Cross Country Basics

Introduction
Welcome to the start of the cross country season. Whether you have been hitting the roads daily throughout the summer months or you are strapping on your running shoes for the first time in ages, the next nine weeks will be filled with many challenges, numerous successes and heaps of fun. In order to help you make the most out of cross country, this sheet will provide you with a collection of tips and reminders essential to every member of the team.

Shoes
You are going to be spending a great deal of time on your feet over the next few months. In light of that fact, it is critical that you get yourself a new pair of training shoes. If you have never before purchased a pair of specialty running shoes, you should consider doing some online research to track down a shoe make and model that will work the best for your body type. One good site to surf is www.runnersworld.com, which features specifications for and reviews of dozens of shoes.

When you are ready to buy the training shoe of your choice, try visiting one of the area's many running stores, such as Start Line (12993 Ridgedale Dr., Minnetonka, 952.593.1116), Running Room (2801 Hennepin Ave., Minneapolis, 612.827.2921), Gear (4406 France Ave., Edina, 952.926.2645), or Marathon Sports (2312 W. 50th St., Minneapolis, 612.920.2606). Since employees at these shops are runners themselves, they will be able to give you a level of assistance and advice that you would not receive at a normal sporting goods store. Additionally, make sure you mention you are a high school athlete and most stores will give you a discount.

While it is by no means required, many runners will purchase two pairs of the same training shoes and wear them on alternating days. Giving each pair of shoes a day off from running allows them to spring back to their original shape after the pounding they take during a workout. Ultimately, this expands the life span of both pairs of shoes and helps lessen the possibility that you will suffer a stress-related running injury.

In addition to training shoes, many cross country runners also purchase racing shoes with spikes. Not only do these shoes give you extra traction when you are battling difficult terrain, they can also be used during the track season should you choose to be a member of the distance squad.

Apparel
Cross country season starts in the summer and ends in the fall. As a result, runners will face wildly diverse weather conditions, from humid summer days with temperatures in the 90s to windy fall days with temperatures in the 40s. Helping make these weather swings more tolerable is proper running apparel. Available at running shops and sporting goods stores, the following items should be in every runner's arsenal:

Summer Wear
Running shorts with lining
Singlet or light t-shirt
Thin, ankle-height socks
White, lightweight hat with bill
Sun tan lotion
Runner's watch

Fall Wear
Running shorts with lining
Long-sleeve thermal shirt
Thin, ankle-height socks
Thick winter hat
Running tights, nylon pants or sweat pants
Windbreaker or sweatshirt
Sun tan lotion
Runner's watch

Diet

Over the course of the season, you will be given a number of handouts that include information on the kinds of eating habits that will keep you healthy and energized whether it is a training day, a race day or a rest day. There are, however, some basic changes you can make now to your eating habits that will have a noticeable and beneficial impact on your performance.

Increase your water intake. It is suggested that a normal person consume eight cups of water a day. Runners should aim for 10-14 given the amount of water they burn during workouts. Even if it is not hot outside, a runner's body is still losing water.

Avoid soft drinks. Soft drinks are detrimental to runners in a variety of ways. First, this type of beverage is a diuretic, which means that it actually takes water out of your body, which can help increase the chances of dehydration while running. Second, soft drinks are thick with sugar and syrup, which, after giving you an initial burst of power, will eventually lead to a dramatic crash in energy levels. If you want a healthier pick-me-up beverage, try not-from-concentrate orange juice.

Avoid junk food. The better the fuel you put into a finely tuned machine like a sports car, the better its performance and longevity. Likewise, the better the food you put into your body, the better will be your strength and endurance. Instead of using potato chips and candy bars to pummel your hunger pains, consider eating cereal and fruit. Your engine will thank you for it.

Eat smaller and more often. Studies are conclusively demonstrating that the human body functions better when small amounts of food are eaten every 2-3 hours over the course of the day as opposed to eating big meals every five hours, as is the case with the traditional breakfast, lunch, and dinner pattern. It is also a good idea to give your food time to digest before embarking on a tough workout or race. Nothing is worse than running with what feels like a brick in your belly.

Road Safety

A majority of the miles you will log as a cross country runner will take place on sidewalks and exercise paths that will bring you into contact with the public and with traffic. In order to ensure that these running adventures will be safe and polite ones, please keep in mind the following collection of tips.

Always stick to the route assigned for that day's practice. With runners sometimes varying in pace, it is hard to keep everyone in one big pack. However, if the coaches always know what roads you should be on, we can easily find you in case of an emergency.

Always run with at least one other person nearby. The "buddy system" gives you someone with whom you can set a pace, someone who could help you if you fall victim to injury, and someone to help protect you from any creeps you might encounter on the road.

Try to avoid running on the road. When you stick to sidewalks, you can spend your time concentrating on the run as opposed to dodging cars. However, if a circumstance forces you to run part of your workout on a road, always run toward traffic. That way, you can see what the oncoming drivers are doing and respond accordingly.

