

WHAT TYPE OF RUNNER ARE YOU?

There's a whole set of sub-species
pounding the pavements out
there - which one are you?



Running is a sport everyone can get into.

You just need to buy a decent pair of trainers and a sports bra, put one foot in front of the other and off you go. But despite the common ground we runners inhabit, we're not as similar as you might think. From different goals and techniques to the levels of experience and even enjoyment, runners have sets of distinguishing characteristics that divide us into sub-species. So what kind of runner are you?

1 THE MARATHON TRAINEE

Serious and committed to your 26.2-mile goal, you have rock-hard determination. Your cupboards are stocked with sports gels and jelly babies, you're wearing gait-analysed footwear and you refuse to run with anyone other than a fellow marathon trainee.

HOW TO SPOT YOU

It's obvious by your facial expressions - a look of steely willpower. You're there to succeed.

TIP FROM THE TOP

'Treat your running schedule like a full-time job by never missing a training session,' says Lee Pickering, personal trainer for DW Fitness Clubs. 'Have a clear plan of what you want to achieve, including milestones to reach along the way, but be realistic - you probably won't be able to tackle a 13-miler in your first month of training, but you should be able to by the third.'

2 THE BAREFOOT RUNNER

Running can get a little monotonous, but not for you. With one eye on the latest trends, you'll try anything to ensure you're not missing out on a great running trick. As the 'hippie of the running world', you don't care if it's wacky - you'll give it a whirl.

HOW TO SPOT YOU

You'll be wearing shoes that resemble space boots designed to mimic the natural foot position - or you might not be wearing any shoes at all. Just watch out for the smashed glass in the park, or you'll be out of action for weeks.

TIP FROM THE TOP

'If zany, tie-dye leggings weren't enough for you, challenge yourself with a reverse run,' suggests Lee. 'Instead of running forwards you run backwards. Be careful not to do this anywhere you could put yourself or others in danger. There are plenty of backwards runs around the country, so find one in your local area and get going.'

3 THE NEWBIE RUNNER

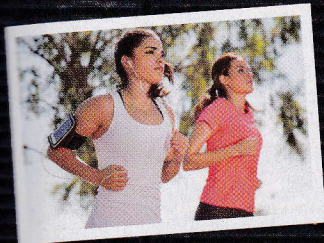
You are the definition of 'all the gear, no idea', but other runners will admire your willingness to have a go. You may feel like you're about to have a heart attack by your fourth minute in, but keep going. It'll get easier with time.

HOW TO SPOT YOU

You'll probably begin by running too fast because you didn't pace yourself, then you'll stop and walk for a while to catch your breath.

TIP FROM THE TOP

'Choose the right running shoes,' says British Athletics endurance coach David Harmer. 'Choosing a shoe that works with your foot mechanics, comfort preferences and training needs is a key starting point for every runner. Nike stores or any other reputable running specialist retailer will provide gait analysis for free.'



4 THE RUNNING CLUBBER

You just can't wait for Saturday! But not because you'll be hitting the dancefloor. No, it's because you'll be in your local park at 9am for parkrun.

And on Monday and Wednesday you'll head out with the gang at the Harriers for a run before dinner, and on Friday you'll catch up with an old mate from the Striders for a 10-miler.

HOW TO SPOT YOU

At parkruns and clubs across the land, walking around talking to everyone before the race. Like a 'local' in the Queen Vic.

TIP FROM THE TOP

'Try running with different people or groups at your club,' says David. 'Running with a new group that trains at a faster pace will challenge you to go quicker and further than usual.'

