

Snowshoe running is a fantastic way to enjoy the winter, while getting stronger and improving your fitness, all while reducing the pounding on your body that you might otherwise get from running on the roads during the winter months.

Aside from the beauty of being out on pristine trails, and the fitness benefits of snowshoeing, it is also surprisingly easy to do. The simplicity of snowshoe running is what draws many people to the activity.

The learning curve with snowshoe running is very short; if you can run, you can snowshoe run. Road runners, trail runners, triathletes and cyclists are well suited to pick up on the sport very quickly due to their familiarity with the movement and their ample lower body strength. If you are newer to running, then mixing in hiking will help you adapt to the new activity safely.

Gear Up!

Other than a pair of running specific snowshoes, you won't need any other specialized gear than what you probably already have for running.

Running snowshoes, when compared to typical hiking models, are much lighter, smaller, and narrower. The best running snowshoes also have a running-specific energy return system. All of these differences allow for a surprisingly natural and efficient running stride.

Getting Out There

Anywhere there is snow offers a potential place for snowshoe running, including your favourite trail system, fields, parks, conservation areas, golf courses and even frozen lakes.

The key things to remember on your first snowshoe outing:

- Start slowly and get used to the movement.
- Begin by walking on a flat, snow packed surface.
- After a few minutes, ease into a relaxed jog, and once you are comfortable with that, then increase the intensity to your normal perceived running effort.
- As you feel more confident on groomed trails, try moving to more challenging conditions by adding in deeper snow and hills. You'll find it won't take long before you'll be running comfortably and confidently.

Snow Much Fun Training

Any type of run that you normally do, from recovery day runs, to intervals or tempo runs, to long runs, can be done on snowshoes. As with trail running, the different snow conditions and terrain can significantly alter the speed that you are able to run.

On groomed trails you may be able to run within a minute per kilometer of what you would run on the roads with the same amount of effort, however in deeper snow conditions or over hilly terrain, you may find that you're running at twice your normal running pace. This is why it is wise to go by time and perceived effort (or heart rate) when snowshoe running instead of trying to run the same number of kilometers at your normal pace.

The fun that you'll have from snowshoe running will help to get you through the winter in fantastic shape for the spring from all the added strength you'll gain from this unique and effective form of training.

Author Bio:

Derrick Spafford is a long-time trail, mountain, ultra and snowshoe runner. He owns Spafford Health and Adventure, which coaches runners of all ability levels, offers sales of Dion Snowshoes in Canada and is the series coordinator for the Dion Canadian Snowshoe Running Series. For more information, visit: HealthandAdventure.com