Give other pedestrians right-of-way on sidewalks. Nothing is scarier than a pack of sweaty teens running toward you at full speed. Try to give area walkers a break by moving to the tree lawn when passing them on the sidewalk. Additionally, if you are approaching a pedestrian from behind, it is polite to give them advance notice that you are about to pass them so they are not startled by the encounter. Finally, try to say "hello" to passers-by. These folks could be potential members of our cheering section at the next meet.

Cross streets at designated crosswalks and obey traffic lights. Since most drivers rarely pay close attention to pedestrians, you must take responsibility for your own well-being while crossing the road. Obeying traffic lights and using crosswalks will help keep you safe.

Wear light-colored, reflective clothing when running at night. Should you choose to go on a late-night run to loosen up your legs after a tough morning workout, always make sure you are visible. Try to wear a white top and bottoms, and try to make sure one piece of your apparel contains reflective tape or strips. Specialty running stores carry many reflective items for safe nighttime running.

Communication Expectations

While it is hoped that each cross country runner will attend every single practice and meet of the season, your coaches realize that emergencies and schedule conflicts do arise. If you are faced with a situation where a doctor's appointment or a work commitment falls during practice, you need to give your coaches advanced notice in person or in writing. Additionally, you need to find out from your coaches what that day's workout is so you can do it on your own that evening. One of the easiest ways to get injured is to skip workouts and then expect your body to perform at peak levels during the next practice or meet. Please keep in mind that runners who fail to inform coaches in advance of absences will not be allowed to run in the next meet after the unexcused absence.

Another area where communication is important revolves around your physical, mental and emotional health as an athlete and student. It is not unusual to feel a bit battered during the first few weeks of practice as you are getting your body acclimated to the demands of cross country training. However, if feeling a bit battered begins transforming into feeling major, injury-caliber aches and pains, you need to talk to your coaches right away. The coaches—along with the school's on-staff physical trainer—can get you the help that you need so you do not hurt yourself in a serious fashion. The same goes for non-injury problems. As teachers, all of your coaches know the stresses that students experience on a daily basis. Do not be afraid to let us know how you are doing.

Contact Information

Please use one of the following methods to get in touch with the cross country coaching staff should a need arise:

Name	Room	Phone	Email Address
Eric Zuccola (boys coach)	241	763-504-8568	eric_zuccola@rdale.org
Chris DiSalvi (girls coach)	292	763-504-8487	christopher_disalvi@rdale.org

Boys and Girls Cross Country—Summer Practice—June 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
June 1 **If you are a new runner, the captains will adjust the workouts according to your abilities. If you are using this calendar to train on your own, you are welcome to change things to meet your current fitness level.**	2 Easy 10-20 minute run on own	3 Easy 10-20 minute run on own	4 Easy 10-20 minute run on own	5 Easy 10-20 minute run on own	6 Easy 10-20 minute run on own	7 Active rest (Cycling, rollerblading, swimming, walking)
9 Active rest (Cycling, rollerblading, swimming, walking)	9 **Captain's practice begins Cooper rock at 8 a.m.** 20-30 minutes easy (West on 49th)	10 20-30 minutes midtempo (South on Boone) 50 push-ups, 50 sit-ups	11 25-35 minutes easy (West on 49th)	12 3 miles uptempo (North on Boone to Bass Lake Road, right on Bass Lake, right on Winnetka, right on 49th back to school) 50 push-ups, 50 sit-ups	13 2 miles easy (McDonald's box run) 30 minutes ultimate frisbee	14 20-30 minute run on your own
15 Active rest (Cycling, rollerblading, swimming, walking)	16 20-30 minutes easy (West on 49th) 50 push-ups, 50 sit-ups Plank, Superman, Swimmer	17 Emily's Hill workout (6-10 repeats total)	18 25-35 minutes midtempo (South on Boone) 50 push-ups, 50 sit-ups Plank, Superman, Swimmer	19 15-20 minutes uptempo (North on Boone)	20 20-30 minutes easy (West on 49th) 50 push-ups, 50 sit-ups Plank, Superman, Swimmer	21 20-30 minute run on your own
22 Active rest (Cycling, rollerblading, swimming, walking)	23 20-30 minutes easy (South on Boone) 50 push-ups, 50 sit-ups P, S, S	24 Fred Simms workout (6-10 repeats; take break half-way through; run in relay fashion if enough people show up)	25 25-35 minutes midtempo (West on 49th) 50 push-ups, 50 sit-ups P, S, S	26 3 miles uptempo (North on Boone to Bass Lake Road, right on Bass Lake, right on Winnetka, right on 49th back to school)	27 2 miles midtempo (McDonald's box run) 30 minutes ultimate frisbee	28 20-30 minute run on your own

