

STAGE 1 GROUNDWORK

START WITH THE BASICS



Your training kicks off with the sensory experience of walking in your bare feet. You'll learn stretching techniques and complete exercises that prepare you for our ultimate challenge—a 1.5-mile run in your Barefoot shoes.

DAY 01

Activity 1 of 2: 5 posture resets

Start with the posture reset exercise covered in the video. You'll do these before each walk or run.

Activity 2 of 2: 30-minute walk

Walk barefoot indoors to get acclimated. Enjoy the sensations of different surfaces under your feet.

Did you know...

Your feet have more than 7,000 nerve endings connecting you to your environment with every step.



DAY 1 COMPLETE

Congratulations, you've completed day 1 of your Barefoot training. Day 2 is unlocked and ready to go.

DAY 02

Activity 1 of 2: 10 toe crunches & spreads

For toe crunches and spreads, sit in a chair and raise your feet. Curl toes tightly. Uncurl, then spread them like a fan. Repeat.

Activity 2 of 2: 30-minute walk

Walk barefoot outside on soft surfaces, like grass or a dirt path.

Did you know...

Walking for 30 minutes can burn as many as 300 calories.



DAY 2 COMPLETE

Walking, crunches and spreads strengthen your toes and feet in preparation for Barefoot's flexible shoe design. Don't forget to do your posture resets!

DAY 03

Activity 1 of 2: 10 ankle circles

For ankle circles, sit in a chair and raise your feet. Rotate right foot counter-clockwise, left foot clockwise. Repeat in the opposite direction.

Activity 2 of 2: 30-minute walk

Walk barefoot outdoors on hard surfaces, like a track or sidewalk.

Did you know...

A recent study published in the British Journal of Sports Medicine finds that stretching and exercising ankles may reduce risk of injuries.



DAY 3 COMPLETE

Ankle circles strengthen muscles and increase your range of motion.

DAY 04

Activity 1 of 3: 10 kneeling ankle & foot stretches

From the pictured position, rock hips left and right 10 times each way.

Activity 2 of 3: 20 jumping jacks

Add jumping jacks as a warm-up.

Activity 3 of 3: 30-minute walk

Remember your posture resets before your walk.

Did you know...

Jumping jacks engage most of the muscles in your body and help get your heart pumping.



DAY 4 COMPLETE

Moderate stretching exercises and calisthenics are a good way to warm up for more strenuous activity.

DAY 05

Free Day, 30 minutes

It's not all work. Try a new park. Invite a friend. Create your own adventure.

Did you know...

Your feet have 19 muscles, 33 joints and 107 ligaments. Let them free!



DAY 5 COMPLETE

You've finished your first 5! Now, get ready for your first Barefoot Challenge.

CHALLENGE

PICTURE YOUR FAVORITE TEXTURE

Visit a park you've never been to and explore a new environment in your bare feet. Enjoy the sensations of different textures, like grass, sand or concrete. Share a picture of your favorite.

THE HOW-TO

Spend 30 minutes walking in your bare feet on as many different surfaces as you can find. Choose your favorite and take a picture.



STAGE I COMPLETE.

Awesome work! You've finished your first stage of Barefoot training. Take a couple of days off before moving on to Stage 2.

STAGE 2 GOOD FORM

PRACTICE THE PROPER TECHNIQUE



You're ready to begin Stage 2. Start by putting on your Merrell Barefoot shoes. During this stage you'll practice good form and technique and gradually increase your training time.

**DAY
06**

Activity 1 of 2: 5 inline hamstring & calf stretches

From the pictured position, lean forward and hold for 20 seconds. Repeat on opposite leg. Keep stretch smooth, without bouncing.

Activity 2 of 2: 30-minute walk

During your walk, work on arm swing, forward lean, and staying aligned over your center of gravity.

Did you know...

The hamstring might better be called the hamstrings. That's because it's actually made up of 3 separate muscles that stabilize and mobilize during walking and running.



