

# Weekly Training for Beginner and Intermediate Junior Orienteers

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## 1 What about all this running training?

So, you would like to get better. That's why you are training! Improving your navigation is a sure way to get better. How about running faster?

Running faster will not simply get you lost faster! Very soon, your navigation skills will improve, and it will count how fast you can run those legs while orienteering flawlessly. *Top orienteers race at a speed that is close to their maximum speed for a similar distance.* In other words, it does not "cost" much time, much slowing down, to navigate well. So, your running speed in the woods is important!

How to improve the running speed? Fortunately, this question has been researched very well, and many books will help you with this—but also, there are many knowledgeable people around. Join your school's track or cross-country program, and listen to the coaches! This is the best step you can take in order to get yourself a solid training program for orienteering.

The running you do in your track or cross-country program will help, but it will not be all that is required to become a good O-runner. Track running is indeed slightly different from the broken surface in the woods; but the biggest problem with relying only on your track or cross-country practices is that the sports seasons only last for a few months. To improve your orienteering running, you need to train all year round, only taking maybe a few weeks off in the whole year. Also, the more serious you get about being a better O-runner, the more training you'll need to do, and the regime of track or cross-country workouts may not provide you with enough training!

Again, track and cross-country are not so different from running in the woods that you should not participate in the practices. However, some of you will be at a school that has no track or cross-country; some are home-schooled; and for all of you, there will be the long summer months without any scheduled practices. I am going to give two kinds of schedules: One assumes twice-a-week track or cross-country practices or races, and the second one is for weeks without the practices.

Also, most of you participate in some kind of fast-paced O-activity once a week, on average. Certainly individual conditions are different, and the schedules I give need to be

adjusted if you do more or less training in your practices or if you have more or less orienteering during the particular week. It is most important not to overtrain! So, if you are tired, the short answer is, skip the scheduled run, or do an easier one—use common sense!

## 2 What kind of running?

You get better at running by, well, running. But exactly what kind of running? Should you, say, simulate your orienteering race experience every day? Would it work, say, to run for 30 minutes really fast, every day?

The short answer is, no. The key to training smart is the *running pyramid*. Just like the food pyramid you are familiar with, the running pyramid is a drawing that explains the importance of different kinds of running. You should understand the pyramid like this: the slower kinds of training lie at the bottom, and the faster ones, at the top. And, the wider the slice, the more of this kind of training you need to do.

In the base, the foundation, is *easy running*. The base is wide; this means that most of your weekly training should consist of easy runs. Putting easy runs into the base emphasizes that these runs are the foundation. These runs make it possible for you to do other kinds of training without getting injured; make you stronger; and make your running stride work out more efficiently, that is, spend less energy to achieve a certain speed. What exactly are easy runs? see later...

In the middle are medium-paced, or *threshold runs*. You should do those runs because they connect the base and the top. If you only do the easy and the fast runs, easy runs alone will not provide you with the training that would allow you to train fast.

Near the top are your O-runs and races, and at the very top are intervals, hill workouts, and sprints you do as a part of your track and cross-country practices. This training is done closest to your pace during an O-race, so it is at the top of the pyramid! And remember that fats and sweets are at the top of the food pyramid... and if you only eat sweets, you won't get the nutrition you need, and may even get sick! The same with fast running—you won't become fast without it, but you need to use it sparingly. If you already do track or cross-country practice twice a week, and the practice includes some pretty fast stuff, you *do not need* to do any more fast training during the week. Especially so if you also have an O-race on a weekend.

## 3 What are those types of running?

*Easy running* is done at a pace at which you can comfortably talk. You should be able to run for more than an hour continuously at the easy pace. This does not mean that you *should* run for an hour at the easy pace, every day or on any day. Easy workouts should leave you comfortably tired, with a feeling that you can do this workout on the next day, and the next day, and so on... As a matter of fact, you would do great with some easy running every day.

However, "easy" is not too easy! It is not hiking or walking, or barely running. Your cross-country and track practices will include some easy running as a part of a warmup.

*Threshold* is the comfortably-hard pace. It is your pace for a fast run of about 30 minutes—it is about the same as your *average* orienteering pace. Now, in the course of an O-race, you

will inevitably speed up to faster than your threshold pace, and at some time you'll slow down—to read a map, because of mistakes, or to plan—so an O-race would usually feel “harder” than threshold. You can tell if you ran faster than the threshold if you are sore the morning after a run. You should not be if you stayed under the threshold pace.

