

About A Simple Benchmark Test For Monitoring Running-Performance Status

This article describes a simple and accurate test to monitor your current, relative performance status.

The test accurately shows if your training program is working as intended or if you are over-training, which can lead to over-train syndrome. The test can be done near your home, and it doesn't require a calibrated track, as does the vVO_{2max} test. However, it does not provide a quantitative value as does the vVO_{2max} test which can be used to accurately predict race performance. [For those not familiar with vVO_{2max} based training see [Running Performance Improvement Workouts](#).] Essentially, this test is based on the full vVO_{2max} test.

The test is applicable for both the vVO_{2max} -based and brute-force based training paradigms. [Regarding brute-force training: Historically, runners trained for performance improvement mainly by brute-force {Intervals all out until fatigue stopped them, powered up hills and increasing distance long runs, longer runs as fast as possible per week}].

For this test it is recommended, but not required, that you run a formal vVO_{2max} test to determine if you are currently close to your best vVO_{2max} . See [Using Your \$vVO_{2max}\$ for Interval Training](#) for a description of the test.

Here is the test:

- You will need a chronograph watch to accurately time exactly 3:00 and 6:00 minutes.
- Select a convenient out-and-back course, preferably relatively flat, and where you run freely outbound for at least 3+minutes.
- Select a permanent starting point and carefully mark it. You will always run your tests starting at this exact point.
- Warm up by jogging slowly, very slowly for 5 minutes. Recover for 2 minutes.
- Then do: 4×100m intervals at about 120% of your vVO_{2max} pace or 90% of your max sprint speed. Important: Allow 60sec recovery between intervals.
- Recover for 2minutes. Now you are ready to go. Notice: You've exercised both your aerobic and anaerobic running systems.
- The goal will be to see how far you can run in exactly 6:00 minutes.
- Run outbound for exactly 3:00 minutes, **carefully mark this turn-around point**, and run back towards your starting point. This point will be your turnaround point for all future tests.
- On the return, focus on running so hard you'll actually get beyond your starting point at actually 6:00 minutes.
- Mark your 6min stopping point carefully.
- Estimate the distance where you stopped relative to the starting point, in meters.
- The key is to get into a routine of running the test every week or two. This way, you'll be able to see a pattern of change.

Interpreting your results:

- Farther is good if you are training to improve your race times.
- If the distance is essentially the same or is slightly declining for several tests and you are training to improve your performance, your training program is not working. [If you are "brute-force" training, consider using the vVO_{2max} training paradigm instead.]
- Shorter is not good, especially if the rate of change is rather rapid. It may be an indication you are into over-train syndrome. Read [About Resting Days For Runners](#)

If you have initially or recently established your vVO_{2max} distance, then you can simply add or subtract your distance change value as if you had done the actual vVO_{2max} test on the track. Use your vVO_{2max} Conversion Chart, etc.

If you are not using the vVO_{2max} -based method, then just estimate or you use a GPS watch, etc. to determine a 6:00min distance. It doesn't need to be very accurate. Then simply compute the percent change from the test distance change / course distance. e.g., 50m/1600m = 3% Given a 50:00 10K before, then a 3% improvement yields 48:30.

Note: All of the underlined text segments are hyperlinks to PDF documents.

Comments, errors, and questions are always welcome. Free free to disseminate.

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