

THE Runner's LEXICON

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Every society or sub-culture has its own rhythms and lingo. When I play pickup hoops, for example, I'd never say, "Excuse me sir, what is my place in the queue?" The proper phraseology on the court is more along the lines of, "Hey man, you got next?" Running has its own distinct lingo, too. Lace up your running shoes, class is in session!

Bonk: To run out of energy. "I was fine through 10 miles, but then I totally bonked. I had to walk parts of the last 5K. I think I should have eaten some Gels in the early miles."

Carb Loading: A pre-race ritual (typically the night before) of eating carbohydrate-rich foods such as pasta, in order to ensure adequate fuel (glycogen) for a hard effort or race. "Barb carb-loaded on pasta last night, but her gluten intolerance turned race-day into a nightmare."

Cool-down: An easy run after a hard effort. "I was feeling really good about my race with 1 mile to go, but then I saw 2 runners who had already finished, back out on the course for their cool-down run."

Course: The route for a run or race. "The London Olympic marathon course consisted of a 2.2-mile loop and three 8-mile loops."

Fartlek: No, it's not what you think ... and you'll know you're a "real" runner when you can say it without a snicker. "Fartlek" is Swedish for "speed play." It's a form of unstructured training designed to build strength and speed, without the grind of running set distances.

Flats: A type of shoe, typically lighter, with less of a heel and less cushioning than training shoes. "Yeah, I ran fast today, but it was my first time wearing flats."

Intervals: A more structured form of training consisting of harder/faster running, interspersed with brief rests. "Today's interval workout will be challenging. We'll run 8 times 1/2 mile, with 90-second jog rest intervals."

Kick: No, this is not when the tae kwon do expert strikes another with her foot. A "kick" is the finishing sprint at the end of an effort or race. "I was a wimp and didn't push the last mile, and Nicole was right there on my shoulder. Her kick was amazing, she put 5 seconds on me in the last straightaway!"

Marathon: A running event consisting of 26 miles, 385 yards. There is no such thing as a "10K marathon."

Master: A runner age 40 or over. "She's been training like crazy ever since turning 38. I think it's because she wants to be competitive for national-caliber Masters competitions."

PR (PB): "Personal record" (in Europe, "Personal best"). Refers to one's best time on a course or distance: "My 5K PR is 22:10, but I know I'll beat that this weekend." May also be used in a verb form ("I can't believe I PR'd on such a hot, humid day!").

Shakeout run: An easy run before or after a race, designed to get out any "kinks" or muscular waste products. "The day before a race, I typically do an easy 3-mile shakeout run."

Speed & LSD: Context is everything. I remember years ago training for Junior Olympics. Our coach told us we'd be alternating "Speed and LSD." Wait... doing drugs is wrong! But no, that's not what he was referring to. "Speed" is "speed work," that's training your body to run efficiently at fast cadence. "LSD" is "long, slow distance." For those interested in competitive distance running, training to run quickly ("speed") as well as training to run far ("LSD") is one path to success.

Split: Not an extreme flexibility move, a "split" is a time for a particular segment of a run or race. Example: "Your splits for the 5K were 6:40, 6:42, and 6:41. That's great pacing!" And if all your splits are spot on... perhaps you can reward yourself with a banana split (one of my favorites)!

Striders: Quick, short runs, typically 40-100 meters each, designed to loosen up the legs and work on form. "Before a race I typically hydrate, warm up, stretch, do a few striders and report to the starting line."

Ultra: Any event beyond the marathon distance. "I've never done an ultra. Running 50 miles in a single day sounds inhuman, but I'm intrigued."

The Wall: A virtual barrier, most classically in a marathon at the 20-mile mark when the body's sugar (glycogen) stores tend to be exhausted. "I was doing great through 18 miles, but soon hit the wall and had to walk the last 10K of the marathon." See also "bonk."

Warmup: Gentle, easy running before a harder effort. "I'm a good runner, but when I start my warmup run you'd think I was 100 years old. It takes me about a mile to really get going."

XC, cross country or "cross." A form of running done on grass or dirt or any off-road, off-track surface. Not typically rocky, but on well-defined trails or other course. "My son's running cross country for Jamestown High. He prefers track, but cross will give him strength he'll need in the fall. He does love the T-shirt that reads, 'XC—finally a good use for a golf course.'"

So, that's enough lingo to get you started on your path. I look forward to seeing you on the roads and trails. Happy running... don't bonk! 🍌