PuneRunners

PRESENTS

THE RUNNER'S WORKOUT GUIDE

Running plans, strength plans, hybrid weeks, fat loss that actually works, recovery and honest comeback steps - mat only at home, a few home basics, or a full gym. Built on published research, with coach practice clearly labelled.

FREE FOREVER · NO SIGN-UP · NO APP

For the PuneRunners community and every runner who has ever asked "but what do I do at the gym?" - this one's for you.

General education, not medical advice. Pain, injury or a medical condition - see a doctor or physiotherapist first.

SECTION 01

START HERE

Two minutes of honest orientation before any plan in this guide.

who this is for

Runners who want to get stronger, gym-goers who want to run, anyone chasing fitter, faster, leaner - with whatever they actually have: just a mat at home, a mat plus a few home basics (a pull-up bar, a band, dumbbells - each optional), or a full gym.

how to use this guide

Pick your goal, days, equipment lane. Section 02 gives you a week template; sections 06-07 translate the strength sessions to your equipment. The free builder at punerunners.com/runnersworkout does the picking live. Your training programme and nutrition strategy should work together - the sibling Runner's Fuel & Nutrition Guide covers how energy, carbohydrate, protein and hydration support training and recovery.

important health and training disclaimer: this guide is for general educational purposes - it is not a substitute for individual medical advice, diagnosis, treatment or professional coaching. Exercise and nutrition requirements vary between individuals: consult an appropriate healthcare professional before beginning a programme if you have a medical condition, injury, significant health concern or a history of disordered eating. Stop training if you experience concerning symptoms - sharp pain, chest pain, dizziness, get checked. Progress gradually and adjust the programme to your ability, training history and recovery. The authors and publishers are not providing individual medical or nutritional prescriptions through this guide.

the talk test (your pace governor)

Easy runs: full sentences, comfortably. Tempo: short phrases only. Intervals: a word or two. If you can't talk, you're not running easy - and easy is where the base gets built.

the effort scale (your gym governor)

Rate effort 1-10. Most working sets live at 7-8: you finish with 2-3 clean reps still in the tank. Save 9-10 for rare occasions. Grinders every session is how progress stalls.

honest timelines, no promises: fitness changes in 4-6 weeks, visible shape usually needs 8-12 weeks of consistency, and bodies vary wildly. Anyone guaranteeing you a six-pack by a date is selling something. We're a running club; we sell nothing.

SECTION 01

WHAT'S INSIDE

Every chapter and what you get from it.

WHAT'S INSIDE

SECTION	CHAPTER	WHAT YOU GET
02	the week that works	week templates for every goal, with honest training-day counts + the fine print
03	running plans	first 5k, faster 10k, 10k-to-half bridge
04	strength basics	six patterns, sets/reps/rest, the progression engine
05	exercise library	30 exercises with cues, swaps and mistake fixes
06	home: mat only · a few basics · dumbbells	sessions matched to what you actually have
07	gym plans	beginner full-body, upper/lower, PPL, gym demystified
08	fat loss & tone	the honest recipe, protein made Indian, the abs question
09	hybrid / hyrox-style	run+lift rules, week templates, the station circuit
10	recovery	sleep, mobility, deloads, returning after a break
11	the comeback corner	niggle education + the graded return-to-run ladder
12-13	mistakes, troubleshooting, numbers, your week	the 12 classics, symptom-first fixes, every number on one page + a fridge page

SECTION 02

THE WEEK THAT WORKS

The most important idea in this book: a week you can actually repeat beats a perfect week you abandon.

Every plan in this book is a rearrangement of the same five building blocks: **easy runs, quality runs (tempo/intervals/long), strength sessions, hybrid sessions, and rest**. Health and shape come from the boring combination the research keeps confirming: 150-300 minutes of moderate cardio plus at least 2 strength days a week [1][2]. Honest check: not every template here reaches 150 cardio minutes by itself. The running-priority weeks do; strength-priority and 3-day weeks deliberately trade cardio for lifting or rest - each template shows its weekly minutes and how to top up with brisk walks, a cycle, or a commute on foot. The health floor is worth knowing; your goal decides whether this block chases it.

THE FIVE RULES EVERY TEMPLATE FOLLOWS

1. **Rest brackets the hardest day.** The day before and after your longest or hardest session is rest or very easy [16].
2. **Every 4th week is a cutback.** Volume drops by roughly a third. This is where the body absorbs the work and comes back stronger [16]. Coaches place it anywhere from every 3rd to every 5th week - treat it as part of the plan, not an optional bonus.
3. **Hard days hard, easy days easy.** Most of the week is genuinely easy; quality sessions only work when you arrive rested [17].
4. **Missed a day? Shuffle, never stack.** Move the session to another day this week, or drop it. Never bolt two hard sessions together to "catch up" [19].
5. **Strength counts on 2+ days, every week, forever.** WHO counts it, ACSM counts it, your knees and your shape both thank you [1][2].

how to pick a template: choose the number of days you can keep for 8 weeks straight - not your best week, your normal week. Three honest days beat six heroic ones. Then match the strength sessions to the equipment you truly have: just a mat, a mat plus a few basics, or a full gym.

SECTION 02

HOW TO READ THE TEMPLATES

The building blocks used in every week template.

HOW TO READ THE TEMPLATES

BLOCK	WHAT IT MEANS
strength A/B/C	Full-body sessions from the equipment chapters - exact exercises, sets and reps live there, matched to your lane.
easy run	Talk-test pace, windows in the running-plans chapter. Walk-run is not a downgrade; it is how every beginner plan works [16].
quality run	One a week at most for newer runners: tempo, intervals, or the long run. Never two hard run days back to back.
hybrid	A run plus a strength circuit in one session (hybrid chapter).

THE DAY NAMES, DEFINED

- **Running day:** a scheduled running or walk-running session.
- **Strength day:** a scheduled resistance-training session.
- **Active recovery day:** low-intensity movement intended to support recovery.
- **Rest day:** a day without structured training.
- **Training day:** any day containing a scheduled running, strength or structured conditioning session.

cute but true: plans like these are exactly what we chatter about at PuneRunners - runners comparing weeks, swapping routes and gym tips. Come find your people: punerunners.com has the links (WhatsApp community, Strava club, r/punerunners, @punerunnersclub on Instagram).

SECTION 02

WHICH PLAN SHOULD I CHOOSE?

Match your honest starting point to a template - then start. Switching later is allowed.

YOUR SITUATION	START HERE
new to running, or returning after 6+ months off	the first-5k week (3 running days + 1 strength day) + the first-5k plan
can run 5k comfortably; want fitness, tone, fat loss	the general-fitness week (3 core + 1 optional) or a 4-day fat-loss week + section 08
can run 5-8k comfortably; want speed	the faster-10k framework (3 runs a week) inside a 4-day week
running 25-35 km/week; the 10k feels owned	the 10k-to-half bridge - read its entry box first
love the gym; runs are the side quest	build-muscle templates; keep 1-2 easy runs
hyrox-style hybrid appeals	hybrid base (4-5 training days) or the 6-day block + the hybrid chapter - read the circuit scaling first

equipment decides the strength column, not the goal: every template works in all three lanes - mat only at home, a mat plus a few basics, or a full gym. The equipment chapters translate the sessions.

THE BUSY-WEEK VERSION (WHAT TO KEEP, IN ORDER)

1. **The long run** - the week's anchor. Protect it first.
2. **One full-body strength session** - keeps the muscle signal alive.
3. **The quality run** (tempo/intervals) - keep it if the week allows.
4. **Easy runs** - the shock absorber: first to shrink, never skipped two weeks in a row.

Drop from the bottom up. One honest session beats a heroic plan you abandon [16][17].

about the 4th-week cutback: a lighter week every ~4th is one proven planning rhythm [16], not an injury-prevention law - a graded plan alone didn't cut injuries in a novice trial [14]. Progression depends on you: training history, sleep, response. If life is already cutback-shaped, hold - don't cut further.

SECTION 02

3-4 DAYS A WEEK

The full-body classics. For busy weeks, true beginners, and anyone rebuilding the habit: three core days, plus one optional or supplementary session.

GENERAL FITNESS: 3 CORE TRAINING DAYS + 1 OPTIONAL STRENGTH DAY

mon	tue	wed	thu	fri	sat	sun
strength A - full body STRENGTH	rest or easy 20-min walk REST	easy run 25-35 min RUN	optional: strength B - full body STRENGTH	rest REST	longer easy run 40-50 min RUN	rest REST

The core schedule is three training days - Monday, Wednesday, Saturday. Thursday's strength session is optional: add it when recovery and your calendar allow. Cardio this week: ~65-85 min running (+ optional 20-min walk) - below the 150-min health floor; top up with 2-3 brisk 30-min walks or easy rides on rest days.

FIRST 5K: 3 RUNNING DAYS + 1 STRENGTH DAY

mon	tue	wed	thu	fri	sat	sun
walk-run session (first-5k plan) RUN	rest REST	strength A - short version 25 min STRENGTH	walk-run session RUN	rest REST	walk-run session - the long one RUN	rest REST

Three running or walk-running sessions plus one short strength session each week. Only have three days? Prioritise the three running sessions - the strength session is supplementary; add it when recovery and scheduling allow. Cardio: ~70-90 min walk-run - below the floor by design (a graded start is the point [16]); easy walks on rest days close the gap.

SECTION 02

BUILD MUSCLE: 3 STRENGTH DAYS + 1 OPTIONAL EASY RUN

The strength-priority week. The three lifting sessions are the core of this programme; the Saturday run is optional.

mon	tue	wed	thu	fri	sat	sun
strength A	rest	strength B	rest	strength C	optional easy run 25-30 min	rest
STRENGTH	REST	STRENGTH	REST	STRENGTH	RUN	REST

The easy run should stay comfortable - do not add it if it compromises recovery or the quality of your strength sessions. Cardio: ~25-30 min - a deliberate strength-first trade; add 2-3 walks or rides if you want the health floor too.

strength A/B/C in your lane

Home - just me and a mat: the mat-only versions (squats to a chair, split squats, push-ups, bridges, planks). **Home - a few basics:** add dumbbell versions (goblet squats, one-arm rows, RDLs, overhead press) for whatever you own. **Full gym:** the gym versions - machines welcome, barbell optional. With three sessions, hitting every muscle each time gives each muscle the 2x-per-week frequency research supports - directly once, indirectly again [2][4][19].

SECTION 02

4 DAYS A WEEK

The sweet spot for most runners who lift: 2 runs, 2 lifts, 3 full rest days.

4-DAY · GOAL: FAT LOSS + TONE

mon	tue	wed	thu	fri	sat	sun
strength A - full body STRENGTH	easy run 25-30 min RUN	rest or 20-min walk REST	strength B - full body STRENGTH	rest - sleep is training too REST	longer easy run 35-45 min RUN	rest REST

Cardio: ~60-75 min (+ optional 20-min walk) - below the floor; add 2-3 brisk walks.