Boys and Girls Cross Country—Summer Practice—July 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
June 29 Active rest (Cycling, rollerblading, swimming, walking)	30 25-35 minutes midtempo (South on Boone) 75 push-ups, 75 sit-ups P, S, S	July 1 The Wall (Run to Wall; do 2-4 repeats of each hill; run back)	2 30-40 minutes easy (South on Boone) 75 push-ups, 75 sit-ups P, S, S	3 3 miles uptempo (North on Boone to Bass Lake Road, right on Bass Lake, right on Winnetka, right on 49th back to school)	4 30-40 minutes easy (West on 49th) 75 push-ups, 75 sit-ups P, S, S	5 25-35 minute run on your own
6 Active rest (Cycling, rollerblading, swimming, walking)	7 Recovery Week 2 miles midtempo (McDonald's box run) 75 push-ups, 75 sit-ups P, S, S	8 Recovery Week 20-30 minutes easy (South on Boone) 75 push-ups, 75 sit-ups P, S, S	9 Recovery Week 20-30 minutes midtempo (West on 49th) 75 push-ups, 75 sit-ups P, S, S	10 Recovery Week 20-30 minutes easy (North on Boone) 75 push-ups, 75 sit-ups P, S, S	11 Recovery Week Perimeter 30 minutes ultimate frisbee 75 push-ups, 75 sit-ups P, S, S	12 Recovery Week 25-35 minute run on your own
13 Active rest (Cycling, rollerblading, swimming, walking)	14 25-35 minutes midtempo (North on Winnetka) 75 push-ups, 75 sit-ups P, S, S	15 Puke Hill (Run to hill; do 3-5 repeats of each; run back)	16 30-40 minutes easy (West on 49th) 75 push-ups, 75 sit-ups P, S, S	17 3 miles uptempo (North on Boone to Bass Lake Road, right on Bass Lake, right on Winnetka, right on 49th back to school)	18 35-45 minutes easy (South on Boone) 75 push-ups, 75 sit-ups P, S, S	19 25-35 minute run on your own
20 Active rest (Cycling, rollerblading, swimming, walking)	21 30-40 minutes midtempo (North on Winnetka) 75 push-ups, 75 sit-ups P, S, S	22 Fred Simms workout (6-8 repeats; take break half-way through; run in relay fashion if enough people show up)	23 30-40 minutes easy (South on Boone) 75 push-ups, 75 sit-ups P, S, S	24 Perimeter 6-10 400s on track at race pace	25 2 miles midtempo (McDonald's box run) 30 minutes ultimate frisbee 75 push-ups, 75 sit-ups P, S, S	26 30-40 minute run on your own

Boys and Girls Cross Country—Summer Practice—August 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
July 27 Active rest (Cycling, rollerblading, swimming, walking)	28 **Register for CC!** 30-40 minutes easy (North on Boone) 100 push-ups, 100 sit-ups P, S, S	29 **Register for CC!** Run to Death Park 8-12 repeats at race pace Perimeter	30 **Register for CC!** 35-45 minutes easy (South on Boone) 100 push-ups, 100 sit-ups P, S, S	31 **Register for CC!** Perimeter warmup 8 lap line run on track (Person in back sprints to front, everyone keeps moving, group by ability) Perimeter cool down	August 1 **Register for CC!** 25-35 minutes easy (West on 49th) 100 push-ups, 100 sit-ups P, S, S	2 30-40 minute run on your own
3 Active rest (Cycling, rollerblading, swimming, walking)	4 **Register for CC!** 30-40 minutes midtempo (South on Boone) 100 push-ups, 100 sit-ups P, S, S	5 **Register for CC!** Fred Simms workout (6-8 repeats; take break half-way through; run in relay fashion if enough people show up)	6 **Register for CC!** 35-45 minutes easy (West on 49th) 100 push-ups, 100 sit-ups P, S, S	7 **Register for CC!** 30-40 minutes uptempo (North on Boone)	8 **Register for CC!** Perimeter 30 minutes ultimate frisbee 100 push-ups, 100 sit-ups P, S, S	9 30-40 minute run on your own
10 Active rest (Cycling, rollerblading, swimming, walking)	11 **Practice begins at 8** 25-35 minutes easy (West on 49th) 50 push-ups, 50 sit-ups P, S, S Calendars	12 **Practice begins at 8** Emily's hill 6-10 repeats at hill	13 **Practice begins at 8** Swamp run easy 50 push-ups, 50 sit-ups P, S, S	14 **Alumni meet at 6:15** Alumni meet 7 p.m. Bassett Creek (Arrive by 6:15; bring snacks for after-party) Warmup Race Cooldown	15 **Practice begins at 8** 25-35 minutes easy (North on Boone) 50 push-ups, 50 sit-ups P, S, S Bagels!	16 30-40 minute run on your own
17	18 **Practice begins at 8** Season calendar distributed	19 **Practice begins at 8**	20 **Practice begins at 8**	21 **Practice begins at 8**	22 **Practice begins at 8**	23
24	25 **Practice shifts to 3:30**	26 **Practice shifts to 3:30**	27 **Practice shifts to 3:30**	28 **Practice shifts to 3:30**	29 **Capt. Practice at 8**	30