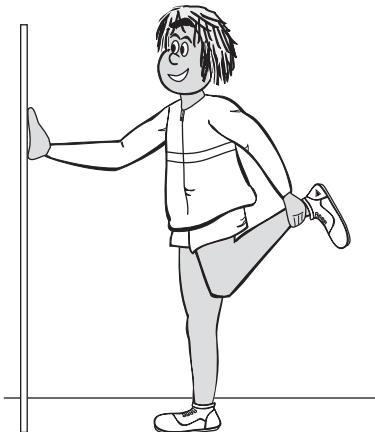
- **side stretch (standing)**

Stand feet astride reach right arm over head stretching body sideways to left. Hold, relax, repeat using other arm.



- **side stretch (sitting)**

Sit, one leg straight, bend other knee, cross over placing foot on floor, turn head/shoulders in opposite direction using elbow to keep bent leg stationary. Hold, relax, repeat on opposite side.



- **quadriceps stretch**

Standing on right leg, reach back and grasp left ankle with left hand. Pull ankle back (not to the side) until you feel the stretch in the front of the thigh. Repeat with other leg.

Jogging activities/games

After a good stretch some gentle activity will help to prepare the body for strenuous work:

- **Jog on the spot**
- **Jog around the room changing direction**
- **Follow the leader jog.**
- **Jog with high knee lift**
- **Walk briskly - changing size of stride**
- **Play tag games**

Warm down

It is a very bad idea to run hard then just stop. There should be a five minute warm down period of gentle jogging then stretching to allow the body to return gradually to its resting state.

- **Jog gently - (jog n'talk!) for three minutes allowing heart and breathing rate to settle down.**
- **Stretch the muscles you have just used - this will avoid stiffness and soreness after a hard session.**

Workings of the body

Children are fascinated by the workings of the human body. Make sure they understand that:

- **during energetic exercise the body requires more oxygen than at rest, so your lungs work harder to collect it - faster breathing. The heart will beat more rapidly to pump the oxygen rich blood around the body to supply the muscles with fuel.**

This kind of activity will:

- develop the size and efficiency of your heart
- increase the efficiency of your lungs
- increase the efficiency of your blood vessels
- make you feel great!

Techniques

The National Curriculum requires children to be taught to develop and refine techniques in running (eg short/long distances, relay)

Techniques of running
- how to get the best out of your running machine

Sustained (distance running)

Conserve energy. Adopt a comfortable and relaxed arm position, low knee lift, use all of the foot in a natural, rolling action.



Running for speed (short distances)

A dynamic, driving action. Arms and shoulders providing power, tension and balance.

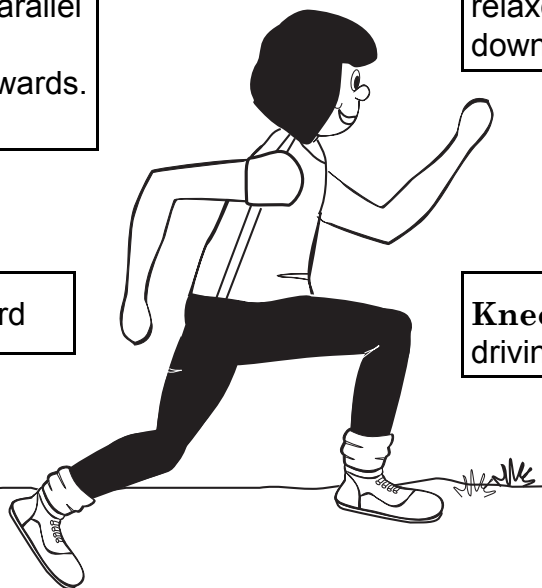
Arms: elbows at about 90° parallel to body not across; high lift driving forwards.

Head: steady and relaxed eyes looking down track ahead

Body: lean forward

Knees: high knee lift driving forward

Feet: drive off ball of foot



The 'Unwilling Runner'

Teachers will occasionally encounter a child who is unwilling to participate. The reasons for such a reaction are usually deeply personal ...

e.g.

- **Feelings of embarrassment about their physical appearance;**
- **A complete lack of confidence in physical fitness;**
- **A fear of being out of breath or feeling heart and pulse pounding;**
- **Worries about not being able to keep up with other children in class.**



What do I do about it?

- **Be understanding**
Do not assume that the child is simply lazy. Try to establish the real cause of concern.
- **Be flexible**
Adapt the activity/programme to suit the need of the child.
- **Be encouraging**
Never isolate, use other children to help support and encourage.
- **Be positive**
Identify and praise every effort made. Refer to well known and admired role models (e.g. Lynford Christie, Sally Gunnel) ... being fit is now fashionable.
- **Be patient**
Allow time for confidence to grow.