DAY 6 COMPLETE

We hope your first day in your new Barefoot shoes has been awesome. Keep up the great work.

**DAY
07**

Activity 1 of 2: 5 kneeling lunges

From the pictured position, raise rear foot, hold ankle with same-side hand for 20 seconds. Repeat on opposite leg.

Activity 2 of 2: 30-minute walk

Remember, arm swing, forward lean and posture!

Did you know...

Walking is serious sport. Denis Nizhegorodov set a world record for 50 kilometers in an astonishing 3:34:13.



DAY 7 COMPLETE

Keep going strong.

DAY 08

Activity 1 of 3: 30-minute walk

Spend your walk concentrating on a mid-foot strike in preparation for your first run.

Activity 2 of 3: 10-second jog-in-place

Before your first run, do mid-foot jog-in-place shown in the video. Jog for 10 seconds. You'll repeat this exercise along with posture resets before each run.

Activity 3 of 3: 30-second run

Stay off your heels and on your mid-foot. Keep your stride short and quick.

Did you know...

You're pretty smart. Studies show exercise improves cognitive function. But you knew that.



DAY 8 COMPLETE

Nice! You've added your first Barefoot run to your training. Pay attention to the signals your body sends. If you're feeling unusually sore or have developed blisters, take a break.

DAY 09

Activity 1 of 3: 10 ankle circles

Sit in a chair and raise your feet. Rotate right foot counter-clockwise, left foot clockwise. Repeat in the opposite direction.

Activity 2 of 3: 30-minute walk

Decrease posture reset reps from 5 to 3.

Activity 3 of 3: 30-second run

Remember to do 10 seconds mid-foot jog-in-place.

Did you know...

The world record for number of barefoot walkers is 1,141, set in 2010 at Green Lake Park in China.



DAY 9 COMPLETE

Going Barefoot is an awesome feeling. Resist the temptation to push too hard or go too far. Stick to the regimen for best results.

DAY 10

Free Day, 30 minutes

Get out and play. Soccer, volleyball or a hike—they're all great ways to get outside and enjoy.

Did you know...

With 26 bones in each foot, a quarter of all the bones in our body are in our feet.



DAY 10 COMPLETE

You've completed almost a quarter of the Barefoot Challenge. Next up for Stage 2, you'll add new exercises to increase your strength and endurance. Take a day off.

DAY 11

Activity 1 of 3: 30 heels-elevated squats

Keep heels off the ground and feet parallel. Squat over mid-foot. Break squats into sets of 3-5 over 15 minutes.

Activity 2 of 3: 30-minute walk

Try increasing the normal pace of your walk.

Activity 3 of 3: 30-second run

Increase mid-foot jog in place from 10 seconds to 20 and focus on making 30 right foot strikes.

Did you know...

Squats strengthen your quadriceps, hamstrings and glutes and help keep your spine upright for better posture.



DAY 11 COMPLETE

You'll notice an increased focus on a lighter step over the next few days. Practice and strength conditioning will help you achieve your ideal foot strike.

DAY 12

Activity 1 of 3: 15 one-leg hops & squats

One-leg hops & squats not only help build strength; they also improve balance.

Activity 2 of 3: 30-minute walk

Keep doing 3 reps of posture resets before every walk.

Activity 3 of 3: 30-second run

Remember to do the mid-foot jog-in-place exercise at 20 seconds with 30 right foot strikes.

Did you know...

American Robert Wadlow had an 18.5" foot and wore size 37 shoes.



DAY 12 COMPLETE

With a dozen days under your belt—or feet—you're making great progress. Looking for fresh inspiration? Check out the Barefoot Blog on merrell.com.

DAY 13

Activity 1 of 3: 30-minute walk

Is there a hill on your walk? If so, try walking to the top, then turn and walk to the bottom. Repeat for the balance of your 30 minutes.

Activity 2 of 3: 30-second run

Complete your jog-in-place warm-up first.

Activity 3 of 3: 15 minutes balancing

Look for a fallen tree, garden ledge or other surface to practice balance.