FASTER 10K: 4 TRAINING DAYS (3 RUNS + 1 STRENGTH)

mon	tue	wed	thu	fri	sat	sun
rest REST	quality session (10k framework) RUN	rest REST	strength A - short version STRENGTH	easy run 30 min RUN	long run (builds weekly) RUN	rest or gentle mobility REST

Cardio: ~145-230 min across the plan - meets the floor most weeks (week 1 sits just under).

UPPER/LOWER SPLIT: 4 STRENGTH DAYS + 1 OPTIONAL EASY RUN

mon	tue	wed	thu	fri	sat	sun
upper body (gym plans) STRENGTH	lower body STRENGTH	rest REST	upper body STRENGTH	lower body STRENGTH	optional easy run 25-30 min RUN	rest REST

The four strength sessions are the programme; the Saturday easy run is optional and creates a fifth training day. If recovery becomes difficult, remove the optional run before reducing recovery time between strength sessions. Cardio: ~25-30 min - walks or rides fill the gap if wanted.

why this split works: each muscle gets trained twice a week - the frequency most supported for growth [4][18] - and the run stays easy enough not to steal from your lifts [6].

SECTION 02

5 DAYS A WEEK

For the regular who's ready for more - still with two honest rest days.

5-DAY · GOAL: FAT LOSS + TONE

mon	tue	wed	thu	fri	sat	sun
strength A STRENGTH	easy run 30 min RUN	strength B STRENGTH	rest REST	strength C - upper body, carries & core only (skip squats/lunges so Saturday's long-run legs stay fresh) STRENGTH	longer easy run 40-55 min RUN	rest REST

Cardio: ~70-85 min - below the floor; add 2-3 brisk walks or a weekend ride. Friday's strength is upper body, carries and core only, so Saturday's legs are fresh - drop it any week they aren't; the long run matters more.

HYBRID BASE TRAINING: 4-5 TRAINING DAYS PER WEEK

mon	tue	wed	thu	fri	sat	sun
rest REST	intervals + light strength (short) HYBRID	easy run 30-40 min RUN	strength A STRENGTH	rest REST	long run RUN	easy walk or rest REST

The core schedule contains four training days; add a fifth session only when recovery, experience and current training capacity support it - never increase sessions simply to meet a weekly target. Cardio: ~115-180 min - meets the floor from mid-plan onwards.

BUILD MUSCLE: 5 TRAINING DAYS

mon	tue	wed	thu	fri	sat	sun
push (chest, shoulders, triceps) STRENGTH	pull (back, biceps) STRENGTH	legs + core STRENGTH	rest REST	upper body STRENGTH	lower body + easy run 20-25 min HYBRID	rest REST

Cardio: ~20-25 min - strength-first trade; a walk most evenings closes the gap. In upper/lower and PPL splits, rest brackets individual muscle groups (48 h between leg sessions) rather than full-body rest days.

the honest check: 5 days only works if sleep and food keep up (recovery chapter). If life gets loud, drop to the 4-day templates without guilt - the plan that survives your calendar wins.

SECTION 02

6 DAYS A WEEK · CUTBACKS · MISSED DAYS

Ambitious, but only after 6+ consistent months - and still one full rest day, non-negotiable.

6-DAY · GOAL: HYBRID (HYROX-STYLE)

mon	tue	wed	thu	fri	sat	sun
strength A + easy run 20 min HYBRID	intervals RUN	strength B STRENGTH	easy run 30 min + core RUN	strength C - upper body, carries & core only, or rest STRENGTH	long run or hybrid simulation HYBRID	rest - fully REST

Cardio: ~165-210 min - comfortably over the floor. Friday stays light or off: Saturday's long run or simulation is the week's anchor, and on simulation weeks the stations ARE the third strength session. Shown here with the build-phase Saturday simulation option; see page 40 for the base-phase version.

6-DAY · GOAL: BUILD MUSCLE (PPL X2)

mon	tue	wed	thu	fri	sat	sun
push STRENGTH	pull STRENGTH	legs STRENGTH	push + easy run 20 min HYBRID	pull STRENGTH	legs OR easy long run 40-60 min (choose one, not both) STRENGTH / RUN	rest REST

Cardio: ~60-80 min - below the floor by design (strength-first); a walk most evenings closes it.

THE CUTBACK WEEK (EVERY 4TH WEEK)

	NORMAL WEEK	CUTBACK WEEK
run volume	100%	~65-70% - same sessions, shorter
strength	100%	same exercises, 1 fewer set each, same or slightly lighter weight
quality sessions	1-2	0-1, kept short

Adaptation happens in recovery, not during the workout [16]. Cutbacks are borrowed from classic marathon plans like Hal Higdon's "stepback" weeks [16] - practice that has survived decades of runners. A lighter week roughly every fourth is one proven planning rhythm, not an injury-prevention law - even a careful graded program didn't reduce injuries in a novice trial [14]. Let your response steer: two flat weeks, slipping sleep or multiplying niggles say "take it now".

missed a day? the shuffle rules

Missed an easy run or rest day: let it go. Nothing to repay. **Missed a strength day:** slide it to the next rest day, keep 48h before the next strength session. **Missed the long run or intervals:** move it once, this week only. Can't fit it? Drop it - next week is a fresh page. **Never:** two hard sessions fused into one monster. That's not catching up, that's catching an injury [19].

SECTION 03

RUNNING PLANS, READ FIRST

Three plans follow: first 5k, faster 10k, and the 10k-to-half-marathon bridge. First, learn to read them.

THE FIVE WORKOUT TYPES (AND WHY EACH EXISTS)

TYPE	WHAT IT FEELS LIKE	WHY YOU DO IT
easy run	full sentences, could sing along	builds the aerobic base; 70-80% of all running lives here [16][17]
long run	easy but patient; the week's longest	trains endurance, fat use and race-day legs [17]
tempo	comfortably hard, short phrases only	pushes the pace you can hold without blowing up [16]
intervals	hard repeats, a word or two, full recovery jogs	raises top-end speed and running economy [16]
walk-run	run a little, walk a little, repeat	how every sensible beginner plan builds up without breaking [16]

PACES ARE WINDOWS, NOT SINGLE NUMBERS

If you have a recent 5k time, it anchors everything - one honest input does the work [23]. Starting windows for a 30:00 5k runner:

TYPE	WINDOW FOR A 30:00 5K	RULE OF THUMB
easy / long	~6:50-7:40 /km	about 0:50-1:40 /km slower than 5k pace
tempo	~6:10-6:25 /km	about 0:10-0:25 /km slower than 5k pace
intervals	~5:35-5:50 /km	around 5k pace or a touch faster, short reps only

These are starting windows, not commandments - the talk test overrules the watch every time, and heat, humidity, sleep and hills all move the window [17][23]. The free builder at punerunners.com/runnersworkout computes your windows from any recent race time.

heat note for India: on hot or humid days, expect 10-30 sec/km slower at the same effort - slow down, hydrate, train by feel; the fitness still counts (practice-level guidance; the talk test is your gauge). Many Indian runners train before sunrise or after work around heat and the clock - the plan flexes, consistency is what counts. Monsoon or heatwave? Every run in these plans works on a treadmill: same minutes, same talk test.

SECTION 03

READY TO START?

Two honest minutes before eight committed weeks. The right entry point beats the ambitious one.

PLAN	YOU'RE READY WHEN	NOT YET?
first 5k	you can walk briskly 30 min; a doctor has okayed exercise if you have health flags; shoes that don't hurt	chest pain, dizziness, or joint pain on walks - see a doctor first
faster 10k	running 15-20 km/week for 6+ weeks; 5-8k feels comfortable; no current niggle	build with the first-5k plan or the 4-day templates first
10k-to-half bridge	25-35 km/week for 6-8+ weeks; a recent 11-12k that felt comfortable	base-build first - the bridge's entry box tells you honestly
hybrid / hyrox-style	6+ months of consistent training; a comfortable 10k; strength A/B/C familiar	earn the base first; the circuit is optional sport-specific work

THE EFFORTS, IN PLAIN WORDS

TYPE	TALK TEST	EFFORT (1-10)	HOW MUCH OF YOUR WEEK
easy run	full sentences, comfortably	3-4	most of it - 70-80% [16] [17]
long run	full sentences, patient	3-4	one per week - the anchor
tempo	short phrases only	6-7	one per week at most
intervals	a word or two	8-9 (hard, not all-out)	one per week at most
strength sets	-	7-8, 2-3 clean reps left [3]	2+ days, every week

not there yet? That's not a fail - the 3-day templates are the on-ramp, and walking counts while you build. Come back to this page in a month.

SECTION 03 · PLAN 1

YOUR FIRST 5K

8 weeks, 3 running sessions a week, walk-run from day one. Fits the first-5k week (3 running days + 1 strength day); add the short strength session as shown there.

WEEK	SESSION 1	SESSION 2	SESSION 3 (LONG)
1	run 1 min / walk 2 min x 8	run 1 min / walk 2 min x 8	run 1 min / walk 2 min x 10
2	run 2 min / walk 2 min x 7	run 2 min / walk 2 min x 7	run 2 min / walk 1 min x 9
3	run 3 min / walk 1 min x 7	run 3 min / walk 1 min x 7	run 4 min / walk 1 min x 6
4	**cutback:** repeat week 2 - same sessions, leave fresh		
5	run 5 min / walk 1 min x 5	run 6 min / walk 1 min x 4	run 8 min / walk 1 min x 3
6	run 10 min / walk 1 min x 3	run 12 min / walk 1 min x 2	run 15 min / walk 1 min, then run 10 min
7	run 18 min / walk 1 min, then 8 min	run 20 min easy	run 25 min easy
8	easy 20 min	easy 15 min + 4 x 20 sec relaxed strides	**5k day** - run-walk as needed, smile at the finish

RULES THAT MAKE IT WORK

- **Slow down.** Every run segment at talk-test pace. The #1 beginner mistake is running the run parts too fast [16].
- **Walk proudly.** Walking breaks are the method, not a failure - classic plans from Higdon down use them at every level [16].
- **Repeat a week freely.** If a week felt hard, do it again before moving on. The plan serves you, not the other way around.
- **Warm up** 5 minutes of brisk walking before every session; cool down 5 minutes after.

club nudge: first-5k stories are our favourite genre. Share yours (or borrow courage from others) via the community links at punerunners.com.

FASTER 10K: 8-WEEK, 3-RUN-PER-WEEK FRAMEWORK

a proposed framework, not a prescription: this is a proposed training framework for runners who already have a consistent running base - one quality session, one easy session and one longer easy session each week. The distances and interval durations must be adjusted to your current running volume, experience and recovery capacity. Treat it as a structure to adapt to your own training, not a personalised prescription.