Threshold runs are also sometimes called tempo runs. For most of you, your weekly orienteering event will provide enough threshold training. However, a weekly threshold run *in addition to* your O-event can generate a bigger benefit; but it is important not to go overboard... Every week should have at least one day of threshold-pace running, so if the practice season is over and there are no O-events on the schedule, you should probably go out and run at this comfortably-hard pace for a bit. For how long, or how far? See the next chapter...

Now, to the *fast running*. Your cross-country or track coach will set your practice workouts; however, what fast running can or should you do when the season is over, or if you are not in a program? This running should be *faster* than your orienteering pace. The pace for a road, track, or cross-country race—an all-out pace—is an example of such a pace. The best structure for the faster-paced training is *intervals*. Those intervals should be done at approximately your 5-km race pace, but they should not be too long, 400 to 1200 meters (one to three track laps).

You should recover after each interval for approximately the same amount of time as it took to run the interval itself, and the total length of the intervals should be no more than 8% of your weekly mileage. You should do this workout no more than once a week. The intervals can be done on hills, with the “up” part done hard and with easy jogs downhill. Again, a running competition will take place of this type of training, and don't do this by yourself during the track or cross-country season.

How about cross-training? Say, cycling, swimming, football, ... Just because an activity makes you tired does not mean it is good running training! Yes, all of those things will help you get faster, but not as much as an equal amount of time spent running. Many of those things are fun, and are worth doing for that sole purpose!

## 4 Putting it all together

So, here's how you put together a weekly training program. First, we need to know what the ingredients are:

1. Fast runs: Track/cross-country practice, once or twice a week; and/or track and cross-country races, no more than once a week; or, one session of intervals a week, no more than 8% of the total weekly mileage.
2. Threshold/tempo runs: Once a week, plus one O-event a week. The total distance for threshold plus orienteering should be no more than 10% of your weekly mileage.
3. Easy runs: The rest of your weekly mileage.

So, what about mileage? What should your mileage be? First of all, if you are serious about your training, you should *log your miles!* All successful orienteers and runners do that. This should be done not just to boast, but to keep track of your achievements, to find out the

mileage that works best, and to motivate you during the week and the year... The best place to log training is on AttackPoint!

I believe that by age 16 (when you'll hopefully become an advanced-course orienteer), boys should achieve a weekly mileage of 80–100 km (50–60 miles), and girls, of 70–80 km (45–50 miles). This sounds like a lot! Most of you aren't anywhere close to that level! But this goal should be kept in mind, and you should gradually increase your weekly mileage until you achieve that goal. A good rule of thumb is to increase the mileage every third week, and by no more than about 5 weekly miles.

So, let's look at the two examples. The first one is for Jim, a boy, age 15, who has cross-country practices twice a week, and his total weekly mileage is 35 miles (56 km). The second one is for Tanya, a girl, age 18, who does not have any practices because she just started college, and her weekly mileage is 50 miles (80 km). The distances are in kilometers.

On Mondays, Jim rests: rest is important! Tuesdays, Jim has a hill workout with the cross-country team. This workout consists of a 3-mile (5-km) warmup, and 10 hills, each one takes about a minute, so probably is about 300 meters or so long, and a downhill jog. The total mileage:  $5 + 10 \times 2 \times 0.3 = 11$  km. (The " $\times 2$ " is because we count both the uphill and the downhill.)

Thursdays, Jim has a sprint workout with the team: everyone sprints the length of a football field, or about 100 meters, and jogs the rest of the field's perimeter, or about 200 meters, and this is repeated 20 times. This works out to 6 km, and with a 5-km warmup, it is another 11-km day for Jim.

On Sundays, Jim goes orienteering! He runs an Orange course, which is about 5 km, and with the non-straight routes and some detours, this probably is more like 7 km. Also, Jim warms up for about 5 minutes before the start, which is another kilometer. Sunday's take: 8 km.

Let's look at this and figure out what else Jim needs to do to fulfill his goal of 56 kilometers for the week. Tuesday, Thursday, and Sunday are 30 km altogether. So, Jim needs to run for another 26 km during Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday. Wouldn't it be great for Jim if he did a threshold run—how long does it need to be?

Remember the 10% recommendation for threshold? 10 percent of 56 km is 5.6 km. Well, Jim's O-course also counts, so Jim has already reached the threshold mileage with his 7 km, and even exceeded it! So, no threshold run for Jim. These 26 km should *all be easy running*. Say, an easy Saturday would be 6 km, and Wednesday and Friday will be 10 km—this makes a nice week for Jim...

