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[Home](#)
[Life](#)
[Running](#)
[Photos](#)
[Musings](#)
[Home](#) > [Running](#) > [Articles](#)
**More articles:**

- [20K wisdom](#)
- [A fitting stage for heroism](#)
- [Cheers to you](#)
- [Durian Power](#)
- [Gear for Cold Weather](#)
- [Running](#)
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- [Harvest of hope](#)
- [Hill training](#)
- [Marathon muse](#)
- [The other side of the fence](#)
- [Penang revisited](#)
- [Performance review](#)
- [Running again](#)
- [Running resolutions](#)
- [Running in the movies](#)
- [State of road running in Malaysia](#)
- [Sunscreen](#)
- [To marathon or not to marathon?](#)
- [Stride Length](#)
- [3 Phases of The Marathon](#)
- [Marathon Packing List](#)
- [Dubious Races & Incompetent Officials](#)
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- [My Bookcase](#)

## Stride Lengths

One of the reasons I love to watch middle and long distance track running is admiring the long flowing strides of the runners as they effortlessly cover the ground. How many of us didn't fantasize ourselves running like the elites?

The argument pertaining to optimum stride length has been fought for a long time. While most subscribe to the rule that the best stride length is the most comfortable stride length for the particular individual, there are certain quarters who will insist that one should always strive to lengthen their strides. I personally have been reprimanded for not taking advantage of my long legs. However, try as I might, I just can't do it - always ending up feeling and looking foolish. It was simply unnatural and exaggerated.

Which is why the recent Runner's World Online article by Owen Anderson caught my eye. The author had the opportunity to visit the top Kenyan runner Godfrey Kiprotich in Kenya.

Anderson observed that the Kenyan had a more powerful "push-off" in his long strides. After probing, he found out that this ability to run efficiently with extended strides are results of their drills incorporated into their workouts. Below are drills which will bring some Kenyan out of you:

### Boot camp hills.

Find a steep hill that's at least 50 to 75 meters long, and run hill repeats on it once every two weeks. Alternate running up the hill at close to top speed with "bounding" up the hill more slowly, with an exaggerated vertical motion. Start with six repeats per workout and gradually increase to 10. Between repeats, jog slowly back down to the bottom of the hill.

### Hill hops.

After you've finished the above workout, begin hopping up the hill on one foot for 15 hops, then shift to the other foot for 15 more hops. Walk for a few seconds to recover, and then repeat.

### Hill fartlek.

Every 10 days or so, warm up by jogging for 10 minutes, then run for 30 continuous minutes over the most rolling terrain you can find. Accelerate on all uphill and jog easily on the downslopes. Try to maintain an overall effort level that's slightly less intense than a 10-K race.

### Quick hops.

Once or twice a week, in the middle of your regular workouts, bound from foot to foot for about 30 meters at a time. Try to maximize your "air time" while minimizing the amount of time each foot spends on the ground. In other words, push hard and fast with the contact foot. Make sure that you cover more distance with these bounds than you do with your normal strides.

### Running on your toes.

After you have warmed up properly, "sprint" on your toes for 30 meters, taking small, quick steps with high knee action. Jog easily for 15 seconds to recover, and then repeat twice more. When finished, do the rest of your workout.

Make sure you only do exercises 4 and 5 on smooth grass or dirt surfaces. Don't do them on asphalt or concrete, where the impact forces could be great enough to cause injury.

*The journey continues...*



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