WEEK	QUALITY SESSION	EASY RUN	LONG EASY RUN
1	6 x 2 min brisk, 1 min easy jog between repetitions	30 min	8 km
2	5 x 3 min brisk, 2 min easy jog between repetitions	35 min	9 km
3	4 x 4 min controlled hard, 3 min easy jog between repetitions	35-40 min	10 km
4	**cutback:** 4 x 2 min controlled brisk efforts · easy run 25-30 min · long easy run 7 km		
5	5 x 3 min brisk, 2 min easy jog between repetitions	40 min	11 km
6	20-25 min controlled tempo effort	40 min	12 km
7	6 x 3 min brisk, 2 min easy jog between repetitions	40-45 min	13-14 km
8	20 min easy + 4 relaxed strides	20 min easy	**10K event** - start at goal pace, not faster

Warm up for 10-15 minutes before quality sessions and cool down afterwards. Brisk intervals are controlled, not all-out sprints; tempo efforts should feel challenging but sustainable. This schedule is not suitable for every runner - do not increase your training volume sharply to match the table; if the starting workload is beyond you, stay at your current level and build gradually. The final week is a taper: do not compensate for missed training by adding extra sessions.

HOW TO SET YOUR GOAL PACE

- **From a recent 5k:** your 10k sits roughly 10-20 sec/km slower than 5k pace for most runners (practice rule of thumb; race-equivalence tables like VDOT formalise this [23]).
- **No recent race?** Do a 3k time trial at "comfortably hard" and use it the same way, or let the builder at punerunners.com/runnersworkout do the arithmetic.

SECTION 03 · PLAN 3

THE 10K-TO-HALF BRIDGE

8 weeks, for runners who own the 10k and want 21.1. Long runs grow in waves; every 4th week steps back [16].

before you start - half-marathon readiness: this plan assumes you have been running consistently for at least 6-8 weeks; roughly 25-35 km per week is a broad reference range, not a strict requirement; a recent 11-12 km long run felt comfortable; you have no unresolved injury; and you are recovering well between sessions. These are screening references, not guarantees - your readiness also depends on sleep, stress, nutrition and life load. If any of these points feels uncomfortable, stay at your current running level longer and build gradually. Run-walk is welcome from week 1 [16].

EXAMPLE WEEKLY STRUCTURE

mon	tue	wed	thu	fri	sat	sun
rest or optional upper strength REST	quality run RUN	easy run RUN	short strength or rest STRENGTH	easy run RUN	long easy run RUN	rest REST

Four running sessions a week; the strength work is optional and supplementary - never at the cost of running recovery. A 20 km long run alone does not guarantee readiness; the full block's consistency and progression decide it.

WEEK	QUALITY SESSION	EASY RUNS	LONG RUN (SAT)
1	25 min tempo	2 x 40 min	12 km
2	5 x 4 min intervals (hard), 2 min easy jog	2 x 40 min	14 km
3	30 min tempo	2 x 40 min	16 km
4	**cutback:** tempo 15 min, easy runs 30 min, long run 11 km		
5	5 x 5 min intervals (hard), 2 min easy jog	2 x 45 min	17 km
6	35 min tempo	2 x 45-50 min	18-19 km
7	20 min tempo + 4 strides	2 x 40 min	20 km
8	easy 25 min	1 x 20 min very easy	**half marathon** - first 5k should feel suspiciously easy

WHEN THE PLAN MEETS REAL LIFE

- **Missed a long run:** move it once within the week, or drop it - never stack two.
- **Persistent pain that changes how you run:** stop and get assessed (comeback corner).

race-week basics (practice, proven over decades)

Taper: week 8 halves the volume [16]. **Fuel:** nothing new on race day - rehearse gels/breakfast on week 6-7 long runs (Fuel & Nutrition Guide). **Pacing:** even splits; hold back the first 5 km [16]. **Strength:** optional short sessions until week 7; none in race week [16].

SECTION 04

STRENGTH BASICS

Muscles know movements, not machine names. Learn six patterns and every gym (or living room) becomes usable.

THE SIX MOVEMENT PATTERNS

PATTERN	WHAT IT TRAINS	HOME VERSION	GYM VERSION
squat	quads, glutes	squat, split squat	goblet squat, back squat, leg press
hinge	hamstrings, glutes, back	glute bridge, superman	RDL, deadlift, hip thrust
push	chest, shoulders, triceps	push-up (knees fine)	bench, overhead press, dips
pull	back, biceps	superman pull, bird-dog - isometric holds only, not a true loaded pull; a band, bar or loaded backpack unlocks real rows	lat pulldown, cable row, pull-up
carry	grip, core, posture	loaded-backpack carry (packed snug)	farmer's carry, suitcase carry
core	trunk stability	plank, dead bug	pallof press, cable chop

A balanced week touches all six. Every template in section 02 does, and the exercise library gives each pattern a home, dumbbell and gym version - with one honest exception: mat-only pulling is a hold, not a row, so the pull pattern grows fastest once a band, a bar or dumbbells join.

SETS X REPS X REST, BY GOAL

GOAL	SETS PER EXERCISE	REPS	REST BETWEEN SETS	EFFORT
general fitness / tone	2-3	8-15	60-90 sec	2-3 in the tank [3]
muscle (hypertrophy)	3-4	6-15	90 sec-2 min	1-3 in the tank [4]
strength focus	3-4	4-8	2-4 min	1-2 in the tank [3] [19]

Wide, honest ranges - because that's what the evidence supports. Both heavier/low-rep and moderate/higher-rep work build muscle when effort is there [4]. Pick the rep zone you enjoy and can progress; enjoyment is a training variable.

Why runners lift: durability - strength work is a standard part of runner preparation [2]; shape - "toned" needs the lifting (section 08); everyday life - the six patterns ARE daily life, trained.

SECTION 04

HOW A/B/C COVER THE SIX PATTERNS

Every pattern, every week - the coverage map.

HOW STRENGTH A/B/C COVER THE SIX PATTERNS

PATTERN	STRENGTH A	STRENGTH B	STRENGTH C
squat	goblet squat	split squat	lunge / step-up
hinge	glute bridge	RDL	hip thrust
push	push-up	overhead press	floor/bench press
pull	one-arm row	lat pulldown / band row	bent-over row
carry	-	-	farmer's carry
core	plank	dead bug	pallof / side plank

A/B/C are the rotating full-body sessions referenced by every template - exact versions per equipment in the equipment chapters.

SECTION 04

THE PROGRESSION ENGINE

Do a little more over time. That's the entire secret - the rest is detail.

Progressive overload means asking slightly more of a muscle than last time, so it adapts [3]. Three honest ways to do it, in order of preference:

1. **Add reps** inside the prescribed range (e.g. 8-12: go 8, 9, 10...)
2. **Add a little weight** when you hit the top of the range on all sets, then build reps again
3. **Add a set** if a muscle is lagging and recovery is good

WORKED EXAMPLE: ONE-ARM DUMBBELL ROW, 3 SETS OF 8-12

WEEK	WHAT YOU DO	WHY
1	10 kg x 8, 8, 7	find your honest starting point
2	10 kg x 9, 9, 8	+1 rep per set [3]
3	10 kg x 10, 10, 9	climbing the range
4	cutback: 10 kg x 8, 8 (2 sets)	absorb the work
5	10 kg x 12, 12, 11	top of range reached
6	12.5 kg x 8, 8, 8	weight up, reps reset to bottom [3]
7	12.5 kg x 9, 9, 8	climb again
8	cutback, then continue the cycle	

HOW MUCH STRENGTH TRAINING IS ENOUGH?

Around 4-6 challenging weekly sets per muscle group can be a reasonable starting point for some beginners [4]. Experienced lifters often use higher volumes - sometimes 10 or more weekly sets per muscle group - but more is not automatically better. Higher-volume training should be adjusted to your experience, exercise intensity, sleep, nutrition and running load [18]; runners lifting on top of real mileage need less lifting volume, not more.

self-check the maths: the upper/lower split trains chest 2x/week at 3-4 sets = 6-8 direct sets, plus indirect work from pressing and pulling - inside the starting range, with weekly reps creeping up, without a spreadsheet.

BODYWEIGHT PROGRESSION (NO WEIGHTS AT HOME)

When bodyweight gets easy, the levers are: slower reps (3-sec lowers), pauses at the hard point, single-leg or single-arm versions, then a snugly loaded backpack. Progressive overload needs no gym card [3].

SECTION 04

WARM-UP, FORM, EFFORT

Three small disciplines that decide whether the next 10 years of training happen.

THE 6-MINUTE WARM-UP (BEFORE ANY STRENGTH SESSION)

MINUTES	DO THIS
0-2	easy cardio to warm the body: march, skip, cycle, or a slow jog
2-4	dynamic mobility: leg swings, arm circles, hip openers, gentle torso rotations
4-6	the first exercise of the day with light weight or bodyweight for 1-2 easy sets

FORM FIRST, ALWAYS

- The best exercise is the one you can perform with good control through a comfortable range of motion - a rule stated plainly by the Huberman/Galpin protocol [19] and echoed by every credible coach.
- New exercise? First session is practice: light weight, slow reps, learn the path. Film yourself or ask a trainer to glance.
- A rep that only happens because form broke doesn't count. End the set there.

EFFORT, HONESTLY

REPS IN THE TANK	WHAT IT MEANS	WHEN TO USE IT
4+	too easy to drive change	warm-up sets, learning form, cutback weeks
2-3	the sweet spot [3]	most working sets, most weeks
0-1	all-out	rare - last set, last week of a block, never on day one

pain and injury precautions: stop the exercise if you feel sudden, sharp or worsening pain. Do not push through pain that changes your technique or running gait. Seek professional assessment for symptoms that are persistent, recurrent or unexplained. Seek prompt medical attention for severe symptoms such as swelling, inability to bear weight, chest pain, fainting or severe breathlessness. Fatigue and normal training soreness are not the same as injury pain - burning muscles and heavy breathing are effort. Full red-flag list in the comeback corner.

SQUAT PATTERN

Cues in plain words. Swaps ranked so a missing machine never cancels a session.

GOBLET SQUAT (DUMBBELL)

- Cup one dumbbell vertically at your chest, elbows tucked.
- Sit down between your heels, chest proud, knees tracking over toes.
- Stand by pushing the floor away; squeeze glutes at the top.

BACK SQUAT (BARBELL)

- Bar on upper back (not neck), feet shoulder-width, big breath and brace.
- Hips and knees bend together; descend with control to comfortable depth.
- Drive up through the whole foot. New to it? A trainer's eye for one session is worth a year of guessing.

LEG PRESS (MACHINE)

- Feet mid-platform, knees track over toes, lower with control.
- Don't let hips peel off the pad at the bottom.

SPLIT SQUAT / LUNGE

- Long stance, torso tall, drop the back knee straight down.
- Front foot does the work; push through it to stand.

STEP-UP

- Whole foot on a knee-height step; stand up using only the top leg.
- Step down slowly - the way down trains too.

SQUAT-PATTERN SWAPS

CAN'T DO / DON'T HAVE	SWAP 1	SWAP 2	HOME VERSION
barbell back squat	goblet squat	leg press	bodyweight squat to a chair
leg press	goblet squat	split squat	split squat (bodyweight)
lunges hurt knees*	split squat (shorter range)	step-up, low step	glute bridge

*discomfort is information, not a command - reduce range, slow down, or swap. Pain that persists: physio (comeback corner).

