

Fartlek for sprinters

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“Fartlek is a training method which is generally considered as applicable only to middle and long distance running, but it can also be used effectively by sprinters.

The author explains the object of this 'natural' way of training and suggests an appropriate training period and day of the week for its practice. Details are presented of the sort of session recommended, which comprises 5 to 6km of fartlek running.”

Fartlek (speed play) is a natural form of free running, during which there is a variation of the training loads undertaken by the runner. The sprinter himself decides the number, intensity and duration of the training loads, and the nature of the recovery pauses, thus making fartlek a unique form of training, in terms of organization and direction. In the case of inexperienced sprinters, it is recommended that fartlek runs should be led by a coach or an experienced athlete, so that training is not allowed to become competition.

Beside sprinters, fartlek can be used by participants in any sport which requires a high level of cardio-respiratory efficiency.

The type of fartlek recommended below can be used successfully, both in the preparatory and competition periods. It facilitates an accumulation of energy in the sprinter, which is of great importance in the periods between important competitions. During the competition period, this suggested way of developing aerobic-anaerobic mechanisms (capacities) usually takes place on Thursdays (when a race is on a Sunday). Fridays are days of rest.

Part I (Introduction)

- a) 200m walking
- b) 600m easy running
- c) During alternating periods of walking and running, a complex of sprint exercises is performed, such as jogging, skipping, high knee raising with a pawing action of the lower leg, butt kicks, changes of direction (like slalom between trees).

The object is to stimulate the nervous system without overstrain.

Part II

- a) Running 300-400m, at an effort according to how the athlete feels.
- b) 400m 'wind sprints' (50m sprint + 50m easy running)
- c) 5 minutes fast, stretching exercises, on the spot and on the move.

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- d) 5x50m downhill running with acceleration (easy jog back up the hill for recovery).
- e) 5 minutes easy running and walking with muscle loosening exercises.
- f) Bounding up a fairly steep incline (5x25 jumps); easy uphill running as the recovery phase.

Part III

Steady running for different periods of time, where the object is to maintain a high running speed by gradually shortening the 'work' time. For example:

- 90sec fast running
- 90sec easy running
- 60sec fast running
- 60sec asy running
- 30sec fast running
- 30sec easy running.

Part IV

- a) Easy run 1.50km.
- b) 5 minutes of stretching and loosening exercises, on the spot and on the move.
- c) walking 200m

Total length of running in this fartlek is between 5 and 6km.

The object is to provide a 'cocktail' of stimulation-refreshment, by performing, in a natural environment, a fairly large range of exercises of alternate high and low intensity.