Did you know...

You can balance your diet, your checkbook and your tires. Balancing Barefoot is way more fun.



DAY 13 COMPLETE

Getting off your heel and onto your midsole keeps your body more balanced and in line with your center of gravity and helps eliminate wobbling in your ankles.

DAY 14

Activity 1 of 3: 20 short leap-downs

During short leap-downs, focus on landing light and balanced on your mid-foot. Break sets into 2-4 over 15 minutes.

Activity 2 of 3: 30-minute walk

Keep up your momentum!

Activity 3 of 3: 30-second run

You're doing great!

Did you know...

Running on your heels creates impacts up to 2.5 times your weight, but a mid-foot strike decreases impacts from your heels to your spine.



DAY 14 COMPLETE

Your training times have increased to more than 45 minutes! Keep it up.

DAY 15

Free Day, 1 hour

You've earned it. Go freestyle. Walk or hike in your favorite place.

Did you know...

Barefooters believe injuries are reduced by practicing lighter, quicker steps and better posture.



DAY 15 COMPLETE

Barefoot isn't all about fitness and strength. It's also about feeling a closer connection to your environment. Share how your walk or hike felt in your Barefoot shoes.

CHALLENGE

GO LONG

Show off your feats of strength in the long jump challenge. Visit a nearby park and look for opportunities to make the outdoors your gym. Practice balance and posture and then see how far you can leap.

THE HOW-TO

Bring measuring tape if you can. Otherwise, estimate. Stand behind a line with feet slightly apart. Leap forward as far as possible. Land balanced, without falling backwards. Share your best out of 5.



STAGE 2 COMPLETE

You've reached another milestone in your Barefoot training. Take a couple of well-deserved days off to get ready for Stage 3.

STAGE 3 PERFORMANCE

GO FARTHER, FASTER



Apply your strength and skills to longer barefoot runs, and learn how to achieve the proper cadence and steps-per-minute. Let's get started!

DAY 16

Activity 1 of 2: 3 ankle leans

Perform forward and backward ankle leans demonstrated in the video. You'll add these to your posture resets and jog-in-place warm-ups.

Activity 2 of 2: 5-minute run

Increase jog-in-place time to 30 seconds. To help get into the cadence of 180 steps-per-minute, you can download the Barefoot playlist and jog to the beat. For your first run, choose flat terrain.

Did you know...

Cadence counts the revolutions your legs turn over in a minute. Steps-per-minute counts each foot strike.



DAY 16 COMPLETE

You've completed your first 5-minute Barefoot run! How are you feeling? Remember, don't overdo it!

DAY 17

Activity 1 of 2: 15 heels-elevated squats

You're getting stronger every day!

Activity 2 of 2: 5-minute run

Keep your footwork to 180 steps or more per minute. If you're falling below that mark, focus on shortening your stride.

Did you know...

Achieving the proper foot strike is like an airplane making a perfect landing. Softer is better and a lot less stressful on your body.



DAY 17 COMPLETE

If you haven't downloaded the Merrell Barefoot playlist yet, give it a try. It's a great way to stay on the beat of 180 steps per minute.

DAY 18

Activity 1 of 2: 5 inline hamstring & calf stretches

Stretch and hold!

Activity 2 of 2: 5-minute run

Running at 180 steps per minute maintains a lighter foot strike and limits over striding.

Did you know...

Over striding is landing heel-first well in front of your hips. It's like stepping on the brake with every step.



DAY 18 COMPLETE

Our Barefoot coach, Jason Robillard, has found that beginners counting their steps can become distracted from maintaining good running form. His advice? Practice, practice, practice.

DAY 19

Activity 1 of 2: 10 bounce-and-stops

Bounce lightly up and down on the balls of your feet without letting your heels touch the ground. On every 3rd rep, freeze and hold for 2 seconds.

Activity 2 of 2: 5-minute run

Remember to warm up with 3 posture resets, 5 ankle leans and 30 seconds of jog-in-place exercise. Enjoy your run!

Did you know...