SQUAT MISTAKES, QUICK FIXES

Same fixes, isolated - check here when a squat feels off.

COMMON MISTAKES, QUICK FIXES

MISTAKE	FIX
knees caving inward	lighter load; think "spread the floor apart" with your feet
heels lifting at the bottom	ankle mobility work; a small heel lift meanwhile
half depth with heavy weight	drop load, full comfortable range - range wins [3]

HINGE PATTERN

The runner's best friend: hamstrings, glutes and the back that holds your posture at km 18.

ROMANIAN DEADLIFT - RDL (DUMBBELL OR BARBELL)

- Soft knees, push hips back like closing a car door with them.
- Weight slides down the thighs; back stays long and flat.
- When hamstrings say "enough", stand by driving hips forward.

DEADLIFT (BARBELL)

- Bar over mid-foot, grip outside knees, chest up, lats tight.
- Push the floor away; bar travels straight up, close to the body.
- Lock out tall without leaning back. Learn light; this lift rewards patience.

HIP THRUST / GLUTE BRIDGE

- Upper back on a bench (hip thrust) or shoulders on the floor (bridge).
- Drive hips to the ceiling; ribs down, glutes squeezed hard at the top.
- Shins vertical at the top - feet too far turns it into a hamstring cramp machine.

BACK EXTENSION / SUPERMAN

- Hinge from the hips, spine neutral; lift by squeezing glutes and back.
- Floor version: superman hold, lift chest and thighs together, 2-sec pause.

HINGE-PATTERN SWAPS

CAN'T DO / DON'T HAVE	SWAP 1	SWAP 2	HOME VERSION
barbell deadlift	RDL (dumbbells)	hip thrust	single-leg glute bridge
hip thrust machine	barbell/dumbbell hip thrust	RDL	glute bridge, feet elevated
back extension bench	superman hold	bird-dog	superman hold

COMMON MISTAKES, QUICK FIXES

MISTAKE	FIX
low back rounding	lighter load; brace like expecting a poke; shorten range
bar/dumbbells drifting away from legs	"shave your legs" with the weight; lats tight
leaning back hard at the top	stand tall and stop - ribs down, glutes on

PUSH PATTERN

Horizontal push and overhead push - cover both each week.

PUSH-UP (THE HONEST BENCHMARK)

- Hands under shoulders, body one line from head to heels (or knees).
- Elbows ~45° from the body; chest to just above the floor.
- Too hard? Hands on a bench. Too easy? Feet on a bench.

BENCH PRESS / DUMBBELL PRESS

- Feet planted, shoulder blades pinched and pressed into the bench.
- Lower to the chest with control; press up and slightly back.
- Dumbbells allow a friendlier shoulder path - equal citizens, not a downgrade [18].

OVERHEAD PRESS (DUMBBELL OR BARBELL)

- Glutes and abs tight; press straight up, biceps finishing by the ears.
- Don't lean back - a shorter range with a straight spine wins.

DIPS (ASSISTED COUNTS)

- Shoulders down away from ears; lean slightly forward for chest.
- Lower to comfortable depth; never chase depth into shoulder pinch.

PUSH-PATTERN SWAPS

CAN'T DO / DON'T HAVE	SWAP 1	SWAP 2	HOME VERSION
bench press	dumbbell press	machine chest press	push-up variations
overhead press bothers shoulder*	landmine press	incline dumbbell press	pike push-up (partial)
dips	close-grip push-up	bench dip, feet low	close-grip push-up

*a shoulder that complains at one angle often accepts another - swapping angles is training smart, not skipping [18][19].

COMMON MISTAKES, QUICK FIXES

MISTAKE	FIX
elbows flared straight out (90°)	tuck to ~45° - friendlier shoulders, same muscle
bouncing the bar off the chest	pause an instant; control is where the growth is [18]
half-range push-ups	elevate hands on a bench instead - full range, honest reps

PULL PATTERN

The posture pattern. Most people under-train pulling - runners included.

ONE-ARM DUMBBELL ROW

- One hand and knee on a bench, back flat and long.
- Pull the dumbbell to your hip, elbow past the ribs; lower slowly.
- Lead with the elbow, not the hand - think "elbow to back pocket".

LAT PULLDOWN

- Wide grip, tall chest, slight lean back (10-15°, not 45°).
- Pull to upper chest, elbows driving down; control the return.

SEATED CABLE ROW

- Tall spine, shoulders down; pull to the lower ribs.
- Squeeze shoulder blades together at the end; no rocking.

PULL-UP (ASSISTED IS TRAINING, NOT CHEATING)

- Dead hang, ribs down; pull chest to bar, lower with control.
- Band or machine assistance keeps reps honest - use it [18].

PULL-PATTERN SWAPS

CAN'T DO / DON'T HAVE	SWAP 1	SWAP 2	HOME VERSION
lat pulldown machine busy/absent	one-arm dumbbell row	bent-over row	band row anchored low
pull-up (can't yet)	band-assisted pull-up	lat pulldown	band pull-down, anchored high
seated cable row	chest-supported row	one-arm dumbbell row	band row / backpack row

why this swap works: swaps are ranked by how closely they copy the movement path and muscle demand - vertical pull for vertical pull, horizontal row for horizontal row [18]. The muscle reads the movement, not the machine's brand name.

COMMON MISTAKES, QUICK FIXES

MISTAKE	FIX
all arms, no back	start each rep by sliding shoulder blades down and back
rocking the torso on rows	lighter weight; brace; the rep count you can control is the real one
shrugging to the ears	shoulders down first; imagine tucking them into back pockets

CARRY + CORE

Grip, posture and a trunk that transfers force - the quiet foundations of both lifting and running form.

FARMER'S CARRY

- Heavy dumbbells at your sides, stand tall, ribs down.
- Walk slow and steady 20-40 m; breathe behind the brace.
- Home version: a snugly loaded backpack (weight high and centred, nothing sharp inside).

PLANK + SIDE PLANK

- Elbows under shoulders, body one line, glutes squeezed.
- Quality over clock: 3 honest 20-30 sec holds beat one shaky 2-minute sag.

DEAD BUG

- On your back, arms up, knees at 90°, low back gently pressed down.
- Extend opposite arm and leg slowly; return; switch. Boring-looking, brilliant.

PALLOF PRESS (BAND OR CABLE)

- Band at chest height, side-on; press hands straight out.
- Resist the rotation - the abs' real job is preventing movement [18].

the crunch truth

Crunches and their cousins train trunk endurance and the rectus abdominis muscle - a fine goal. They do not melt belly fat around them: in a controlled study, six weeks of abdominal exercise alone didn't reduce waist circumference or abdominal fat [5]. Direct core work 2-3x a week for strength and posture; the kitchen and your steps handle visibility (section 08).

CARRY + CORE SWAPS

CAN'T DO / DON'T HAVE	SWAP	HOME VERSION
farmer's carry (no space)	suitcase hold, one side at a time	backpack hold, standing tall
pallof press (no band/cable)	side plank	side plank
plank hurts wrists	forearm plank	forearm plank

CARRY + CORE MISTAKES, QUICK FIXES

Same fixes, isolated - check here when a carry or core move feels off.

COMMON MISTAKES, QUICK FIXES

MISTAKE	FIX
plank sagging to chase the clock	3 x 25 quality seconds beat 90 shaky ones
holding breath the whole set	brace, then keep breathing behind the brace
only crunch-type work	add anti-rotation (pallof, side plank) - resisting movement is the core's day job [18]

the golden rule of swaps

Same pattern, similar muscle demand, equipment you actually have. Trade any exercise for another in its pattern row - the session still counts. That's the whole swap system.

LANE 1: JUST ME AND A MAT

Zero equipment, zero excuses. Two full-body sessions that rotate A/B through your week - no gym card, no gear, no furniture gymnastics.

STRENGTH A (MAT ONLY) · ~30-35 MIN

EXERCISE	SETS X REPS	REST	CUE
squat to chair	3 x 8-15	75 sec	tap the chair, don't sit
push-up (knees or hands-elevated fine)	3 x 5-12	75 sec	body one line
superman pull	3 x 8-10	60 sec	lift, pull elbows back, lower slow
glute bridge	3 x 10-15	60 sec	2-sec squeeze on top
plank	3 x 20-30 sec	60 sec	ribs down, glutes tight

STRENGTH B (MAT ONLY) · ~30-35 MIN

EXERCISE	SETS X REPS	REST	CUE
split squat	3 x 6-10 /leg	75 sec	back knee drops straight down
pike push-up	3 x 4-8	75 sec	hips high, head between arms
bird-dog	3 x 8 /side	60 sec	long line, no wobble
single-leg glute bridge	3 x 8-12 /leg	60 sec	hips level, no twist
dead bug	3 x 6-10 /side	60 sec	low back stays down

the honest pull problem

Pulling is the one pattern a bare floor can't fully train - your back wants something to pull against. The superman pull and bird-dog above keep the muscles honest, but if you ever add one thing to this lane, make it a resistance band: it unlocks real rows and pull-downs - the single most useful add-on for this lane. Until then, don't improvise rows off doors or furniture - an unverified anchor is how home workouts end badly.

SHORTER DAYS

- **20-minute version:** first 3 exercises, 2 sets each, rest 60 sec.
- **45-minute version:** add a 4th set to the first two exercises + 10 minutes of mobility (recovery chapter).

progression at home: when bodyweight gets easy, the levers are slower reps (3-sec lowers), pauses, single-leg versions, then a snugly loaded backpack. Progressive overload needs no gym card [3].

LANE 2: A FEW HOME BASICS

A pull-up bar, a resistance band, a pair of dumbbells - each one is individually optional. Use what you own; skip what you don't. None of them is required, and none of the mat-only sessions assumes them.

if you have a pull-up bar: the pull-up ladder

The most satisfying home strength goal there is. Climb one rung at a time, 2-3 sessions a week, and only move up when the current rung feels controlled. **Safety first:** the bar must be rated for your bodyweight and mounted exactly as its instructions say - test it with a gradually harder hang before every first session of the week, and if anything shifts or creaks, don't use it.

RUNG	STEP	TARGET BEFORE MOVING UP	WHY IT WORKS
1	dead hang	3 x 20-30 sec	grip + shoulder position
2	scapular pulls	3 x 8-10	learns the "shoulders down" start
3	negatives (jump or step up, lower slowly)	3 x 5, 4-5 sec down	builds the lowering strength first
4	band-assisted pull-ups	3 x 5-8	full range with honest help [18]
5	full pull-up	first one, then sets	the milestone - celebrate it

if you have a resistance band: the pull block

Add to any strength session, or use as a standalone 10-minute block. Check the band for cracks before every session; anchor it around something solid that cannot slip or snap back, never toward your face; if an anchor can't be verified stable, skip it.

