

PACING WITH A PARTNER



Partners with different paces face challenges when running together - but you can combine training sessions

Q My partner and I want to go for runs together, but she's just starting out, averaging 10min/mile, while I've been running for some time, pacing closer to 7min/mile on a six-mile training run. Can we train together and benefit equally? **DAN MORRIS, EMAIL**

A You have to ask yourself two questions. First, does your partner want to get faster? And second, do *you* want her to get faster? If you can answer yes to both of those questions, then it's 'safe' to run together. But if at any point you consider that running with her is an obligation, stop right there. She'll sense it, and you'll both end up miserable. You'll begin to feel resentful that you're sacrificing your time and workout potential. She'll feel guilty that she's slowing you down, or worry that you don't actually want to be spending time with her (even if that's not the case).

She should also keep in mind the importance of not over-striding when trying to match your pace - that could result in injury.

A three-minute gap in mile pace is rather large. However, if you aren't training for

anything specific in terms of a race in the next couple of months, then it's okay to run slower than your usual pace for your easy runs. But, in all honesty, I'd wait until the average mile pace was within two minutes before consistently planning runs together.

Perhaps the best way to train together at your own pace is to run in the same vicinity. You could try these three sessions:

■ **Hit the track.** Doing repeats at the track is a great way to spend time with each other and run your own pace. Consider doing a set of 800s in which you push her for the first lap (slower than your pace but faster for her). On the second lap she tries to maintain the pace with you while you speed up - for example, running 10secs faster than on the first lap.

■ **Run hill repeats.** Time the repeats so that she starts out a bit before you each time. For example, you run 90sec repeats while she runs 60sec repeats. The descent is recovery and you start at the bottom of the hill each time.

■ **Plan your easy run around a square neighbourhood grid or a large soccer field.** Run in opposite directions and encourage each other as you pass. Speed up in approach and maintain that speed for 30secs after passing each other for a little fartlek.

Training together doesn't have to mean running side by side. Get creative with workouts. What's important is to make sure you're clear with yourself and with each other about your goals and hers. **AM**