**Top Tips for Trail Runners – With Liam Grimley**

Trail running is a great way to energise the body, mind and soul. Whether you’re looking to push your personal fitness or switch pavement for gravel and try new terrain, trail running is a popular and exciting way to spend more quality time outdoors. But the intense activity can also be a stress on your body so it’s important that you understand the basics of injury prevention and stretching to ensure you are always at your best.

Liam Grimley - professional coach, rehabilitator and blogger from Elevate Sport recently took over our Instagram where he shared with us his top tips for injury prevention when trail running, and answered questions from our community on what to consider when starting running on the rough stuff. Grab your water bottle and let’s go! Over to you Liam…

**Injury Prevention & Training**

Ordinarily up to 80% of runners are injured at any one time, and around the same amount of people become injured just running, so here I’ll take you through some tools to takeaway on how to stay injury free, enjoy trailing running and avoid becoming one of those statistics.

In my running coaching and my formal rehabilitation practice, I see a lot of running injuries and you can break typical running injuries into two kinds.

1. Sudden accident type injuries (i.e. trips or falls)
2. Overuse injuries

Luckily there are ways you can combat injury. Here’s my top tips on injury prevention.

Balance Training

Both balance and stability training are great options to help you move through tough terrain and keep your balance, using both static single leg balances and dynamic exercises. Dynamic stability and agility exercises include bunny hops on straight lines or zig zags, or single leg hoops following the same movements. During each throw in some twists and turns to keep you agile.

Another great tool is practicing quick feet and agility to change direction at speed. This will help you to avoid obstacles and safely tackle the terrain.

The Right Footwear

Having the correct running footwear with a decent level of grip is essential. Your shoe should fit you well, be suited to the terrain type you’re running on and feel comfortable yet secure.

Scan the Ground Ahead

Good observation of the ground ahead is really important. Scanning the trail and choosing your line will help you to avoid and anticipate rocks and ruts. Bridleways as an example can become rutted easily, which could catch you off balance if you’re not observing the route.

Warm Up & Cooldown Periods

Don’t overlook the importance of a good warm up and cooldown period. Warming up dynamically using good running movements and rhythm will prepare your body for action. A combination of stretches and breathing techniques will keep you at your best and ready to run.

Just as important is the cooldown. Finish your session with a light run and static stretches of the major muscles: quads, hams, glutes, hip flexors, carves (recommend 1 x 3 with 30 secs for each).

Review Your Training

If your current training programme is leaving you constantly feeling sore, tired and beaten up, then it is inappropriate for you., so have a good hard look at what you are doing and how to change it up. We’re all different and so it’s important to have an exercise programme which matches you. If you don’t change it then you’ll likely end up with an overuse injury.

**Top Tips for Beginners**

I often get asked by people about recommendations for those just getting started. During my takeover of the GO Outdoors Instagram channel, their great community asked me a few fantastic questions.

How often and how far do you recommend running for a beginner?

This is a great question and centres on avoiding overuse injuries. Largely it depends on your general fitness and exercise history but my top tip would be to run more often at shorter distances (i.e. every other day). Just 10-15 minutes running every 2 days to start off with will help you both physically and mentally to get into the activity. Over time start to gradually increase the length, building gently and adding breaks (i.e. run for 5 mins, walk for 5 mins).

What are the basic safety precautions in trail running?

Trail running unlike road running is off the beaten track and so there are a few basics I’d recommend:

1. Plan and know your route; take a look at the map if you need too
2. Tell someone where you’re and what time you expect to be back roughly
3. Always get permission of the land owner if your route will take you across non-public land
4. Check the weather and dress appropriately – see below some gear recommendations from GO Outdoors
5. Be aware of other trail users (walkers, runners, families, horses and cyclists); plus take care around vehicles and farming equipment

If you do get an injury, how do you keep yourself motivated and stay positive?

This is a really great question. I’d encourage you to see injury periods as an opportunity to work on things you’ve neglected like flexibility, mobility and stability. Practicing your balance and agility exercises if you’re able to will help keep you physically and mentally active. If you need assistance with an injury, then it’s important to seek professional support from a coach or physio.

Also, remember that your injury is just temporary! You’re going to get back perfectly well to running soon. I find that the passion and interest for running grows when you have to stop temporarily through injury or illness. Keep yourself motivated for goals and you’ll be back out beating that PB in no time.

Liam Grimley is professional coach, rehabilitator and blogger from Elevate Sport - <http://elevatesport.co.uk/about/> .

**Running Gear to GO Outdoors**

One of Liam’s top tips is to have the right gear for the terrain and weather. Here’s a quick guide to the basics every trail runner should own.

Trail Running Shoes: Built for off-road terrain, these specialist shoes have grippy soles, lightweight designs and technical features to keep you stable and comfortable on the trail.

<https://www.gooutdoors.co.uk/running/footwear/trail-shoes/>

Running Jacket: Lightweight, waterproof jackets are designed to keep the rain at bay. They offer a combination of low weight, high protection and good breathability to stop you overheating. Some feature reflective strips to keep you visible.

Headtorch: Running at dusk on uneven terrain can be challenging so we recommend always taking a headtorch with you to light up the trail ahead.

Running Baselayer: Forget cotton tees, a technical baselayer will manage your body’s sweat effectively to ensure you remain comfortable and drier for longer.

Hydration: Keep your fluids topped up with an easy-carry water bottle or hydration pack.

Running Watches: Although not an essential, sports watches are a common sight on many runner’s arms. From basic stats to full GPS performance, there is a wearable running companion for everyone.