EXERCISE	SETS X REPS	TRAINS
band row, anchored low	3 x 10-15	horizontal pull - the mat-only gap, fixed
band pull-down, anchored high	3 x 10-15	vertical pull (lat pulldown pattern)
band pull-apart	2-3 x 12-15	rear shoulders, posture
pallof press, band at chest height	2-3 x 10 /side	anti-rotation core [18]

LANE 2: DUMBBELLS + MIXING LANES

One pair covers all six patterns.

if you have dumbbells

One pair covers all six patterns - the full A/B/C rotation is on the next page. Adjustable dumbbells are the luxury version; a fixed pair works fine with the rep-range progression from section 04. No rack, no bench needed - the floor and a sturdy chair or sofa edge cover everything here.

mixing lanes is normal: own a band but no dumbbells? Run the mat-only A/B and swap the band block in for the superman pulls. Own dumbbells but no bar? Run the dumbbell A/B/C as written. The sessions are Lego, not law.

LANE 2 CONTINUED: DUMBBELL A/B/C

One pair of dumbbells covers all six patterns. A/B/C rotation, 30-40 min each.

STRENGTH A

EXERCISE	SETS X REPS	REST
goblet squat	3 x 8-12	90 sec
one-arm row	3 x 8-12 /side	75 sec
push-up (DBs as handles if wrists prefer)	3 x 6-12	75 sec
plank	2 x 20-40 sec	60 sec

STRENGTH B

EXERCISE	SETS X REPS	REST
romanian deadlift	3 x 8-12	90 sec
overhead press	3 x 8-12	75 sec
split squat (DBs at sides)	3 x 6-10 /leg	75 sec
dead bug	2 x 8 /side	60 sec

STRENGTH C

EXERCISE	SETS X REPS	REST
DB hip thrust (back on sofa/bed edge)	3 x 10-15	75 sec
bent-over row	3 x 8-12	75 sec
floor press (lying, DBs)	3 x 8-12	75 sec
farmer's carry or suitcase hold	3 x 20-30 m (or 30 sec)	60 sec

- **20-minute version:** first 2 exercises, 3 sets, as a circuit, minimal rest.
- **45-minute version:** add one set everywhere + superman holds + 10-min mobility.

club nudge: training on a single pair of dumbbells? Good company to be in. Swap home-gym setups and secondhand-equipment finds through the club's channels - all linked at punerunners.com.

GYM PLANS · BEGINNER FULL-BODY

For the first 6 months in a gym. Common machines and dumbbells; no barbell required until you want one, and no exotic equipment assumed.

STRENGTH A

EXERCISE	SETS X REPS	REST
leg press	3 x 10-12	90 sec
seated row	3 x 10-12	75 sec
chest press machine	3 x 10-12	75 sec
leg curl	2 x 10-12	60 sec
plank	2 x 20-40 sec	60 sec

STRENGTH B

EXERCISE	SETS X REPS	REST
goblet squat	3 x 8-12	90 sec
lat pulldown	3 x 10-12	75 sec
shoulder press machine	3 x 10-12	75 sec
hip thrust machine or DB hip thrust	3 x 10-12	75 sec
dead bug	2 x 8 /side	60 sec

machine missing or busy? Trade it for any exercise in the same library pattern - leg press becomes a goblet squat, chest press becomes a dumbbell press. Same pattern, session saved. That's the golden rule of swaps, and it's the only swap system you need.

FIRST-WEEK GYM RULES

- Start every machine at a weight that feels almost too easy; add from session two. Your tendons are a week behind your enthusiasm [3].
- One honest set of notes beats memory: record weights and reps in your phone.
- Adjust the seat before you lift. Most machines fit you only after 10 seconds of pin-pulling.

SECTION 07 · FULL GYM

GYM PLANS · UPPER/LOWER & PPL

Once 6 months of full-body feels easy, splits let you add volume per muscle [4][18].

UPPER/LOWER, 4 DAYS (MON/TUE/THU/FRI)

UPPER (X2/WK)	SETS X REPS	LOWER (X2/WK)	SETS X REPS
bench or machine press	3 x 6-10	squat or leg press	3 x 6-10
lat pulldown or pull-up	3 x 8-12	RDL	3 x 8-10
overhead press	3 x 8-12	leg curl	2-3 x 10-12
seated row	3 x 10-12	split squat or lunge	2 x 8-10 /leg
face pull or band pull-apart	2 x 12-15	calf raise	3 x 10-15
curl + triceps pushdown	2 x 10-15 each	plank or pallof	2-3 sets

PUSH / PULL / LEGS, 6 DAYS (PPL X2)

PUSH	PULL	LEGS
bench press 3 x 6-10	pull-up or pulldown 3 x 8-12	squat 3 x 6-10
incline DB press 3 x 8-12	barbell or DB row 3 x 8-12	RDL 3 x 8-10
overhead press 3 x 8-10	face pull 3 x 12-15	leg press or lunge 3 x 10-12
lateral raise 3 x 12-15	curl 3 x 10-12	leg curl 2 x 10-12
triceps pushdown 3 x 10-15	hammer curl 2 x 10-12	calf + core 2-3 each

PPL x2 is the classic high-frequency split for a reason - each muscle twice weekly with room to grow [4][18]. It's also the easiest to overdo: keep runs easy and keep the rest day holy [6].

SECTION 07 · FULL GYM

THE GYM, DEMYSTIFIED

For everyone who has walked into a gym, felt watched, and walked to the treadmill instead. Nobody is watching. Really.

MACHINES YOU'LL MEET (AND WHAT THEY SECRETLY ARE)

MACHINE	PATTERN	THE ONE ADJUSTMENT THAT MATTERS
leg press	squat	seat distance - knees shouldn't jam your chest
chest press	push	seat height - handles at mid-chest
lat pulldown	pull (vertical)	thigh pad snug - you shouldn't float
seated row	pull (horizontal)	chest pad - tall spine, no reach-and-round
smith machine	squat/push	the bar is on rails - great for learning, still demand form

ETIQUETTE IN FOUR LINES

- Share between sets - "mind if I work in?" is a complete and respected sentence.
- Wipe what you sweat on; re-rack what you lift.
- One machine at a time - no towel-reservations across three stations.
- Asking a trainer or the strong-looking person for a form check is normal. Lifters love it. Truly.

club corner: nervous about day one? Every lifter has a first-day-at-the-gym story - ask around the club's channels and collect a few. WhatsApp community, Strava club, r/punerunners and @punerunnersclub, all at punerunners.com.

THE HONEST RECIPE

"Toned" is not a training style. It is muscle, revealed. Two jobs, done at once.

fat loss while training: the commonly cited 300-500 kcal daily energy gap is a planning reference, not a mandatory target. Runners in high training loads may need a smaller deficit - or maintenance - to protect performance and recovery. Prioritise energy availability, protein, carbohydrate timing and recovery: chronic low energy availability can impair performance, hormones, bone and immunity (IOC REDs consensus [15]). If you experience persistent fatigue, declining performance, disrupted sleep, loss of menstrual regularity or repeated injuries, stop dieting and speak to a qualified professional. Weight-loss goals should never take priority over health or adequate fuelling.

job 1: keep the muscle

Lift 2-4x a week with real effort - during fat loss, training's job is to tell the body the muscle is still needed [2][4]. Protein: 1.4-1.8 g/kg when running and lifting, up to 2.0 g/kg in strength-focused phases - the same master table as the sibling Fuel & Nutrition Guide [7]. At 70 kg that's 98-140 g a day - the single highest-leverage nutrition number in this guide.

job 2: lose the fat, slowly

A small calorie gap, kept daily: roughly 300-500 kcal/day supports about 0.25-0.5 kg of fat loss a week for most (practice rule of thumb; bodies vary). Faster usually costs muscle and mood. Steps are the silent engine: 7-10k steps a day (practice guideline) moves fat loss more reliably than extra punishing cardio. Cardio slots from the templates stay easy [6].

who should not diet without a doctor: anyone pregnant, under 18, with a history of eating disorders, or managing diabetes, kidney, heart or blood-pressure conditions. This guide is education, not a prescription.

WHAT ONE FAT-LOSS TRAINING DAY LOOKS LIKE

TIME	WHAT HAPPENS	WHY
morning	10-min walk before/after breakfast	steps banked early
lunch	normal thali, protein first (dal/paneer/eggs/chicken)	protein anchors satiety + muscle [7]
evening	today's session from your template (strength A or easy run)	the stimulus
dinner	normal food, slightly smaller carb portion, protein kept	the small gap, without misery
night	7-9 h sleep	where recovery and appetite hormones settle [8]

Notice what's missing: punishment workouts, skipped meals, detox anything. Slow fat loss you can live with beats fast fat loss you can't [7].

PROTEIN, MADE INDIAN

Hitting 98-140 g at 70 kg with food you actually eat. Numbers are for the edible/prepared portion unless marked 'dry' or 'raw' - check your labels. The sibling Runner's Fuel Guide has a kitchen chapter with four ready day plans.

THE USUAL SUSPECTS

FOOD	SERVING	PROTEIN
chicken breast, cooked	100 g	~31 g
eggs	2 large	~12 g
paneer	100 g	~18-20 g
curd / dahi	200 g	~6-11 g (greek hung curd higher)
cooked dal	1 katori (150 g)	~7-9 g
soya chunks, dry	50 g	~26 g
firm tofu	100 g	~12-17 g (softer packs run lower; read the panel)
milk	250 ml	~8 g
roasted chana	30 g	~6 g (peanuts ~7-8 g)
whey scoop (if you use it)	~30 g	~24 g

A 120-G VEGETARIAN DAY, SELF-CHECKED

MEAL	WHAT	PROTEIN
breakfast	besan chilla (50 g dry besan) + 200 g curd	~11 + 8 = 19 g
lunch	2 katori dal + 100 g paneer sabzi + roti/rice	~16 + 19 = 35 g
snack	30 g roasted chana + 250 ml milk	~6 + 8 = 14 g
dinner	50 g dry soya chunks curry + 2 roti	~26 + 6 = 32 g
before bed	200 g curd	~8 g
total		**~108 g; add a whey scoop or 2 eggs to pass 120**

A 130-G NON-VEGETARIAN DAY

Self-checked against the same arithmetic as the vegetarian day.

A 130-G NON-VEGETARIAN DAY, SELF-CHECKED

MEAL	WHAT	PROTEIN
breakfast	3-egg bhurji + 2 toast	~18 + 6 = 24 g
lunch	120 g chicken curry + rice + curd 100 g	~37 + 4 = 41 g
snack	200 g greek/hung curd + fruit	~15-20 g
dinner	100 g chicken/paneer + 2 roti + salad	~31 + 6 = 37 g
total		**~117-122 g; a whey scoop or 2 more eggs clears 130**

Spread across 3-5 occasions - the body uses it better in doses than one heroic dinner [7]. Count for a week to teach your eye; then your eye carries it.

THE ABS QUESTION

Everyone asks. Here's the honest answer, with the receipts. Abs are built in training, revealed by fat loss.

WHAT THE RESEARCH ACTUALLY SAYS

In a controlled trial, six weeks of abdominal exercise (five days a week) improved muscular endurance but did not reduce body weight, abdominal fat, or waist circumference [5]. You cannot pick where fat comes off - the body decides, largely by genetics and hormones. This is the spot-reduction myth, and it refuses to die because it sells.

