

Off-Season or Maintenance Running in Spring and Early Summer

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Unless you're already training for a late-summer or early-fall marathon, like Seattle (June) or Chicago (October), you're probably in one of those periods where you're following no specific training schedule, perhaps wondering how far and how hard you should be running these days. Instead of considering yourself to be "off-season," think of yourself as being in "maintenance" mode. The primary focus should be on maintaining your aerobic base, which means that most of your miles should be in an easy, conversational pace.

There are all kinds of heart rate formulas and "rate of perceived exertion" scales to determine your optimal pace for aerobic training, but the easiest way to do this is to simply run at what you feel is an "easy pace," following these general guidelines:

- Aim for 40-60 minutes at this pace, three to four times per week. Make one of those a longer run, but don't aim for anything much longer than 90 minutes or so.
- Go early or late in the day to avoid heat.
- Mix up your routes to keep boredom away, or run with friends or groups.
- Take plenty of walk or water breaks if needed.

Once a week or every other week, it's ok to go out and do some speed or hill work, but keep in mind that your speed and stamina in these intensity workouts might be less than what you experienced during racing season. The goal of these speed and hill sessions is not to perform at high levels, but to keep just a little bit of intensity in your running routines during the long, hot summer days.

Remember, the primary goal is to work on your aerobic engine, which means lots of miles at slow, easy paces. Questions? Ask the coach at paulruns@gmail.com.