

# RUNNING RESOLUTIONS FOR 2006

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Most runners are ambitious people by nature. Consider the willpower exemplified by those conquering single digit temperatures and ice-covered roads to log a few miles of road work, anxiously looking ahead to the warmer climate of springtime. With Thanksgiving traditionally marking the end of the competitive racing season in New England, December offers the ideal opportunity for a physical rest break from the consistent exercise routine you may have maintained during the year. But no sooner will you polish off the very last of the egg nog and a brand new year will be upon us. Runners of all levels of ability, from casual joggers to competitive road racers, can benefit from the motivation that a new beginning can bring. Here are seven resolutions sure to improve your fitness level in 2006:

**#1 PREPARE A PLAN:** While December may offer the opportunity to slack off and allow for an increase in waistline size, January 1<sup>st</sup> is the perfect starting point for newly-discovered inspiration. Set goals and make sure to reasonably adjust these goals based on illness, weather conditions, time constraints, etc.

**#2 CROSS TRAIN:** Cross training can develop many of the non-running muscles to help support the body's frame and to strengthen ligaments and tendons. The repetitive motions of distance running tend to involve only certain muscles while ignoring the others. Activities like swimming, bicycling, aerobics, and elliptical training can add benefit and help reduce the risk of overuse injuries.

**#3 WEIGHT TRAIN (NOT GAIN):** Weight training is beneficial in terms of improving form, increasing strength, and preventing injuries. You'll look better too, a definite plus when beach season eventually rolls around. If increasing strength is your goal, try working up to lifting the most weight you can handle for 8-10 repetitions. Those concerned with burning calories should attempt to stick to lighter weights and lots of repetitions while maintaining proper form.

**#4 CHANGE GEARS:** In order to run fast, you must, at least at specific times, train fast. This is applicable at any level of fitness. However, bear in mind that the winter season should be more about regrouping and rebuilding endurance than running fast. To get the maximum physical benefits from your running, try to vary the pace and the distances of your training runs. This will allow the body to reap the benefits of a challenging workout and then to recover properly before the next workout.

**#5 RUN WITH COMPANY:** Instead of heading out the door alone in the cold dark winter evenings, schedule group runs with a few training partners. If your friends are not as fleet-footed as you may be, use these days as easy mileage sessions. If you happen to be the slowpoke of the group, then make this your difficult workout day of the week. This will condition your body for some of the discomfort that will follow with the approach of the spring racing season. It also helps offset any negative affect from the post-run pizza and beers that may follow.

**#6 RUN LONG:** Wintertime is a great time of year in New England to run long and slow. Try running for a certain amount of time rather than for a set amount of miles. Long, slow distance (LSD) builds endurance and burns a serious number of calories, allowing individuals the perfect mechanism for trimming and toning the slightly heavier body that you may have inherited during the holiday season.

**#7 HAVE FUN:** Being physically fit is important, but life goes by too fast to take exercise so seriously that the process no longer is enjoyable. While even the most hard-core exerciser would prefer the warm house to the cold streets from time to time, one of the benefits of physical activity is the sense of accomplishment received from completing such a task. Learn to make exercise a part of your lifestyle and enjoy what it can do for you.

Follow these guidelines for a healthier and happier running season in 2006.

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