SO THE PLAN IS

- **Train core 2-3x a week like any other muscle:** dead bug, plank family, pallof press, reverse crunch, cable crunch - 2-3 sets of 8-15, progressed like everything else [3]. Strong abs improve posture, lifting and running form long before they show.
- **Reveal them with this chapter's recipe:** small calorie gap + high protein + steps + patience. Visibility is mostly body-fat percentage, which changes over weeks and months, not days.
- **Timelines stay unwritten** because no honest one exists: starting point, consistency and genetics decide. Anyone quoting weeks is guessing at you.

a kinder frame: train your core because a strong trunk makes every run and every lift better. If definition arrives as a side effect, enjoy it - but let performance be the point.

THE TWO CORE SESSIONS (ROTATE 2-3X/WEEK)

CORE A (ANTI-EXTENSION + ROTATION)	CORE B (ANTI-ROTATION + FLEXION)
dead bug 3 x 8/side	pallof press or side plank 3 x 10/side (or 20-30 sec)
front plank 3 x 20-40 sec	reverse crunch 3 x 10-12
bird-dog 3 x 8/side	cable/weighted crunch 3 x 10-15

Progress these like any lift: reps first, then load or harder variation [3]. Ten focused minutes, done for months, beats an occasional 500-crunch hero day.

RECOMP EXPECTATIONS & PLATEAU FIXES

"Build muscle and lose fat at once" - possible for some, oversold by many.

WHO REALISTICALLY RECOMPS

- **New lifters (first 6-12 months of real training):** yes, often. Muscle grows fast here even in a small deficit [4][18].
- **Returners after a long break:** often, thanks to muscle memory (practice consensus).
- **Trained + already lean:** slowly and painfully. Pick one goal per block; it's faster in the end.

THE PLATEAU TABLE

WHAT YOU'RE SEEING	LIKELY CAUSE	FIX
weight stuck 3+ weeks	calorie gap quietly closed (portions creep, steps drop)	re-audit a week honestly; trim ~200 kcal or add 2k steps
lifts stalled, tired	too much, too hard, too often	cutback week; check sleep [8]
lifts stalled, fresh	needs a new stimulus	change rep range or swap the exercise variant
weight down, shape same	protein or lifting too low - losing muscle with fat	protein to the top of the master-table range (1.4-1.8 g/kg, up to 2.0 strength-focused) [7]; 2+ real strength days [2]
everything stalled	been in a deficit for months	2-4 weeks eating at maintenance; then resume (practice)

evidence honesty: research gives ranges and directions - it does not hand anyone an exact "recomp program". Where the studies end, we say "adjust and observe", and we label coach practice as coach practice.

MEASURE PROGRESS HONESTLY (OR YOU'LL ARGUE WITH A SCALE)

TOOL	HOW OFTEN	WHAT IT TELLS YOU
waist tape, same spot, morning	weekly	fat trend, calmer than daily weight
bodyweight, averaged weekly	daily or 3x/wk	trend only - water and salt lie daily
lift log (weights x reps)	every session	muscle kept or built [3]
same-lighting photo	monthly	what "tone" actually looks like
energy, sleep, run feel	daily note	the leading indicator of everything above [8]

which goal this block? new lifter or returning: recomp is realistic - run the fat-loss week with protein high. Trained and already lean-ish: alternate 8-12 week blocks, one goal each - it reaches both faster than chasing both.

HYBRID / HYROX-STYLE TRAINING

Run and lift in the same week - sometimes the same day - without them cancelling each other.

THE INTERFERENCE QUESTION, HONESTLY

The 2022 meta-analysis on concurrent training (Schumann et al.) found that combining endurance and strength training produces small interference effects on explosive strength, while maximal strength, muscle growth and aerobic capacity adapt well when the week is arranged sensibly [6]. Translation: you can absolutely have both - the order and spacing matter.

THE FOUR ARRANGEMENT RULES

1. **Separate hard sessions by 6+ hours** when both live in one day (run morning, lift evening - or reverse) [6].
2. **Same slot?** Lift before the run if strength is the priority that day; run first if it's a quality run day. Never sandwich two hard ones tired.
3. **Keep easy runs truly easy on lifting days** - they cost little and keep mileage alive [6].
4. **Legs day and intervals day don't share a bed:** at least a day apart when possible (practice consensus; your quads will explain why).

PHASES LIKE THE PROS (HYROX PRACTICE)

PHASE	WEEKS	FOCUS
base	1-4	aerobic volume + full-body strength 2-3x/wk
build / specific	5-8	intervals, thresholds, station-style circuits, compromised running (running on tired legs)
peak / taper	9-10	sharpen, simulate, then drop volume ~40-50% in the final week

Phased base-specific-peak structure follows the official HYROX training partner programming and the HYROX training manual - coach practice, labelled as such [20][21].

A SAME-DAY HYBRID, SCHEDULED

OPTION	MORNING	EVENING	BEST WHEN
A	quality run (intervals/tempo)	strength, 6+ hrs later	run quality is the priority that day [6]
B	strength	easy run, 6+ hrs later	strength/muscle is the priority [6]
C	lift, then easy run straight after (one slot)		only one time slot exists - lift first, run easy

Food note for double days: carbs around both sessions, protein anchored 3-5 times across the day [7]; details live in the sibling Runner's Fuel & Nutrition Guide (free at punerunners.com).

HYBRID WEEK TEMPLATES

Two ready weeks: a 4-day base-builder and the 6-day hybrid block from section 02, expanded.

4-DAY HYBRID BASE

mon	tue	wed	thu	fri	sat	sun
strength A (full body) STRENGTH	easy run 30-40 min RUN	rest REST	strength B + short easy run 15-20 min HYBRID	rest REST	long easy run 50-70 min RUN	rest REST

6-DAY HYBRID BLOCK (BASE PHASE)

mon	tue	wed	thu	fri	sat	sun
strength A + easy run 20 min HYBRID	intervals: 5 x 3 min, 2 min jog RUN	strength B STRENGTH	easy run 30 min + core 10 min RUN	strength C - upper body, carries & core only, or rest STRENGTH	long run 75-90 min RUN	rest REST

- Same-day order on mon/thu: lift first, run after - strength quality protected, run stays easy [6].
- Cutback week 4: long run to ~50 min, intervals to 3 x 3 min, one set off every lift.
- Progress to the build phase by swapping friday's lift for the station circuit and adding 1 km reps to tuesday.

THE STATION CIRCUIT (HYROX-STYLE)

Hybrid racing's flavour: 1 km run, then a station, repeat. Optional sport-specific work - no ordinary runner needs it, and the base weeks come first. No sled? Swaps included, labelled by what they actually train. Coach practice, from the HYROX manual and event formats [20] [21].

THE CIRCUIT (BUILD PHASE, ONCE A WEEK)

STATION	WORK	NO-SLED SWAP	WHAT THE SWAP TRAINS
1 km run between every station	steady, not sprinting	-	aerobic conditioning
ski erg	30 sec hard / 30 easy x 4	band pull-downs fast x 20	upper-body muscular endurance (closest home option; not the same load)
sled push	4 x 15-20 m	loaded-backpack stair climb or uphill march, 60-90 sec	leg strength-endurance. A 15-sec hill sprint trains power + conditioning - a different stimulus, NOT a sled equivalent; use only if joints are happy
sled pull	4 x 15-20 m	band high-row fast x 25 + slow hip hinges x 10	back/grip endurance + hinge patterning; no home setup truly copies the drag
burpee broad jumps	15-20 m	same - needs nothing (low-impact: squat thrust + calf raise x 10)	power + conditioning
row	500 m strong	band row x 30 + high knees 1 min	full-body conditioning
farmer's carry	2 x 40 m heavy	backpack / water-can carry, packed snug	grip + trunk - close match
sandbag lunges	20 m	backpack lunges, well-packed	leg strength-endurance - close match
wall balls	30-50 reps	backpack thrusters, well-packed / fast air squats	power-endurance / conditioning

PROGRESSING THE CIRCUIT

One lever at a time, and only when every round feels repeatable.

- **Beginners:** 4 stations, 20-30 sec work / 60-90 sec rest, 2 rounds, 4 x 500 m runs. Progress one lever at a time (a station, then a round, then work seconds) only when every round feels repeatable.
- **Full simulation (all 8 + 1-km runs):** only after 6-8 weeks of hybrid training with a recent comfortable 10k, 2-3 weeks before the event [20][21]. Skip it entirely if any of that isn't true yet.
- **Compromised-running skill:** the runs between stations should feel like "starting a run on tired legs" - that's the point, and it learns fast [20].

club corner: hyrox-curious? Find training partners and station-practice ideas through the club's channels - WhatsApp community, Strava club, r/punerunners and @punerunnersclub, linked at punerunners.com.

RUNNER'S RECOVERY

Training is the question; recovery is the answer. Adaptation happens between sessions, not during them [16].

THE POST-RUN 30 MINUTES

- Walk it down 5 min - let the heart rate glide, not crash.
- Refuel within ~1-2 hours after hard or long sessions: carbs to restock, 20-40 g protein to rebuild [7].
- Timing matters most when the next session is within 24 hours; after easy runs, normal meals are fine.
- Rehydrate to thirst with electrolytes on sweaty days - detailed sweat math lives in the sibling Runner's Fuel & Nutrition Guide.

SLEEP: THE LEGAL PERFORMANCE ENHANCER

- 7-9 hours for adults; athletes in heavy blocks often need the top half. Sleep interventions reliably improve performance and recovery markers across studies [8].
- Keep a regular sleep window; dark, cool room; hard sessions earlier in the evening if late workouts wire you [8][19].
- One bad night? Train, but trim - effort 6 instead of 8. A week of bad nights? That's a cutback asking to happen.

EASY DAYS ARE THE PLAN

Recovery runs exist to help you absorb the hard days - slower than easy, short, proud [17]. If your "easy" day leaves you tired, it wasn't easy. The talk test doesn't lie.

RECOVERY EATING, BY SESSION TYPE

TODAY WAS	WHAT MATTERS AFTER	SIMPLE EXAMPLE
easy run / light lift	normal meals are enough	your regular dal-rice-paneer
long run / hard intervals	carbs + 20-40 g protein within ~1-2 h [7]	curd + banana + poha; eggs + toast
hard strength session	20-40 g protein, carbs to taste [7]	chicken/paneer roti wraps; milk + sandwich
double session day	carbs between sessions; protein at both ends	fruit + curd mid-day, full dinner after

sleep > supplements: no powder out-recovers a consistent 7-9 hours [8]. Prioritise food and sleep hygiene before anything in a shiny tub.

SECTION 10 · RECOVERY

MOBILITY & THE DELOAD

Ten quiet minutes that keep the machine moving, and the week that keeps the year moving.