5 THE FAIR-WEATHER RUNNER

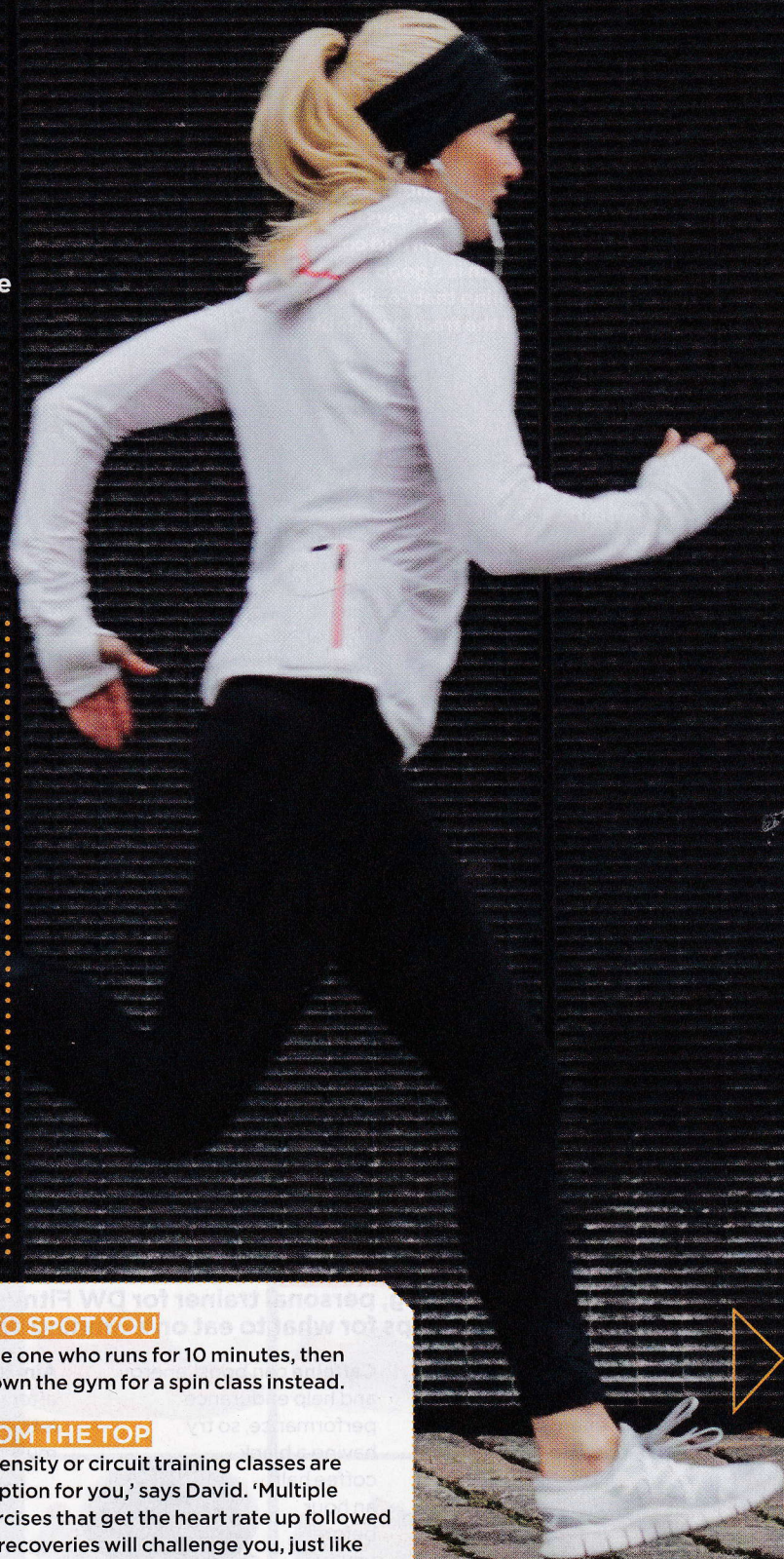
Not one for getting your hair wet, you don't mind the odd outdoor jog, on a Monday, in a month with the letter Y in it, if there's a full moon. But one glimpse of a thundercloud and you'll head indoors to Zumba. Jogging round the park four times a week bores you senseless; you've already named all the ducks in the pond to entertain yourself.

