

## The Penguin's Top 10 Training Tips

Runner's World columnist, author and accomplished runner, John Bingham (The Penguin), offers his advice on training with his top 10 training tips. In no particular order:

1. **Size matters, at least when it comes to shoes.**

I'd worn size 8 1/2 shoes since I was 17 years old. So at age 42, when I went to buy my first pair of running shoes, I bought--you guessed it--size 8 1/2. I didn't even bother to try them on, I was so sure they would fit.

2. **Clothes make the man.**

I thought that I could just dig out some of my old T-shirts and sweat pants and start running. I thought that all the technical "stuff" that real runners wear was only for the fast runners. I was wrong.

The reason why those runners wear technical clothing is the same reason that I finally did. Performance. Fabrics that wick moisture are cooler in the summer and warmer in the winter. You don't have to carry the weight of your own perspiration on your favorite cotton T-shirt anymore.

3. **Three steps forward, two steps back.**

I thought that I would continue to get better and better. I thought my progress would be linear. For a while, it worked that way, although considering where I started that shouldn't be a surprise.

For several months I got faster with nearly every run. Then the progress suddenly stopped. Long term improvement is a constant cycle of getting faster, hitting a plateau, slipping backwards, regrouping, and then getting faster again.

4. **Talk is cheap.**

When I first started, I spent more time planning my runs than actually running. I also spent a lot of time talking about running, and not nearly enough time running. I thought that knowing about running was the same as being able to run. I thought that being able to use a phrase like anaerobic threshold in a sentence was as good as experiencing it. Once you start training more and talking less, your running improves.

5. **Garbage in, garbage out.**

I had no idea how food worked once it was inside my body. I understood how it made me feel when I ate it, but knew nothing

about how food functions. I didn't understand the correlation between what I was asking my body to process and what I was asking my body to perform.

As I began to view food as fuel rather than as comfort or recreation, I discovered that the foods I wanted and the foods I needed were almost always the same. That doesn't mean you can't give in to an occasional craving, but don't ignore the effect that food has on your performance.

**6. Sometimes, less is more.**

I never considered myself the sharpest knife in the drawer. I knew there were people smarter, better educated, and more talented than I in my profession. But I also knew that I had the capacity to outwork anybody I had ever met.

I took that attitude into my running. When I read that one day of speed work was good, I thought that 3 days would be better. If everyone else increased their mileage by 10% per week, then I'd increase mine by 20%.

Improvement comes at the point of balance between effort and recovery.

**7. There are no secrets.**

I was sure that there were hidden 'truths' about running that would make me faster sooner. I read everything I could find, trying to uncover those hidden truths. After a while I discovered that most of what I needed to learn I was going to have to find out on my own, with my own two feet.

Training for a long distance race is sometimes a frustrating process of trial and error. If there are any secrets, you are going to have to find them on the roads, not in books.

**8. My body, my self.**

In the early stages I waited for the magic transformation of my body into the body of a runner. I expected my legs to get longer and leaner, my muscles to become tight and sinewy, and all my joints to work exactly like they were supposed to.

There may be less of it now, but it is still basically the same body I had when I started running. It turns out that you have to learn how to train with the body you have.

**9. Being a runner is a process, not a destination.**

I was convinced that I could get into shape and stay there. I

thought that once I had achieved a certain speed or distance, I could relax and enjoy the view. But, there is always something new to learn, some new distance to try, or some new pace to struggle toward.

Running is a constant process of assessing and evaluating where you've been, where you are, and where you want to be.

10. **Races are celebrations.**

I've always been a big motor sports fan. I've attended hundreds of races. They were battlegrounds. But runners are different.

Once I overcame my fear, I raced nearly every weekend. I couldn't wait to line up with friends and find out what their best was on that day, and to show them MY best at the same time. Despite the competition between individuals, there is still an overwhelming sense of shared achievement at races.