Let the Children Run

- **Be fun**

Make sure all the children have a good time and feel good about getting fit.

Avoid!

- **Sarcastic comments**

However amusing they are always hurtful and demoralising

- **Peer comparison**

Unlike references to well known role models, comparisons with other children in the group are likely to generate negative feelings on at least one side.

The Infant Runner

Given the space of a hall or playground infant children will, without any prompting, run around in it. Infant play areas are high energy zones at break and lunchtimes as the youngsters dash about becoming cars, trains, planes, monsters and countless other imaginary figures.

A comfortable and natural introduction to running can be made by keying into this energetic and imaginative play, continuing it and developing it building in

- i) The foundations for a range of important physical skills
- ii) Simple vocabulary and understanding of the body and its parts
- iii) A positive attitude to energetic exercise

Introducing the basics

The body

If we are going to ask the children to run on their toes or bend elbows etc then they need to be able to identify different parts of the body. Lots of fun can be had:

Lifting knees high

Rubbing tummy

Flapping elbows

Stretching hands high

Slapping side etc.

Understanding of 'side' and 'back' is very important as this forms the basis for change of direction in space.

Weight

Footwork

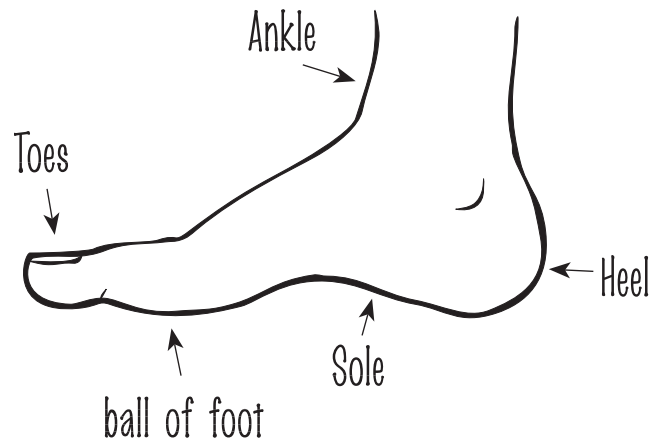
The body operates most efficiently during physical activity when it is well balanced.

The secret to a smooth, balanced and successful performance is good footwork

Infant children need a clear introduction to the different ways of using various parts of the foot - and regular technique practise throughout the primary phase.

Good Practice

Make sure children know:



Toes - heel - sole - ball of foot
and what it feels like to walk/balance/run on each part

Activities which develop good footwork:

- **skipping - skip steps - side steps**
- **hopping - hop/step/jump**
- **take off - landing (one foot, two feet etc)**
- **running on the spot**

Draw childrens attention to and improve consistently the way the feet are used in all of the directional and speed activities (ie) good use of feet when changing direction/moving sideways

Think of improving footwork in all aspects of PE - Gymnastics, Dance, Games, Athletics, Outdoor activities.

The Infant Runner (Continued)

Space

The aim is to encourage the change from free running as in play, to a purposeful and organised exploration of the space around the room or playground.

Running on the spot:

The child becomes aware of the personal space in which he/she operates. Finding a space for themselves, working and remaining in it - an important step

Running in general space:

learning to explore the space available; choosing pathways between other runners; varying the route, aiming to always run into a space; to be in a space when the stop whistle blows.

Places within the room/playground space:

learning to move to and past places in the hall or playground.

"run to the clock", "past the stage", round the piano", "from the teacher to the door and back", "to the box, round the box and back to the door" etc

Directions in space

learning to run forwards, backwards, sideways
(*travelling sideways - not to be confused with turning and running in a new direction).

