

# Should Distance Runners Lift Weights?

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This is a question I get quite often. The answer is a little bit more complex than a simple yes or no. Your first goal is to make sure you are running the mileage you need each and every week first and foremost. There is no substitute for hitting the pavement or trails. Once you have committed to putting in the mileage and have time for a few more workouts, resistance training should be part of your weekly routine. So then you must determine do I lift heavy or do I lift light? My answer may surprise you. You should do both.

## ***Importance of resistance training to runners.***

Before I write about the types of resistance training lets dive into the why we need to lift. The simple answer is we want to be able to finish a race with the same form, leg turnover and ground contact time, time our feet on the ground, as we did at the beginning of our run or race. Weight training allows you to maintain your form throughout your run and avoid crumpling of our core. You have seen the runner in the later stages of their race hunched over, once your core crumples your form and leg turn over turn to mush. With proper weight training you can keep your core strong, call on your fast twitch muscles in the later stages of your race to finish strong with good turnover and the same ground contact time that you had at the start of your race.

## ***Heavy Lifting - More weight less reps***

If you have limited time then one strength session per week lifting heavy 85 - 90% Maximum rep, sets of 4-6 for 3 sets with a recovery of 3 to 5 minutes per set.

## ***Lighter weights more reps***

If you are able to work in a few more workouts a ratio of two light weights to one heavy weight is the best ratio for weight training for distance runners.

When I first started training in the 70's I was coached to lift light with a lot of reps, 70% maximum rep, sets of 10 - 15 for 3 sets with 2 minutes rest between sets. Coaches at the time thought if a distance runner lifted heavy they would bulk up and decrease muscle endurance. Today I also consider workouts like yoga and pilates a substitute for light lifting. These activities give you the added benefit of flexibility.

## ***Some important facts about weight training.***

1. Technique is the most important factor in achieving the right result from your weight training. I recommend that before you start adding weight training to your routine enlisted the guidance of a trainer or coach that has experience with proper technique for the exercise and understands the specifics of weight training for endurance athletes.
2. When lifting heavy make sure you have a spotter. Many endurance athletes like the freedom and independence that our sport offers. This is not the time to go it alone. Once you have the

techniques and have determined the proper weight to use this is a good time to find a partner and hit the gym.

3. Take the time between sets to recover. To get the maximum benefit from your weight training your recovery between sets is as important as the set itself.

4. Do your weight training on your hard workout or key workout days. This will allow your body to get the full benefit of your easy and recovery days.

Make sure you are putting the time on the roads first, But when you are ready to take your training up a notch, a good weight training program will give you the strength to maintain your form and stride all the way to the finish line.