1. **Start slowly and build up**
   Lots of new runners get carried away and try to do too much too soon. This can lead to disappointment, loss of enthusiasm and possibly injury. If you want to be able to enjoy running for the rest of your life, start out slowly and build up.

2. **You may need to check with a doctor or a physio before you start running**
   You should get a medical check up if you are over 50 and unused to a lot of exercise, or if you may be in danger of having a heart condition which could be triggered by running. Use your common sense: if in doubt, see your doctor.

3. **Keep a running log**
   A running log is a place where you record each run that you do. It is excellent for motivation. It also provides useful information which you can use as you improve, to see what works for you. You can use a pen and notebook, your personal organiser, or a spreadsheet on your computer.

4. **Set yourself a goal**
   It helps to have something to aim for. This could might be running in a 5km race, or losing a stone. Make sure your goal is something achievable. If your goal is to run a marathon, you might want to set yourself some milestones (such as completing a half marathon) on the way. Whatever your level, it is exciting and motivating to see how you are improving and to reach your goals.

5. **Stretch**
   There are few runners who would not benefit from running half an hour a week less, and using that half an hour a week for stretching instead. Stretching makes muscles more flexible and reduces the chance of injury.

6. **Get decent running shoes**
   One of the benefits of running is that you do not need to spend a fortune on kit. The one essential item is a pair of running shoes, and you should not scrimp on getting the right pair for you. You also need a decent sports bra. Go to a specialist running shop, not a general sports store.

7. **Run safely**
   Research shows that most accidents involving vehicles and runners are the fault of the runner, not the driver. Take responsibility for your own safety.

8. **Drink lots of water and eat properly**
   Runners burn up more energy than non-runners, both while they are running (at about 100 calories a mile) and afterwards. So you need to eat more, and you need to consume more of your calories as carbohydrate. You also need drink plenty of water - keep a bottle of water on your desk and sip during the day.

9. **Keep on enjoying running**
   Don't let running become just another stress in your life. Don't set yourself such a

rigid or time-consuming timetable that you struggle to achieve it. Give yourself breaks - a day a week, and month each year - when you don't run at all.

New runners often try to run too far or too fast at first. This is particularly true if you join a running club and feel you should be keeping pace with more experienced runners. The key to running is to push yourself, but not so hard that you become injured or ill.

Five tips to help you start running safely

1. **Walk for the first three weeks**
   If you are new to running - even if you are physically fit - you should walk for the first three weeks. Although this may sound boring, there is statistically a very good chance of becoming injured in your third month of running if you do not begin with a period of walking. It takes time for your joints, muscles, tendons, ligaments and bones to get used to the impact and mechanics of running. Your overall fitness tends to increase before your body has fully adapted, and that is when you get injured. Use the first three weeks of walking to get into the habit of exercise, and adjust your daily routine, and let your body get a head start on adapting to running. If you have jogged a little, but never run far, it is still advisable to begin a programme of mainly walking before you start running. Consider visiting a physiotherapist or podiatrist.

2. **Remember the talk test**
   When you are training, you should be able to maintain a conversation, talking in complete sentences. If you are too out of breath to do this, you are training too fast.

3. **Rest**
   Your fitness and strength do not improve while you are running. They improve while you are resting, as your body responds to the stresses it has experienced. Rest is just as important a part of your training programme as running. When you start running, you should not run more than every other day. As you get more experienced, you should take a day off each week.

4. **Do not increase your distance more than 3 miles a week**
   You should not increase your weekly mileage more than 3 miles in any one week. This will ensure that you build up slowly. Jumps in mileage are asking for injury.

5. **Keep at it for at least 4 weeks**
   For many runners, the first 3-4 weeks are a real struggle. Every time you put on your running shoes, you wonder why you are doing it. But one day, after about 3 weeks, you will suddenly feel the wind at your back, and you will run easily and smoothly without effort. Running will get easier from then on, and the good days will increase while the hard days recede. Enjoy it: you have become a runner.