Keeping your knees bent during running helps keep your weight off your heels.



DAY 19 COMPLETE

Much of mastering Barefoot is staying relaxed. Remember to keep your knees bent rather than stiff, which helps minimize stress on your body.

DAY 20

Play your favorite sport for 30 minutes.

Go Barefoot and play. Soccer, touch football and volleyball are a few fun ways to get outside.

Did you know...

Playing sports is a great way to increase agility.



DAY 20 COMPLETE

Want to learn more about your feet? Check out the Harvard study featuring the biomechanics of foot strikes at www.barefootrunning.fas.harvard.edu.

DAY 21

Activity 1 of 2: 10 bounce-and-stops

Bounce-and-stops both strengthen and stretch muscles in your legs.

Activity 2 of 2: 5-minute run

Dial in your form! Practice leaning slightly forward from your ankles, vertical and slightly backward 2-3 times during your run. Practicing different leans will help develop your optimum running form.

Did you know...

Many runners use a mix of Barefoot and cushioned footwear over time. One doesn't exclude the other.



DAY 21 COMPLETE

Runners who've had chronic foot, shin and knee pain have found that switching to Barefoot running on their mid-soles has eased or eliminated their discomfort.

DAY 22

Free Day, 1 hour. Make your own adventure.

Get stronger and healthier playing your way. Create your own adventure.

Did you know...

"Healthy feet can hear the very heart of mother earth."—Sitting Bull



DAY 22 COMPLETE

You're past the halfway mark for the Barefoot Challenge. Take a day or two off.

DAY 23

Activity 1 of 2: 15 minutes heels-elevated squats

Do 15 minutes of squats, resting as needed.

Activity 2 of 2: 5-minute run

Don't forget to stay hydrated. A good rule is to drink 16 ounces of fluids before your run.

Did you know...

Fluids help lubricate joints, tendons, and ligaments and carry blood to your organs.



DAY 23 COMPLETE

Keep up the awesome work.

DAY 24

Activity 1 of 2: 10 bounce-and-stops

“Commit to be fit!”— author unknown

Activity 2 of 2: 5-minute run

Have you mastered the Barefoot cadence? Check your progress by counting your steps per minute for the first and last minutes of your run.

Did you know...

There’s an easy way to avoid all those boring chores around the house. Live outside!



DAY 24 COMPLETE

The Mayo Clinic reports that physical exercise improves your mood, eases chronic diseases, manages weight, increases energy, promotes better sleep, sparks bedroom passion, and is just plain fun. ‘Nuff said.

DAY 25

Activity 1 of 2: 10 kneeling ankle & foot stretches

What’s been your favorite warm-up or strengthening exercise so far? Share it on Facebook.

Activity 2 of 2: 5-minute run

How’s your foot strike? Remember, keep it light and quick over your midsole.

Did you know...

A tradition of the Tarahumara Tribe is a barefoot run of 435 miles in just 2 days.



DAY 25 COMPLETE

Christopher McDougall’s book *Born to Run: A Hidden Tribe, Superathletes, and the Greatest Race the World Has Never Seen* chronicles the amazing barefoot running feats of the Tarahumara Tribe.

DAY 26

Play your favorite sport for 1 hour.

Have a favorite sport? Put on your Barefoot shoes and play.

Did you know...

The latest buzz in golf? Swinging the clubs barefoot. Even pros are giving it a try.



DAY 26 COMPLETE

Pro golfers like Ryan Moore and Oliver Wilson are going barefoot from tee to green.

DAY 27

Activity 1 of 2: 10 toe crunches & spreads

Stronger toes may not win you any body building awards, but they'll help you build speed and quickness.

Activity 2 of 2: 5-minute run

Remember your lean, posture and jog-in-place warm-ups. If you've been running on a track or sidewalk, switch to grass or a soft path.

Did you know...

On North Island, New Zealand, going barefoot is acceptable everywhere from shopping malls to restaurants.



