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HARD/EASY DAYS

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A great way to split up your training week is to break up your workouts into hard days and easy days. You, as runners, probably read about this concept a lot. Typically though, a lot of writers don't define what constitutes hard and easy workouts. Here is what I use for definitions.

HARD WORKOUTS

- Interval training of any kind---track or fartlek
- Tempo runs
- Long days (greater than one hour), even when in aerobic limit of less than 75% of max heart rate

EASY WORKOUTS

- Easy runs less than 75% max heart rate and shorter than one hour
- Recovery workouts (less than 65% of maximum heart rate)
- Cross training in aerobic range of less than 75% of the max

If you want to run your best, try to avoid doing two HARD days in a row. Never do an interval workout the day after a long run. Or don't do a "tempo" run the day before your "long day". The rule of thumb is to follow every HARD workout with a recovery workout the next day. Research has shown that doing this "recovery workout" (active rest) actually helps rid your muscles of waste products. You will recover faster than if you just took the day off. The mistake runners often make is following a HARD day with what they call an easy run, but it's done at heart rate greater than 65%. So in actuality this is not a recovery workout and does not have the same recovering effect. Yes, the body can be that precise. In reality, only a few percent of (very light weight) gifted runners can RUN and still keep their heart rate below 65%. For the rest of us, it's best to follow up a HARD day with a walk or a spin on our bike or other light cross training.

Regular easy and short aerobic runs can be stacked back to back. For example, 3 days in a row of 30 minutes runs at less than 75% of your maximum heart rate would be fine. Although I don't adhere to this approach, for recovery reasons it would work fine.

I don't recommend the back to back easy days because I think when we're striving to reach a fitness goal, we want to focus on quality in all of our workouts. Quality can be different from hard/easy split I mentioned above. There are many "easy" workouts that are quality workouts, such as recovery workouts, "form days", and working on neglected muscular systems. Quality to me means that the workout has a purpose. You're not just banging miles. For example, when a person is building a "long day" up from 20 minutes to 2.5 hours, then every workout done (if it's adequately spaced) is a quality day. But to go run that 40 minutes again the day after a long, is not quality—make sense? So, yes,

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there is a fine line when we're trying to structure those aerobic days. If you ask yourself if this workout is making you more fit and you can say, "Yes", chances are it's quality. Remember I write these articles based on the premise of maximum human performance. So if you lot to run long and hard every day because it gives you peace of mind, more power to you! My advice however, is geared to runners trying to run their personal best.

To make this all work, you really have to know your paces and/or personal intensities or there will really be no way to take advantage of this fail safe program. You don't know how many times I've seen runners out running on their "easy days" and they can barely get a word out. An easy day isn't defined by whether or not you can keep up. It is defined by heart rate.

Here is a quality based running schedule that takes advantage of the heard day/light day premise:

Monday:	OFF
Tuesday:	Run—Intervals (track or fartleks)
Wednesday:	Cross train—45 min spin on bike at less than 65% of maximum heart rate
Thursday:	Run—Tempo run
Friday:	Cross train—walk at a heart rate of less than 65%
Saturday:	OFF
Sunday:	Run—90 minutes at less than 75% of maximum heart rate