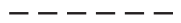
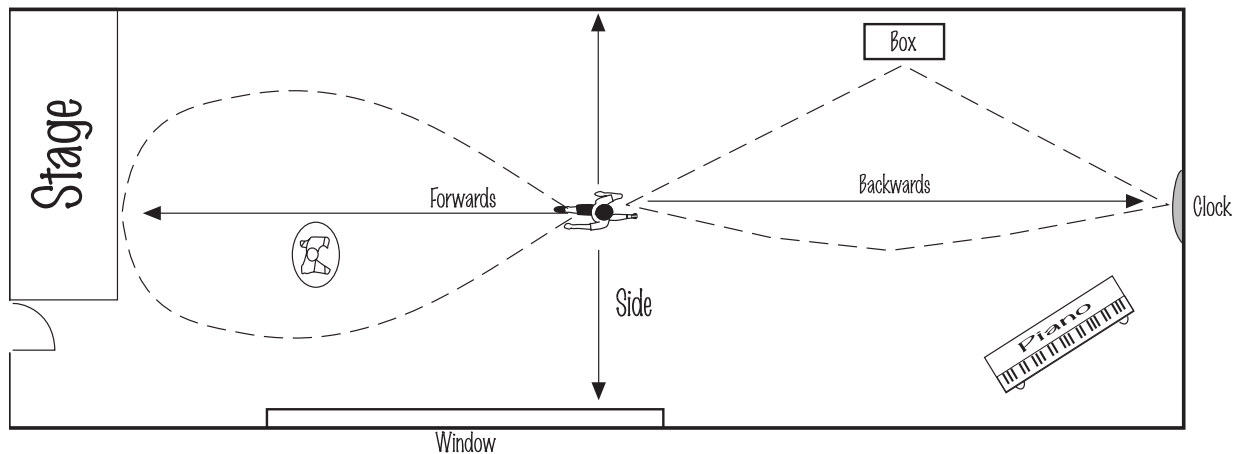
Changing direction - smoothly, suddenly - on command and freely.

(*think about and explore different use of foot work in change of direction)

***Safety: Always look - especially when moving backwards!**

*see plan below

Space in the hall



Directions

Path to run

Teacher

Child

The infant runner (continued)

Time

Development of the childrens understanding of pace judgment and how less speed = more time = more relaxed and comfortable running.

Introduce the idea using imaginative play:

"lets all run as fast as a cheetah"
"can you move as slowly as a tortoise?"
"how fast does a trotting horse go?"

Develop more formally the understanding of

stillness
walking slowly
walking briskly
running very gently
jogging steadily
running quickly
sprinting at full speed

Slow motion movement is useful fun!

When the idea of different speeds has been established introduce simple sequences:e.g.
stop - walk slowly - jog - stop
walk briskly - run quickly - jog

Encourage children to look at e.g. how the body movement for walking differs from the sprinting action: what are the differences - use of toes/arms/knees/bigger strides etc.

Develop the idea of running for a longer period of time at a steadier pace eg 30 secs, 45 sec, 1 minute.

Running Activities: Years 1 & 2

Approaches (teacher directed)

Whole class work on change of direction/speed/footwork can be straightforward or based on imaginative themes e.g. animals

Progression ... Group/team work as children become more confident

Animals (teacher directed)

Children become a variety of creatures with different movement/running characteristics e.g.

Cheetah - runs swiftly

Giraffe - strides out with long tall legs

deer - springs and runs

rabbit - dodges and weaves quickly

progression ... Animals (groups)

Colour/team groups adopt an animal

eg reds - deer

blues - rabbit etc

teacher tells story enabling animals to run and rest in turn or together.

Trains (teacher directed)

Children become trains individually or in groups, moving as teacher instructs/tells story to vary journey and speed etc.

progression ... Trains (group/team work)

(1) A line of children, front child drives, moves along, driver choosing route. Train stops on whistle, the child at the rear becomes the new driver.

(2) Set up a series of 'stations' in the hall. Trains pass the stations drop off and pick up passengers. Whistle stops trains and changes driver. (build in a time element)

Journeys (teacher directed)

(1) Interesting journeys

Hoop bases are shared by pairs of children. Child 1 goes on a journey around the hall' choosing an interesting route around the other hoops, returning to base on whistle. Child 2 takes turn ...

Progression ...

(the speed/time of the journey can be varied - child 2 must observe child 1 and attempt to follow their route)

(2) Compass points

Identify four side of hall/playground as N S E W. Children run from hoop base on given route

e.g. N E S N -> to base
(children will enjoy giving directions to the class)

(3) Maths adventure

Identify several places in hall/playground as a number 1 - 10. eg no 5 on box, no 3 on bench etc. Children run from hoop base to touch numbers or do sums. eg run to the 5 then the 2 and back to base or touch numbers that add up to 12 etc. etc.

(4) Adventure zones

Create different areas in the space (eg jungle - field - marsh etc.) As the children run their route around the hall their speed/movement must vary according to the zones they are in - very fast on the field, very slowly in the marshy ground, bending and dodging in the jungle.

(5) Long journeys

Set out apparatus, cones etc. to make an interesting variety of pathways in the hall/playground.

Children, with friend, choose a route through the pathways that they can follow repeatedly. Using sand timer - children undertake their 'long journey' jogging on their chosen route for 30 seconds, 1 minute 1.5 mins etc.

Progression ... increase time span. Count number of completed journeys in time.