DAY 27 COMPLETE

Phalanges are another name for toes, raising the question: Which phalange cried *wee, wee, wee* all the way home?

DAY 28

Free Day, 1 hour

Play your way. Enjoy the outdoors in your Barefoot shoes.

Did you know...

Sustained activity, like jogging, can burn as many as 500 calories per hour.



DAY 28 COMPLETE

How did you spend your free day? Share your favorite Barefoot activity so far. Your third challenge is on tap next. Have fun!

CHALLENGE

COUNT YOUR STEPS

See how your footwork stacks up. Get outside on your favorite running surface and count your steps. It's time to put your cadence skills to the test!

THE HOW-TO

Run for 1 minute on flat terrain and count your steps.



STAGE 3 COMPLETE

You did it! Congrats. Now, take a couple days off to rest up for Stage 4.

STAGE 4 MULTI-SPORT

PUT YOUR TRAINING INTO PLAY



Your last stage of training preps you to get outside and enjoy your favorite sports. You'll increase your run times to build greater strength and endurance and practice agility drills for quicker footwork.

**DAY
29**

Activity 1 of 2: 5 inline hamstring & calf stretches

When doing stretches, it's important not to bounce. Stretch and hold for 20 seconds.

Activity 2 of 2: 10-minute trail run, 1-minute walk, repeat 2X

Obstacles like rocks, roots and downed trees make great agility builders. Choose a moderately hilly trail to build endurance as well.

Did you know...

Barefoot frees your feet to develop strength and agility the way nature intended.



DAY 29 COMPLETE

Many parts of the body work together for agility and balance. Your toes are an important part of the equation. Staying on your midsole in flexible footwear brings your toes' natural ability more into play.

**DAY
30**

Activity 1 of 2: 15 minutes side-to-side leaps

Before your run, leap side to side over a distance of 12-15 inches. Keep your feet slightly apart and parallel, landing balanced over your forefoot for 5-10 sets of 10-20 jumps.

Activity 2 of 2: 10-minute trail run, 1-minute walk, repeat 2X

You're into the swing of it now.

Did you know...

Agility work builds quickness, lightness and ease of movement.



DAY 30 COMPLETE

For nearly 3 million years our ancestors walked, ran and played in bare feet, sandals or moccasins. Back to the future?

DAY 31

Activity 1 of 2: 10-minute trail run, 1-minute walk, repeat 2X

Remember to complete your pre-run exercises. Start with posture resets, complete 30-second jog-in-place and do 3 reps of ankle leans.

Activity 2 of 2: 15-minute walk on steep grade

After your run, choose a steep grade and walk 15 minutes.

Did you know...

Interval training mixes faster and slower paces to increase strength and endurance.



DAY 31 COMPLETE

Great work! Are you feeling the burn? Walking a steep grade works muscles in your thighs and rear. It's also a good way to build endurance.

DAY 32

Activity 1 of 2: 5 kneeling lunges

Lunges are great strength builders for your lower body. One of the keys to maximizing their benefit is to do each rep slowly.

Activity 2 of 2: 10-minute trail run, 1-minute walk, repeat 2X

How are your feet and legs feeling? Remember to take a break if you're more sore than usual.

Did you know...

Running on your forefoot increases efficiency by using elastic energy to create more forward propulsion.



DAY 32 COMPLETE

Experts in biomechanics are continuing to study the differences in efficiency between heel and midsole strikes. Stay tuned to merrell.com for more information.

DAY 33

Activity 1 of 2: 5 kneeling lunges

Keep up the good work.

Activity 2 of 2: 10-minute trail run, 1-minute walk, repeat 2X

Run relaxed. Don't clench your hands or jaw. Stay loose and light.

Did you know...

There are 4 races in endurance running's grand slam: Western States 100, Vermont 100, Wasatch Front 100 and Leadville Trail 100.



DAY 33 COMPLETE

Barefoot expert Jason Robillard tells us that staying relaxed is essential to enjoying your runs. Feeling tight? Try shaking your arms and hands by your sides occasionally as you run.

