

Plyometrics for Runners

COACH O TRAINING SERIES

Coach Oliete · 1 to 2 times a week, after a warm-up · Rest 60 to 90 seconds between sets

Plyometrics are jumping and hopping drills that teach your muscles and tendons to work like springs. Do them on grass, a track, or another soft, flat surface, only when you are pain-free. Start at the top. Each jump should be quick and powerful with soft, quiet landings. Stop the set when you get sloppy. New to plyometrics? Pick only 4 or 5 drills per session and add more over a few weeks. Do not do these the day before a race or hard workout.

Why it matters beyond injury prevention: Plyometrics improve running economy, which means you use less energy at the same pace. They also build a faster finishing kick, help you power up hills, and make your bones, tendons, and landings stronger and more controlled, which helps prevent injuries.

NO EQUIPMENT NEEDED

Pogo Hops 3 sets of 15	Hop on both feet using only your ankles, staying on the balls of your feet. Keep your knees almost straight and touch the ground as briefly as you can.
A-Skips 3 sets of 20 meters	Skip forward, driving one knee up to hip height while the other foot quickly pushes off the ground. Swing your arms like when you run.
Squat Jumps 3 sets of 6	Squat down halfway, then jump straight up as high as you can. Land softly on the balls of your feet and sink back into the squat.
Lateral Line Hops 3 sets of 10 each way	Hop side to side over a line on the ground with both feet together, quick and light. Later, do them on one foot.
Broad Jumps 3 sets of 5	Swing your arms and jump forward as far as you can with both feet. Land softly and hold the landing for 2 seconds before the next jump.
Skater Bounds 3 sets of 6, each side	Jump sideways from one foot and land on the other, like a speed skater. Hold each landing for a second with your knee over your toes.
Single-Leg Hops 3 sets of 10, each leg	Hop in place on one foot with quick, springy contacts. Keep your hips level and your knee from caving in.
Bounding 3 sets of 20 to 30 meters	Run with long, exaggerated strides, pushing off hard and floating through the air. Drive your knee and arms forward. Do this one last.

WITH EQUIPMENT

Equipment needed: a jump rope and a low, sturdy box or step (12 inches or lower to start).

Jump Rope 3 sets of 30 sec	Jump with both feet staying low and on the balls of your feet. Once it is easy, try alternating feet like running in place.
Step or Box Jumps 3 sets of 5	Stand in front of a low, sturdy box or step. Jump up and land softly with both feet, stand tall, then step down. Do not jump down.

Tip: Only do plyometrics after a few weeks of strength work, and stop if you feel pain in your shins, feet, knees, or hips. Fewer good jumps beat many sloppy ones. Tell Coach Oliete if anything hurts.

Disclaimer: Coach Oliete is not a doctor, and this sheet is not medical advice. Only you (the runner) or a doctor can judge whether these exercises are safe for you to do. If you are unsure, check with a doctor first.