THE 10-MINUTE MOBILITY ROUTINE (DAILY OR ON REST DAYS)

MOVE	TIME/REPS	FOR
90/90 hip switches	8-10 slow reps	hips
world's greatest stretch	5 /side	hips, t-spine, hamstrings
downward dog to cobra	6-8 slow	calves, spine, shoulders
deep squat hold (hold a post if needed)	2 x 30-45 sec	ankles, hips
wall thoracic rotations	8 /side	upper back
standing quad stretch + calf stretch	30 sec /side each	quads, calves

Static stretching is for flexibility work and cooldowns, 30-60 sec holds [19]; before runs and lifts, keep warm-ups dynamic.

THE DELOAD: SIGNS YOU NEED ONE, THEN HOW

NORMAL TRAINING FATIGUE	WARNING SIGNS - DELOAD NOW	GET ASSESSED - STOP
heavy legs 1-2 days · sleepy after the long run · mild next-day soreness that fades as you warm up	lifts or paces sliding 2+ weeks · resting heart rate up · sleep worse · motivation gone · niggles multiplying	pain at night or rest · pain changing how you walk · swelling, locking, giving-way · pinpoint bone-tender spot · chest pain or dizziness

Left column: train on, maybe trim. Middle: take the deload below now. Right: a clinician, not a calendar - comeback corner.

- **How:** 5-7 days at ~60-70% volume, effort capped at 6/10, same movement patterns. You're not slacking; you're cashing the cheque the last block wrote [16].
- **Scheduled:** every 4th week is the default cutback; an extra deload when the signs say so is wisdom, not weakness.

a good rest day, menu-style

✓ a walk - 20-40 min, actually easy ✓ the 10-min mobility routine, once through ✓ protein-anchored meals, water to thirst ✓ screens down earlier than usual; sleep window protected [8] ✓ optional: a gentle swim or cycle if legs feel heavy

foam rolling & massage guns, honestly: they can feel good and give short-term relief; the evidence for lasting recovery or injury prevention is thin (practice-level; mixed studies). Enjoy them as comfort - they don't replace sleep, load management, or strength work [12].

RETURNING AFTER A BREAK

Life happens - travel, exams, illness, a busy quarter, or a medical pause. The comeback is a skill, and it's simpler than the guilt says.

THE GENERAL RAMP (HEALTHY RETURNERS)

TIME AWAY	WEEK 1-2 BACK	THEN
2-4 weeks	~60-70% of previous volume, all easy	build to 100% over 2-3 weeks
1-3 months	~50%, walk-run welcome, lifts at light-moderate	add ~10-15%/week over 4-6 weeks
3+ months	start like a motivated beginner (3-day templates)	full 8-week rebuild; it returns faster than it first arrived

MISSED A WEEK? MISSED SEVERAL?

TIME AWAY	WHAT TO DO
1 week	repeat the last full week - no penalty, no catching up
2-3 weeks	step back 2-3 weeks in the plan; first week at ~70-80%
4+ weeks	use the ramp above; strength resumes at ~50-60% loads, one set less

Graded ramps like these are standard coaching practice [16]; interestingly, one trial found even careful 10%-rule ramps didn't cut injury rates in novices [14] - so the real rules are: start conservatively, listen honestly, and don't spike weeks [12].

after illness, a procedure, or a doctor-ordered pause: your clinician leads. Follow their clearance and their timeline exactly; bring this book to them and ask what fits, rather than asking the book to overrule them. Start below what you think you can do; skip the "make up for lost time" phase - there's only the next good week.

Returning after a break or injury: progression depends on your symptoms, training history and recovery - not a fixed number of days. Move to the next stage only when the current one is tolerated without worsening symptoms; stop and reassess if pain persists, worsens or changes how you move. General progressions cannot replace an individual rehabilitation or return-to-sport plan from a qualified healthcare professional.

FROM YOUR OLD PLAN: KEEP / DROP

KEEP	DROP
the exercises you enjoyed and did well	the old weekly volume, for now
the time slot habit (same days, same hours)	old working weights as targets for week 1
the log habit - even a notes app	comparisons with pre-break you for at least 8 weeks

the comeback mindset: fitness returns faster than it first arrived - your only job is boring, repeatable weeks.

SECTION 11 · THE COMEBACK CORNER

NIGGLES, HONESTLY

General education for common runner niggles - not diagnosis, not treatment, and never a replacement for a doctor or physiotherapist who has actually examined you.

FIRST, THE HONEST FRAME

Most running niggles are load-management problems: tissue asked to do more than it was currently prepared for [12]. The way out is rarely "total rest until it vanishes" - it's usually calm load adjustment plus gradual reloading, which is why every block in this chapter says "calm it down, build it up, return in steps" [9][10].

stop and see a doctor/physio promptly if: pain at night or at rest · pain that changes how you walk · swelling, locking, giving-way, or numbness · pain after a fall or sudden "pop" · anything getting worse week over week despite backing off · fever or unexplained symptoms · a pinpoint bone-tender spot, or pain that persists while walking (possible bone stress - no test runs, straight to assessment). This list is conservative on purpose. When in doubt, get looked at.

THE THREE-STEP SHAPE OF EVERY COMEBACK

1. **Calm it down:** cut the aggravating load (usually running volume/hills/speed) to a level the area tolerates - mild discomfort that settles within 24 hours is the usual practice guide; sharp or worsening pain is not tolerated, full stop [9].
2. **Build it up:** load the area with progressive strength work (specifics next pages) while keeping fitness with what doesn't hurt: walking, cycling, pool, upper-body lifting.
3. **Return in steps:** the graded walk-run ladder at the end of this chapter, climbing only when each step stays quiet during and after.

load spikes, not load, are the usual villain: the training-injury paradox work in BJSM: athletes adapt to loads they arrive at gradually [12]. Ramp weeks gently, respect cutbacks, and most of this chapter stays theoretical.

WHAT LOAD MANAGEMENT LOOKS LIKE IN NUMBERS

WEEK	RUNNING	STRENGTH	NOTE
1	20 km, all easy	2 full-body	comfortable base
2	22 km, one tempo	2 full-body	+10%, one new stimulus only
3	24 km, intervals short	2 full-body	another small step
4	16 km easy	1-2 light	cutback - absorb [16]

The classic error is week 2 becoming "30 km + join a gym + start HIIT". Spikes, not totals, are the risk [12] - and even a careful graded program is no injury-vaccine [14], so listen to the body above any table.

KNEE & SHIN

What the evidence supports, in plain words. See a physio for anything persistent - these pages are education, not treatment.

RUNNER'S KNEE (PATELLOFEMORAL PAIN)

Achy pain around or behind the kneecap, typically worse with stairs, hills, squats, or sitting long.

- **Evidence:** the BJSM best-practice guide (2024) synthesising the systematic-review evidence supports exercise therapy - knee and hip strengthening - as the core management, with education and load management alongside [9].
- **Practice shape:** calm phase = trim hills/speed/deep knee bends to tolerance; build phase = progressive quad + hip work (split squats, leg press in tolerable range, side-lying abduction, clams, step-ups), 2-3x/week [9].
- **Don't:** push through sharp stairs pain to "toughen it up".

SHIN SPLINTS (MEDIAL TIBIAL STRESS SYNDROME)

Diffuse ache along the inner shin, classic in newer runners and sudden volume spikes.

- **Evidence:** risk-factor meta-analysis links MTSS to training-error patterns and biomechanical factors [13]; graded programs alone didn't cut injury rates in novices [14] - so management is conservative loading plus gradual return, not a magic fix.
- **Practice shape:** reduce running to comfortable levels (or swap to cycling/pool 1-3 weeks); calf raises and soleus work, foot-strength basics; return on the ladder on softer surfaces first.
- **Red flag:** a focal, pinpoint bone-tender spot or pain that persists walking - get assessed before running on; bone stress needs a clinician, not a calendar.

making the most of a physio visit

Bring your last 4 weeks: distances, paces, lifting, shoes, and when it hurts. Specifics get you a specific plan. Ask three questions: what should I keep doing, what should I pause, and what does "ready to progress" look like? A good physio gives you loading homework - the exercises here are education about that world, not a substitute for yours.

shoes and surfaces (practice-level): comfortable, familiar shoes beat exciting new ones during a comeback; rotate softer surfaces (tracks, trails, treadmill) for early ladder rungs; introduce new shoes or minimalist styles only when everything is quiet - and then gradually [13].

ACHILLES, HEEL, IT BAND, HAMSTRING

Same honest shape: calm, build, return in steps. Persistent or worsening = physio.

ACHILLES TENDINOPATHY

- **Evidence:** progressive tendon loading is the mainstay - a randomized trial found combined concentric-eccentric loading (Silbernagel-style) and classic eccentric (Alfredson-style) both improved symptoms, with no clear winner [10].
- **Practice shape:** calf-raise progressions (two legs to one leg, flat to step, added weight), 2-3x/week, mild tolerable discomfort ok; keep runs flat and easy, cut hills/speed early on [10].

PLANTAR HEEL PAIN

- **Evidence:** high-load strength training (slow heel raises with a towel under the toes) improved outcomes versus stretching in an RCT with 12-month follow-up [11].
- **Practice shape:** heel-raise progression 3x/week, morning foot care (gentle movement before first steps), supportive footwear during the calm phase [11].

IT BAND IRRITATION (OUTER KNEE)

- **Evidence/practice:** managed like other load-related pain: trim downhill running and volume spikes, build hip and quad strength, return gradually. (Practice-level guidance; less trial evidence than knee/achilles - we say so.)

HAMSTRING STRAIN

- **Practice shape:** after the acute days, progressive loading from gentle isometrics to hinges to running drills; sprinting is the last thing back, not the first test. A "pop" with bruising = physio first, always.

habits that keep this chapter theoretical

✓ 2+ strength days every week, legs included [1][2] ✓ gradual ramps + every-4th-week cutback [12][16] ✓ easy days actually easy (talk test) [16][17] ✓ 7-9 h sleep [8] ✓ variety: routes, paces, and at least one non-running cardio option ✓ early whispers get early rest - one easy week now beats one forced month later

Worth repeating: these pages are general education drawn from the cited research and mainstream physio practice. They do not diagnose your pain, and they yield to any instruction from your own doctor or physiotherapist.

THE GRADED RETURN-TO-RUN LADDER

The shared final step for every niggle in this chapter. Climb one rung when the previous one stayed quiet during the session AND the next morning. Timelines and starting rungs vary by condition and by person - when a clinician is involved, their clearance and their plan outrank this page.

Stop check before Rung 1: Suspect a bone stress injury - pinpoint tenderness on the shin, foot or hip, or pain while walking? Stop running and get assessed; don't start this ladder until a clinician says what loading is safe for you.

RUNG	SESSION	PASS RULE
1	brisk walk 30 min, daily	no pain during or next morning
2	walk 4 min / easy jog 1 min x 6	2 clean sessions
3	walk 2 min / jog 3 min x 5	2 clean sessions
4	continuous easy jog 15-20 min	2 clean sessions
5	easy run 30 min	2 clean sessions
6	rebuild volume ~10-15%/week to your normal; strides last, hills and intervals after that	quiet = keep climbing

- Any rung protests: drop one rung for a week, then retry. A protest means information, not failure [9][10].
- Frequency: rungs every other day at most early on; keep cycling/walking on off days.
- Keep the strength work going from the previous pages the whole way up - it's the return plan, not an accessory [9][10][11].

the golden sentence of this chapter

A physio who sees you once beats a guide that guesses ten times. Use these pages to ask your clinician better questions and to fill the waiting days with sensible basics. Nothing here diagnoses, treats, or promises recovery times.

