



Natural Running: The Simple Path to Stronger, Healthier Running

Danny Abshire , Brian Metzler (Contributor)

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Natural Running is the middle ground runners have been looking for. By learning to run the barefoot way—while wearing shoes—runners will become more efficient, stronger, and healthier runners. Backed by studies at MIT and Harvard, running form and injury expert Danny Abshire presents the natural running technique, form drills, and an 8-week transition plan that will put runners on the path to faster, more efficient, and healthier running.

In *Natural Running*, Abshire explains how modern running shoes distort the efficient running technique that humans evolved over thousands of years. He reviews the history of running shoes and injuries, making the case for barefoot running but also warning about its dangers. By learning the natural running technique, runners can enjoy both worlds—comfortable feet, knees, and legs and an efficient running form that reduces impact and injuries.

Natural Running teaches runners to think about injuries as symptoms of poor running form. Abshire specifies the overuse injuries that are most commonly associated with particular body alignment problems, foot types, and form flaws. Runners will learn how to analyze and identify their own characteristics so they can start down the path to natural running.

Abshire explains the natural running technique, describing the posture, arm carriage, cadence, and land-lever-lift foot positioning that mimic the barefoot running style. Using Abshire's 8-week transition plan and a tool kit of strength and form drills, runners will move from heel striking to a midfoot or forefoot strike.

Natural Running is the newest way to run and also the oldest. By discovering how they were meant to run, runners will become more efficient, stronger, and healthier runners.

Natural Running: The Simple Path to Stronger, Healthier Running Details

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Nicolae Racovita says

Great technique. The book could be condensed in half. I improved my timing, also I'm much less tired after running.

Julianne says

This book provided a good history of how running in America became so fraught with injuries (it lays the blame mostly at the foot of the athletic shoe industry), but I found it lacking as an actual guide on how to begin applying the principles Natural Running. For example, in one chart he says if you flaw is "Landing with loud foot strikes" the fix is to "Land lightly and quietly, self-regulate your impact"...but how do you actually make that transition when you've been running for years the wrong way? I found Chi Running to have a much more clear plan of how exactly to incorporate the different tenants of natural running into my routine. Even so, after reading the book and see and seeing how passionate the author is, I'm definitely interested at taking a look at the his natural running shoe line (Newton Running).

Lauren says

Lots of good information on running and running form. My biggest gripe with this book is that, in places, it's very clear Mr. Abshire has an agenda in promoting running shoes. He's the founder of Newton Running Shoes, and he sometimes leaves out bits of information in order to make his point (especially as regards barefoot running). I'm a minimalist runner (stepping on a piece of glass eight years ago has made me unlikely to run barefoot except when I've thoroughly inspected every inch of ground I'm going to run first), but it bothered me that he stopped short of giving readers the whole story on running regardless of shoe preference. It's an otherwise great book and compiles a lot of information in one easy-to-read format. My advice? Worth a read, but keep in mind that he has an agenda and it's probably worth checking out a few other sources rather than taking his word as sacred. Recommended.

Ivan says

Runners looking to change their heel-striking gait (which is the root cause of so many running injuries) to a more natural running style should definitely give this book a look. There is a fair bit of tedious repetition here, reinforcing at every turn the notion that heel-striking is bad for you, but there is also a lot of useful information on running shoes, the science of motion, biomechanics and the physics of running. Also included are exercises to help reinforce good running form and an 8-week transition plan.

Bud Winn says

I've had this book for about 4 years but finally got around to re-reading it and posting it here on Goodreads. Good information overall, but the section on drills and actually incorporating the framework into running is small...most of the book goes into the "why" vice the "how." Just a personal preference for me....I've understood the reasoning and methodology for quite awhile, but incorporating it into everyday practice is the hard part.

Quinston Piper says

I'm a big believer that the natural running style is best form to use as a runner so, I think my opinion of this book is a little harder than it should be because, I've read so much about the subject already. It didn't help that the book was also a bit repetitive.

This book is more of an introduction to natural running and the bulk of it is geared towards the runner that is still a heel-striker. I did learn some new strength and form drills to reinforce a natural running technique but, even that portion of the book is only slightly useful to me. I find that the best way to learn drills is to have someone show you, in person, what to do.