HOW TO SPOT YOU

You're the one who runs for 10 minutes, then heads down the gym for a spin class instead.

TIP FROM THE TOP

'High-intensity or circuit training classes are a good option for you,' says David. 'Multiple joint exercises that get the heart rate up followed by short recoveries will challenge you, just like a fartlek run or hill training session.'



6 THE 'ACTION WOMAN' RUNNER

You are in total ultra territory. In fact, we feel a bit silly talking to you about running, as you practically invented it. You've got at least six marathons under your belt, and a couple of triathlons too.

HOW TO SPOT YOU

Mostly seen running up mountains wearing a backpack stocked with energy drinks, torch, map, tent and some Kendal mint cake - in case you're out so long you decide to put up a tent and stay the night.

TIP FROM THE TOP

'Don't neglect strength and conditioning work in favour of extra mileage,' says David. '10 minutes of muscle activation and core exercises pre and post-run is a good way of incorporating conditioning that could keep you on the road and off the treatment table.'

7 THE WEIGHT-LOSS RUNNER

Maybe your wedding is on the horizon, you want to look better in a bikini, or your smug friend Laura lost two stone by pounding the pavements three times a week and now you're on a mission to do the same.

HOW TO SPOT YOU

You'll have the same determined look as the 'marathon trainee' but your runs will be shorter. You'll also know the calorie content of a banana.

TIP FROM THE TOP

'Burn more calories by alternating speeds and intensities,' says Lee. 'Choose a route or treadmill setting that alternates between running up hills and running at ground level to constantly challenge your muscles.'

8 THE SMILEY RUNNER

The cheerleader of the running world, you're a bouncy bundle of running joy. Pounding the pavement makes you super-happy. In fact, it's how you deal with any stress in your life, and how you stop yourself from shouting at your other half when he eats the last Magnum from the freezer. Grrrr!

HOW TO SPOT YOU

That easy, breezy look that says 'I love exercise'. You're the definition of the word 'perky' and you run for your endorphin boost, probably while wearing headphones and listening to Taylor Swift.

TIP FROM THE TOP

'Get your endorphins early by starting the day with a run,' says Lee. 'You'll find that you have more energy and will feel invigorated throughout the rest of the day, plus you'll be in a really good mood because you've tackled one of the activities that most people leave until the end of the day, so there's more time for you.'

ARE ALL RUNNERS CREATED EQUAL?

Dr Stephen Mears, sports nutrition and exercise physiology expert from Loughborough University, explains how body type impacts on natural running ability.

There are two types of muscle fibres that affect running ability. The slow-twitch muscle fibres (type I) and the fast-twitch ones (type II). Many elite long distance runners genetically have more type I fibres. These produce less force, but are more resistant to fatigue. Their natural body type tends to be lean with a low body mass. Running means carrying your own body weight and the longer you run the harder it gets, so if you're lighter it's easier to run a longer distance.

The elite sprinter has more type II muscle fibres, which produce more force but fatigue quickly. They tend to have a muscular body shape, so they're able to generate force faster. As they are running a shorter distance they don't need to worry about body weight.

The starting point for running is your genetics, but with training you can adapt your muscle type slightly to become better, but your natural ability to run either long distances or at a fast pace is genetic.



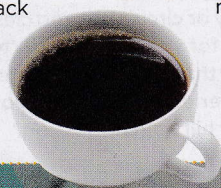
FOOD TO GO


Lee Pickering, personal trainer for DW Fitness Clubs offers top tips for what to eat on a running day

Choose carbs before your run, so your muscles can use these for energy. Opt for brown rice, or a banana.



Caffeine can boost energy and help endurance performance, so try having a black coffee half an hour before you run.



Aim to eat carbs and protein after your workout, so energy is transferred straight to your muscles to repair them. 



GET IN GEAR

Turn to page 60 for outfits tailored to your running type!