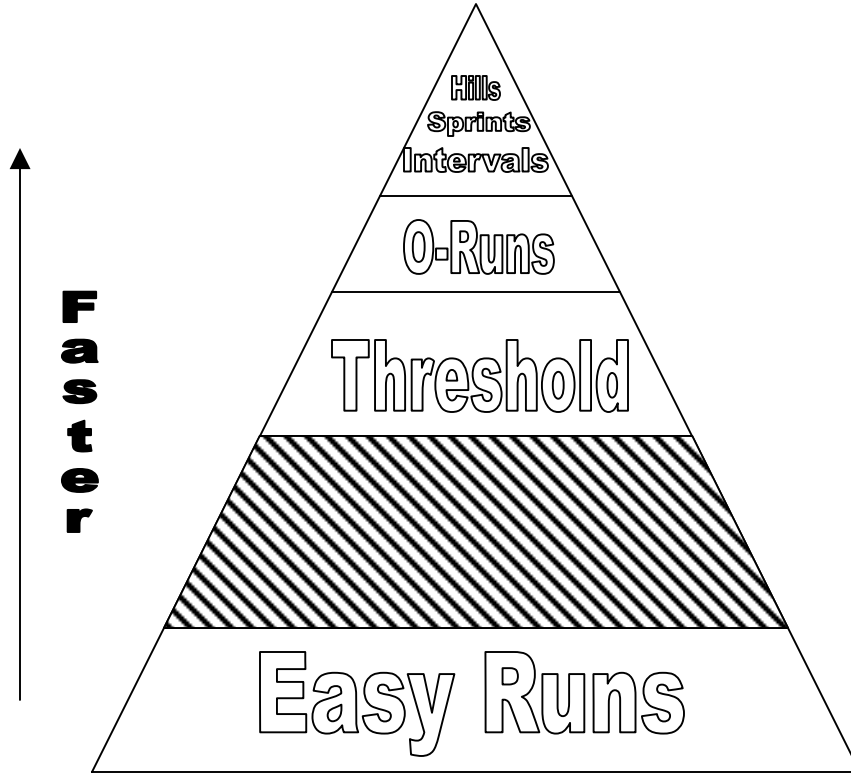
Look at Tanya's schedule—it is put together the same way as Jim's.

## 5 Anything else we need to know?

Not every week is created equal—there are multi-day events in the summer, track competitions, weeks you spend injured... The schedules I gave you are just starting points. To learn more, work with a coach, or read a great book such as *Daniels' Running Formula*. This book will provide you with explanations on why you should do certain types of training, what their benefits are, how to schedule your training if there are weeks you need to take off, how to *periodize* your training in order to *peak* for important events...

Happy training!

# The Running Pyramid



Jim's Training

			Kilometers	Time
Monday	Fast Medium Easy	Rest	0	0:00
Tuesday	Fast Medium Easy	Hill intervals: 10 × 1 minute	3	0:10
		Warmup before the intervals; downhill portions of the intervals	5	0:27
			3	0:15
Wednesday	Fast Medium Easy	10 km easy	10	0:55
Thursday	Fast Medium Easy	Football field sprints: 20 × 100 yds.	2	0:07
		Warmup before the sprints; jogging around the field	5	0:27
			4	0:24
Friday	Fast Medium Easy	10 km easy	10	0:55
Saturday	Fast Medium Easy	6 km easy	6	0:32
Sunday	Fast Medium Easy	Orange course, advertised as 5.0 km	7	0:45
		Warmup before the start	1	0:06
		Total	56	5:03

Tanya's training

			Kilometers	Time
Monday	Fast Medium Easy	Rest	0	0:00
Tuesday	Fast Medium Easy	Track intervals: 5 × 1200 (3 laps)	6	0:25
		Warmup before the intervals;	4	0:22
		jogging portions of the intervals	2	0:25
Wednesday	Fast Medium Easy	14 km easy	14	1:15
Thursday	Fast Medium Easy	Long run: 24 km	24	2:16
Friday	Fast Medium Easy	5 km easy	5	0:28
Saturday	Fast Medium Easy	16 km easy	16	1:28
Sunday	Fast Medium Easy	Red course, advertised as 7.0 km	8	1:20
		Warmup before the start	1	0:06
		Total	80	8:05