



Overview: Middle Distance

Middle distance events are the most demanding in track and field because they are actually long sprints. 800m and 1500m events are considered middle distance. Training is designed to develop these skills listed. A training program should be developed to meet individual needs.

Middle Distance Key Skills Checklist

YOUR ATHLETE CAN
Run longer distances (400m/800m1500m)
Pace self (or can learn)
Demonstrate speed, strength, and endurance
Maintain erect posture with hips tall
From back of the foot, roll through the ball of the foot and push off
Show spring, rhythm, and light touch in foot action
Keep shoulders not hunched and elbows tucked in
Keep body relaxed and moving efficiently

Training for Middle Distance

Middle distance training focuses on pace. The key for a coach is to keep a balance between training volume and intensity. Athletes need a strong aerobic base. It helps them to be able to pace themselves, but speed is also an important part of their training. Middle distance athletes need good endurance to maintain speed over a race.

Middle distance runners should try and maintain a prescribed pace established by the coach. Example: During a 1600m training run, the athlete would run each of four 400m laps in 2 minutes per lap. The coach might also set a target time for athletes to run a given distance. Example: Run 200m every 3 minutes. To increase the challenge, the athletes would increase speed or decrease time between intervals.

Athletes can do “surges” to develop speed. Example: Set out cone at intervals around the track. The athlete runs at normal stride to first cone. Then they “surge,” or increase speed, to next cone. They continue to alternate from normal to “surge” pace between cones.



STAND START

All distance runners must use a standing start. All distance races begin with a 2 command start. Refer to the Starts section for more details.



COACHING POINTS FOR MIDDLE DISTANCE RUNNING TECHNIQUE

When coaching middle distance runners, the coach needs to find the right combination of speed and endurance for each athlete.

1. It is important to have a comfortable stride and rhythm and to not over stride.
2. Unlike sprinting, the foot strikes the ground less on the ball of the foot and more to the back of the foot. The foot rolls onto the ball and pushes off.
3. The knee has some flexion.
4. Knee lift is lower than that of a sprinter.
5. Heel does not go as high as a sprinter.
6. Leg movement is smooth.
7. Swing arms from shoulders. The elbows are bent at around a 90-degree angle but can straighten a little more on the down swing. Arms and shoulders should be relaxed.
8. Head straight; chin level, focus ahead 20-30 meters.



TRAINING TO IMPROVE TECHNIQUE - MIDDLE DISTANCE RUNNING

Observation	Correction by coach	Drill/Test
Runner not erect enough. (Chin is too low;)	Remind athlete to: Position the chin higher Hold shoulders back. Maintain this position.	Practice Correction
Runner appears to be bobbing up and down (excessive bouncing).	Remind athlete to: Pull through elbows. Wrist needs to go hip to chin.	Practice correction. Do arm movement while standing.
Runner is "twisting."	Remind athlete to: Keep torso in a forward direction and toes pointed forward.	Have runner run on a line or inside of the lane.

TRAINING DRILLS FOR MIDDLE DISTANCE RUNNING

As a general rule, duration for the 800m runner is not very long, 25-35 minutes on non-track days and 45 minutes to an hour on the long run day. Remember: the focus is maintaining speed over a longer distance.

Drill	Russian Workout	Purpose	Develop Speed Endurance
Reps:	5 (increasing to 15 over time)	When to Use	Mid Season
Teaching Points			
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Run 5x200m at $\frac{3}{4}$ race pace. 2. Rest 45 seconds between each 200m. 3. After five repetitions, rest three minutes. 4. Repeat. 			
Points of Emphasis			
Athlete developing speed endurance			



DISTANCE RUNS

Middle distance training should include a distance runs. There are two main types of distance run, depending on the type of effort and recovery needed.

1. Distance Run: Duration of 35-40 minutes. The pace is set so that the runner can manage without too much stress. This should be a flat, soft-surfaced, continuous run. This is more common early in the season. Do not worry so much about time. As the season progresses, mark each mile and make necessary corrections.
2. Hill Running is more difficult. The first 20 minutes maximum are flat. The next 30 minutes must have a series of uphill climbs or a steady hill climb. As with the long slow run, do not worry so much about time.

INTERVAL TRAINING

Below are some examples of interval sessions. Sample recovery times are listed. Coaches can adjust as necessary.

	Increasing speed/decreasing recovery reps	Russian intervals	Pick-up Reps
Intervals	4 x 200m	3 x 300m at set pace	4x400m at set pace
No. Sets	2 sets	2 sets	1
Recovery in Sets		Jog 100m in 30s	90s
Recovery between sets	No additional recovery between sets	Jog 800m	

TOP TIPS FOR COACHING MIDDLE DISTANCE RUNNING (SKILL DEVELOPMENT)

1. Demonstrate stand-up start with commands. (Refer to Starts section)
2. Demonstrate and practice breaking into lane one at the correct point.
3. Practice one turn stager start as used in 800M.
4. Demonstrate and practice how to safely pass another runner. Run around the runner on the outside. Get two strides ahead before cutting back in.
5. Run or ride along with runners on a bike to help control running pace. A stopwatch, pedometer or GPS watch can help you to monitor pace.
6. Establish split times with athletes for certain distances of the race.
7. Make sure athlete receives ample recovery time from training.
8. Train to race: Simulate race conditions as much and as often as possible. (e.g. start each practice interval with 2 command start).
9. Learn when to stop a session when an athlete is not running well. Practicing slow teaches you to race slow.



TOP TIPS FOR MIDDLE DISTANCE AT COMPETITION

1. Plan the race.
2. Warm up thoroughly.
3. Save energy for the last part of the race.
4. Run your race and plan.
5. Surge when others try to pass.
6. Never take the lead unless you plan on keeping it.
7. Maintain contact with the leader if not leading. Keep in striking distance.
8. Respond to the moves of other runners.
9. Avoid getting behind or boxed in