DAY 34

Free Day, 1 hour

Spend an hour Barefoot doing what you love to do.

Did you know...

A study by the Outdoor Industry Foundation reports that nearly 90% of participants find getting outside reduces stress.



DAY 34 COMPLETE

Nice work. Take a day or two off before starting your next training session.

DAY 35

Activity 1 of 2: 15 minutes side-to-side leaps

Also called lateral leaps, this exercise falls under the category of plyometrics, or jumping exercises. They help build power and agility.

Activity 2 of 2: 15-minute run

Start thinking of goals to keep you motivated after the Barefoot Challenge.

Did you know...

The plantar fascia is a ligament supporting the arch of your foot. It puts the spring in your step.



DAY 35 COMPLETE

Looking for more inspiration and motivation? Check out our list of Barefoot resources on merrell.com.

DAY 36

Activity 1 of 2: 15 minutes 4-way leaps

Use your environment. Make an “X” on the ground with sticks. Practice leaping lightly 8-12 inches side to side, forward and back and diagonally for a total of 50-100 foot strikes.

Activity 2 of 2: 15-minute run

Looking for a good read on the subject? Check out Jason Robillard's *The Barefoot Running Book: A Practical Guide to the Art and Science of Barefoot and Minimalist Shoe Running*.

Did you know...

In 2010, American Todd Ragsdale ran barefoot 102 miles in 24 hours.



DAY 36 COMPLETE

Your leap exercises are great prep for the trail, helping you to increase agility, balance and strength for walking or running on uneven terrain.

DAY 37

Activity 1 of 2: 5 kneeling lunges

Keep up your training even after you've completed the challenge. All of the stretches and strength building exercises you've completed are great ways to stay in shape.

Activity 2 of 2: 15-minute trail run

It's time to get rough. Pick a trail with big ups-and-downs and lots of obstacles.

Did you know...

Energy bars are good on-the-go food. Get bars low in fat, less than 4 grams per 230 calories.



DAY 37 COMPLETE

Integrating Barefoot into your favorite activities and sports is a great way to get outside in your shoes. You can also slip them on for just hanging out around town.

DAY 38

15-minute run/play your favorite sport

Mix your training with pleasure. Go run *and* play.

Did you know...

Stopping to smell the roses is a good thing. After all, you could be on a treadmill at the gym.



DAY 38 COMPLETE

Your foot strike and cadence should all be coming together for a balanced, more efficient stride.

DAY 39

15-minute run through obstacles

Visit a new park. They make great obstacle courses and offer a variety of running surfaces.

Did you know...

Obstacles break up your running rhythm and build strength and agility.



DAY 39 COMPLETE

Looking for another way to stay motivated? Share Barefoot with your friends. Training with a partner can give you a lift when motivation is running low.

DAY 40

Activity 1 of 2: 5 kneeling lunges

Power to the legs! Next time you're slogging up a hill on a day hike, you'll be glad you completed all your lunges.

Activity 2 of 2: 15-minute run

You're almost to the finish line!

Did you know...

If you can't get out of the city, you can try a man-made hill like an empty parking garage on the weekend.



DAY 40 COMPLETE

From cardio to calorie burn, going uphill reaps greater rewards for your body.

DAY 41

Free Day, 1 hour

Play your way!

Did you know...

"Fitness has to be fun. If it isn't, there will be no fitness. Play is the process. Fitness is merely the product." —Dr. George Sheehan, runner & author



DAY 41 COMPLETE

One more challenge to go! Congratulations on your determination to master the Barefoot experience.

CHALLENGE

GO THE DISTANCE

It's time to put all your training together with a 1.5-mile run. Remember proper cadence, posture and foot strike. Make it your best Barefoot run yet and share your time.



BAREFOOT CHALLENGE COMPLETE

Congratulations! From day 1 you've been building new strength, improving form and discovering a closer connection to the terrain. Now it's time to get outside and enjoy. We hope you continue using your app. It's a great tool for measuring your continued progress. Happy barefooting!

