

# South Molton Strugglers

## Beginners Group



Congratulations on taking your first step to running. This course is designed to help you build up over a ten week period from a non-runner to running 5km in a fun, supportive group- the South Molton Strugglers. The Strugglers are a friendly running club that meet every Wednesday evening. Their ability ranges from beginners all the way up to competitive athletes taking part in a variety of races. We welcome all runners and support everyone on their running journey – whatever their reason for running. For some it is purely to get out of putting the kids to bed and have a chat with their friends whereas others are coming out to train hard and push themselves to improve. Everyone is welcome.

Running clears the mind – something about the flow of oxygen to the muscles, not the brain, simplifies the most thorny problem. Running can be blissful solitude, and the most social of sports. Running means different things for different people, from park pootlers to supersonic sprinters, but we believe there is something in this wonderful sport for everyone.

As you are a beginner to running, we have put together some key information that may help you over the next ten weeks and beyond.

### Everyone can run

Yes, everyone. Whatever your age, size or background. Even if you've not so much as sprinted for a bus since you left school, and watching Mo Farah on the telly leaves you breathless, once you start running you will be surprised how quickly you improve.

### Where should I run?

You can run anywhere that's safe and enjoyable. The best running routes are scenic, well lit, and free of traffic – footpaths, trails, parks etc. Think of running as a way to explore new territory. Use your watch to gauge your distance, and set out on a new adventure each time you run. Talk to other runners about the routes they run. The Strugglers website has a varied list of local routes both on and off road -

<https://www.southmoltonstrugglers.co.uk/members/training-routes>

The more varied your routes, the easier running will feel. We encourage all runners to wear an item of 'hi-vis' typically a running vest or belt specifically with the reflective strips. They are cheap to buy and can be purchased through sports direct/amazon/wiggle etc. This does not mean a bright luminous top – they are not hi-vis. A strugglers rule whilst talking about safety – 'no headphones at all on a club night'. This is for three main reasons – 1. you will not hear the run leaders instructions 2. You will not hear traffic approaching and 3. Why come to running club to listen to music when the rest of us come to support/chat/socialise?

## **I always feel out of breath when I run. Is something wrong?**

Running causes you to breathe harder than usual, so some amount of huffing and puffing is normal. Most of that out-of-breath feeling diminishes as you become fitter. Concentrate on breathing from deep down in your belly, and if you have to, slow down or take walking breaks. If the breathlessness persists, ask your doctor about the possibility that you may have asthma.

## **I often suffer from a stitch when I run. Will these ever go away?**

Side stitches are common among beginners because the abdomen is not used to the jostling that running causes. Most runners find that stitches go away as fitness increases. Also, don't eat any solid foods in the hour before you run. When you get a stitch, breathe deeply, concentrating on pushing all of the air out of your abdomen. This will stretch out your diaphragm muscle (just below your lungs), which is usually where a cramp occurs.

## **Don't worry if it's hard at first**

Everyone struggles with motivation sometimes, even the pros. And everyone finds running hard at some point – it's perfectly normal to find it daunting at the beginning, or after a break. Running has a steep learning curve, not so much for your head as for your unaccustomed-to-the-impact muscles. So don't stop after your first, second, or even third run: they are literally the hardest you will ever do. And any time you push

your body to do something new, you are probably going to feel it the next day. DOMS – delayed onset muscle soreness – is perfectly normal, and nothing to worry about. It passes – just ask anyone at the Strugglers. But if you have something that hurts for more than a couple of runs, do try to get it seen to. When you get over the top of the first steep curve you'll be able to back off a little, and suddenly it feels enjoyable. It won't take long to get there either.

## **Other exercises are important**

Many runners regard any training that isn't actually running as a waste of time. They are wrong. Core work, and strength and conditioning work, are hugely important, both in injury prevention and in improving your running form and economy. It is also vitally important that you warm up and cool down correctly – we will give you guidance on this each week.

## **Do I have to wear running shoes, or are other trainers fine?**

Running doesn't require much investment in gear and accessories, but you have to have a good pair of running shoes. Unlike all-round trainers, running shoes are designed for running and hopefully reduce the amount of shock that travels up your leg. They're also made to fit your foot snugly, which reduces the slipping and sliding that can lead to blisters.

## **Make running social**

The idea of talking while running might strike fear into you, and leave you feeling breathless with mere anticipation. But for the majority of the Strugglers this is what it is all about – 'running at the speed of chat' is the best speed (for most of the women at club). Running with a friend can make a slog seem like a jaunt, even if you save all the actual chatting for afterwards. You will soon pick up with a few people that are a similar pace to you and if you decide to stick with the Strugglers after you've finished the ten weeks, you will look forward to your 'Wednesday night' workout/chat.

If you have any questions throughout the ten weeks, please feel free to ask Julie, Nik or any of the other leaders/runners that will assist throughout the programme. There is a more detailed introduction to running available on the Strugglers website if you would

like to consider all aspects further ranging from diet, rest, recovery and clothing. There is no expectation to join the Strugglers at the end of the ten weeks but we would love it if you do!

We are a very friendly bunch of runners and always welcome new members and support them on their next step.