THE MATCHING RETURN-TO-LIFT LADDER

WEEK BACK	LOADS	SETS	RULE
1	~60-70% of pre-break working weights	2 per exercise	all sets at 4+ in the tank
2	~75-85%	2-3	3+ in the tank
3	~90%	normal	2-3 in the tank
4+	100% and climbing	normal	resume the progression engine

Tendons adapt slower than muscles - the conservative first fortnight is for them [3][10].

THE GREATEST HITS

Collected from every beginner (and every honest experienced runner) ever.

1. **Too much, too soon.** The classic. Volume and intensity both spike; the body files a complaint 2-3 weeks later [12][14].
2. **Running easy days too fast.** Then arriving at quality days pre-tired. Easy = talk-test, every time [16][17].
3. **Program hopping.** A plan needs 6-8 honest weeks before any verdict. Changing weekly means starting forever.
4. **Skipping legs.** Legs are half your muscle and all of your running. The templates never skip them; neither should you [2].
5. **Ego lifting.** A rep that needs broken form isn't a stronger rep - it's a louder risk. Effort 7-8, 2-3 in the tank [3].
6. **Chasing abs with crunches.** The study has been cited (section 08); the myth persists; you now know better [5].
7. **Sleep treated as optional.** It's where the adaptation is stored [8].
8. **All-or-nothing weeks.** Missed two days, declared the week ruined. The shuffle rules exist precisely for this.
9. **Comparing week 1 to someone's year 5.** Their chapter 20 is not your chapter 1. Run your own pages.
10. **New shoes, new plan, new diet - same Monday.** Change one variable at a time or you'll never know what worked [12].
11. **Ignoring the warm-up to "save time".** Six minutes is the best insurance in this book.
12. **Training through red flags.** The comeback corner's stop box exists to be obeyed, not admired. Sharp pain = stop; persistent = physio.

THE TROUBLESHOOTING TABLE

Symptom - likely cause - first fix. For pain entries, the comeback corner and a physio are the real answers.

SYMPTOM	LIKELY CAUSE	FIRST FIX
always tired, flat sessions	stacked hard days; sleep short	cutback week + 7-9 h sleep target [8]
runs feel harder at same pace	heat/humidity, under-fueled, or fatigue debt	slow to talk-test; eat around runs; deload if 2+ weeks
weights not moving 3+ weeks	effort too comfortable or recovery short	honest effort check (2-3 in tank?); add a rest day [3]
waist not moving 3+ weeks	gap closed quietly	the plateau table in section 08
knee/shin/achilles grumbling	load spike	the comeback-corner page for that area; physio if persistent [9][10][13]
dreading sessions	plan too big for current life	drop a day-level (6 to 5, 5 to 4). Consistency > ambition
bored	monotony	new route, club run, swap exercise variants, one hybrid session

club corner: stuck on one of these rows? Bring it to the group - a fresh pair of runner eyes fixes faster than a lone spiral. Community links at punerunners.com.

SECTION 13 · NUMBERS APPENDIX

EVERY NUMBER, ONE PAGE

Screenshot this one.

WEEKLY MINIMUMS (HEALTH AUTHORITIES)

WHAT	AMOUNT	SOURCE
moderate cardio	150-300 min/week (or 75-150 vigorous)	[1]
strength	2+ days/week, all major muscles	[1][2]

STRENGTH LANDMARKS

WHAT	AMOUNT	SOURCE
volume per muscle/week	~4-6 sets minimum, 10+ for growth	[4]
frequency per muscle	2x/week preferred	[2][4][18]
working effort	2-3 reps in reserve most sets	[3]
rest between sets	60-90 sec (general), 2-4 min (heavy)	[3][19]
progression	+1-2 reps/week, then +weight, range resets	[3]

RUNNING LANDMARKS

WHAT	AMOUNT	SOURCE
easy share of running	70-80%	[16][17]
cutback	every 4th week, ~65-70% volume	[16]
pace windows	easy = 5k pace + 0:50-1:40/km; tempo = +0:10-0:25/km (practice)	[23]
weekly volume jumps	small and gradual; spikes are the risk [12]; the "10% rule" alone didn't prevent injuries in a trial [14]	[12][14]

NUTRITION + RECOVERY

WHAT	AMOUNT	SOURCE
protein	1.4-1.8 g/kg running + lifting · 1.6-2.0 strength focus · master table in the Fuel & Nutrition Guide	[7]
fat-loss gap	~300-500 kcal/day - a planning reference, not a mandatory target	practice
post-hard-session protein	~20-40 g within ~1-2 h	[7]
sleep	7-9 h; regular window	[8]

Full fueling math lives in the sibling Runner's Fuel & Nutrition Guide, free at punerunners.com.

WRITE YOUR WEEK

Print this page, fill it in, stick it on the fridge. Or let the free builder at punerunners.com/runnersworkout do it in 30 seconds.

MY ANSWERS

GOAL	DAYS/WEEK	EQUIPMENT	MINUTES/SESSION	WEIGHT (KG, FOR PROTEIN)

MY WEEK

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN

my protein target

____ kg x my master-table range (1.2-1.6 / 1.4-1.8 / 1.6-2.0) = ____ - ____ g per day [7]

my cutback week is week

4 · and every 4th after that [16]

my reminder

easy days easy · 2-3 in the tank · missed a day = shuffle, never stack · sleep is training · week 4 is lighter on purpose

MY PROGRESSION LOG (4 LINES A WEEK IS ENOUGH)

DATE	RUN (KM + FEEL)	LIFTS (LOADS)	EFFORT /10	SLEEP H	SYMPTOMS

Patterns, not perfection: distance creeping up, loads creeping up, effort steady, sleep steady, symptoms quiet = keep going [3][14].

the 5-question sunday review (5 minutes, weekly)

✓ did i hit my planned days? if not, what got in the way - and does the plan or the calendar need to change? ✓ did easy days stay easy (talk test passed)? ✓ did my lifts creep up even slightly - reps or load? [3] ✓ how were sleep and energy, honestly? [8] ✓ what is the ONE small upgrade for next week?

club nudge: post your week in the PuneRunners WhatsApp community - nothing keeps a streak alive like friendly witnesses. Links at punerunners.com.

SOURCES

RESEARCH SOURCES

Peer-reviewed. Every number in this guide traces here.

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COACH PRACTICE SOURCES

Respected coaching resources we borrowed structure and phrasing from. Practice, not peer review - labelled accordingly wherever used.

16. [16] Hal Higdon training programs - halhigdon.com (Novice 1: halhigdon.com/training-programs/marathon-training/novice-1-marathon/). Stepback weeks, rest placement, walk breaks, taper practice.
17. [17] Geeks on Feet, RunStrong - runstrong.geeksonfeet.com and geeksonfeet.substack.com. Pace windows, workout-type explainers, colour-coded weeks, "adjust as life happens".
18. [18] Jeff Nippard - jeffnippard.com (Fundamentals Hypertrophy Program + free program selector). Splits by days/week, ranked exercise substitutions, LSRPE tracking.
19. [19] Huberman Lab (with Dr Andy Galpin) - Foundational Fitness Protocol: hubermanlab.com/newsletter/foundational-fitness-protocol. One-week all-adaptations template, modification rules, "choose exercises you can do safely".
20. [20] HYROX Training Manual (2020) - compromisedrunning.com/post/hyrox-training-manual.files/HYROX_ENG_Manual_10_2020.pdf. Station formats, compromised running, phase structure.
21. [21] PureGym - Hyrox Training Plan: puregym.com/blog/hyrox-training-plan/. Free 12-week hybrid plan, simulation + taper structure.
22. [22] Fitpage - training.fitpage.in. Goal-based adaptive plans, guided workouts, drag-to-move weeks (Indian, app-based).
23. [23] V.O2 Running Calculator (Jack Daniels' VDOT) - vdoto2.com/calculator. One race result -> training pace zones (research-derived, tool is practice).

HOW THESE SOURCES WERE CHOSEN - AND HOW TO VET ANY FITNESS ADVICE

- **Research first:** every load-bearing number traces to the peer-reviewed list opposite. If a claim couldn't be traced, it was labelled practice or dropped.
- **Practice is labelled:** decades-proven coaching patterns (Higdon's stepbacks, VDOT paces, HYROX phases) are useful without being trials - so they carry a label, not a costume.
- **Beware certainty:** anyone guaranteeing timelines, spot-reduction, or "one weird trick" is marketing. Real science speaks in ranges and conditions - which is why this guide does too.
- **Check the motive:** free community resources (like this one) want you consistent; products want you purchasing. Adjust your scepticism accordingly.

from your friends at PuneRunners

PuneRunners is a free community of Pune runners - every pace, every distance, every body. No fees, no forms, no gatekeeping: show up, run, belong.

Find the WhatsApp community, the Strava club, r/punerunners and @punerunnersclub on Instagram - all linked at punerunners.com.

Pair this guide with its sibling, the Runner's Fuel & Nutrition Guide (everyday eating + race fueling), and the live workout builder - both free at punerunners.com.

The Runner's Workout Guide is general education for healthy adults, not medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Consult a doctor or physiotherapist before starting if you have any medical condition, pain, or injury, and follow your clinician's guidance over anything printed here. Research and coach-practice sources are listed and labelled separately. Free forever - share it with a runner who needs it.

November 2026 revision: protein page aligned with the Fuel & Nutrition Guide (roasted chana ~6 g, firm-tofu range, dry-weight marking) and the 120-g day retotalled to ~108 g; Friday strength before Saturday long runs changed to upper body, carries and core only across the week templates; faster-10k week respaced; first-5k week 3 session volume equalised; bridge interval notation spelled out and early-week easy runs steadied; bone-stress stop check added above the return-to-run ladder; the 6-day hybrid block cross-referenced between section 02 and the hybrid chapter. Earlier revisions: weekly schedule headings now honestly count training days (including optional sessions); the faster-10k plan relabelled as a proposed 3-run-per-week framework, not a prescription; half-marathon readiness criteria and an example weekly structure added; strength-volume, technique, pain and return-to-running guidance strengthened; training-day terminology defined; shared health disclaimer aligned with the nutrition guide; protein aligned to the shared master table; equipment chapters rebuilt as three honest lanes - mat only, a few home basics (pull-up bar, band, dumbbells each optional) and full gym; new pull-up ladder and band block; swap tables consolidated into the library's golden rule; unsafe improvised setups removed; cardio-minute honesty per template; schedules reconciled with recovery rules; half-bridge entry criteria; station swaps relabelled; home-equipment safety checks; nutrition framed as general guidance with a REDs warning; return-to-run made condition-aware; decision guide, readiness checklist, busy-week drop order, missed-weeks guide and progression log; citations re-verified. First released October 2026.