



FEBRUARY: LAY THE FOUNDATION

Four months to go till the big day. And while that might sound a long time, in training terms, we're actually needing to crack the whip somewhat. Not so much to get ready for race day, but to prepare the body for the training to come. In other words, February is about laying the foundation.

Body Foundation | Chances are that over the next four months you'll be doing more running than you've ever done. This will mean 100s of kilometres in training and about 1000 steps per kilometre where your poor old feet are absorbing about three times your body weight per stride. So we're literally looking at 100s of 1000s of steps just to get to the start line of your race—sounds like a perfect recipe for an overuse injury! So it's easy to see why you need to get your body ready for what is to come. But how?

It's a little obvious, but your primary prep for running should be running (focus on increasing both your longest run and weekly mileage by no more than 10 per cent each week). And you will also want to include some strength and core work to develop a stable middle (think hamstrings, glutes, abdominals, obliques and back). And, especially if you're new to running, some alternative cardio like cycling or swimming will help build fitness and improve body composition while you are gradually and carefully building running mileage.

Mind Foundation | Running is tough—there's a reason that "marathon" is the most commonly used metaphor used for describing hardship! So use February to set yourself challenging but achievable running goals in order to get some wins on the board giving you some positive associations towards running.

These goals might include running your first 5k or 10k or perhaps a trail run, entering your first event (parkrun is a perfect starting point), or hitting a certain target in weekly mileage. Celebrate these wins with a good meal and a social media post or two (don't be afraid to bring your Facebook friends with you on your training journey!).

Habits Foundation | Embarking on a new fitness goal inevitably involves a lifestyle shift. Don't leave your training sessions up to chance whether you do them but instead book them in (keep a training diary), arrange to meet a friend for a run (accountability partners are excellent!), sign up to online tools like Strava to track your training, join a running club (or even sign up to one of our TempoFit 6-week seasons).

The universe will do everything it can to derail your training goals, so stack the deck in your favour by structuring your life to look like the runner you want to become.

Gear Foundation | Finally, now is a great time to go shopping! Fitting yourself with a good pair of shoes at a running specialist store is vital for beginner runners. And, while you're there, grab some shorts/tights and tops that feel good, look good, won't chafe, and, most of all, will inspire you to get out on the trails and pavements to show them off!

A GPS watch is useful if you want a relatively accurate tracking of your training. But phone apps can also do this job (with less accuracy) and a simple \$10 stopwatch combined with a tool like Mapmyrun.com can give you a useful gauge on your distances and pace. And, if you're training in Wellington, be sure to grab the *Runner's Guide to Wellington* book for ideas on where to run (I may be a little biased on this last point, having penned the book myself!).

Happy foundation building.