Angie says

Mid to fore foot strike, not heel strike! That was the mantra of this book and it got a bit repetitive as the author went through all the stuff that is wrong with everything we've all been taught about running in comfy, padded-heel shoes. The last two chapters detail exercises and a training plan, including building upper body and general all body strength. Definitely an informative read for those wanting to start running "natural."

Scott Simon says

Good explanation of the mechanics of how we should be running and how to improve. I'm anxious to incorporate his form/strength drills into my weekly workouts. I found this book provided a more detailed explanation into the 'why' natural running is better for your body than ChiRunning did (although that was also an excellent book--I think the two are great companions).

Regarding others commenting on the author 'plugging' his own company, I didn't view it that way at all. He was up front from the beginning who he was and I didn't find the references to Newton all the frequent and when he did mention them they seemed pretty unbiased/neutral. In fact, I think I am more inclined to consider a Newton shoe now out of respect for the authors impartiality, knowledge, and experience.

Overall, a good read I would recommend.

Jen says

Informative, great visuals, includes a program for working through various form drills.

Brian S. says

This is an excellent book on the mechanics of how humans were designed to run. Abshire provides an in depth look at the evolution of running shoes from the early 60s through the running boom of the 70s, 80s and 90s. The main theme of the book is that we were designed to run with a midfoot or forefoot strike and not the heel strike for which so many of today's running shoes are designed. Abshire also provides a training plan and exercises to aid the reader in transitioning to a more natural way of running.

As other reviewers have mentioned, Abshire is the co-founder of Newton Running Shoes, and it is clear he frames much of what he writes in order to sell shoes. I did not find that it was too over the top. In fact, most of the time he recommends shoes in a general way that does not even mention Newton.

The only other possible negative about the book is that it is repetitive. I personally don't mind it as repetition is important when trying to change habits. Abshire writes the book as if he is trying to coach you to become a natural runner, and thus the repetition is warranted in my opinion.

Overall a quick, good read for someone who wants to know more about how to run more efficiently with less injuries.

Blackdogsworld says

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Andrew Burden says

A lot of the tips in this book have become second nature to me already, but I tried to approach my rating as if it was all new information. The author developed Newton Running shoes, a popular minimalist brand (disclaimer: a pair of Newtons was the first low-profile shoe I adopted, not quite a year ago). You'll see complete barefoot runners occasionally, but more commonly it's a pair of Vibram Five Fingers or Skeletoes that turn heads. The basic idea is that going barefoot in training and wearing a shoe with less padding - and more importantly, minimal difference between heel and toe - allows you to sense the running surface better. If you train properly in these types of shoes, you should see less injury, increased running efficiency, and enjoy running more. Since I've already integrated so much of the program informally already, I'm not sure I'd follow the exact plan, but this would be an excellent starting place for someone who has previously only worn modern-traditional running shoes (such as Nike Air).

Clarissa says

This book frustrated me more than anything. As a non-elite runner I felt quite put down for it.

It seemed like there was more name dropping and "buy my shoe" notations than anything else.

Lest the writer forget, many runners do so because it is a low cost form of exercise. That being said many cannot afford a minimalist pair of running shoes that could very well be out of their price range, while a traditional running shoe could be very easily obtained on a limited budget.

Kayla says

This was an excellent book! It had great information about the running shoe industry and how to run naturally and more efficiently.

The author founded Newton Running Shoes and contrary to some of the other book reviews I've read I did not think he was plugging his company at all. When he did mention his company he was referencing other natural running shoes and he listed several other companies, like Vibram.

He talked about how heavy, highly cushioned running shoes with a high heel to forefoot drop of 10mm or more are causing runners to heel strike. He discussed how to improve one's running form by landing on the mid-foot and how to concentrate on not over striding by maintaining a turnover cadence of 180-190.

I liked how he included different strength training exercises with pictures and descriptions. When practiced these exercises would help to strengthen weak muscles and help keep injuries at bay. As a marathoner, I know it is important to maintain strong core and upper body muscles to maintain good form and I appreciated that the author talked about those points.

He also mentioned common running injuries like IT-Band syndrome, shin splints, and runners knee and he showed how they have been linked to being caused by heel striking.

I liked the way he organized the book and opened with evaluating elite marathoners running form. As he pointed out they are not heel strikers, instead they land lightly on their forefoot when running.

This was a very informative book and I highly recommend it to any runner who wants to explore running naturally and more efficiently and for runners looking for the cause of their injuries. Or maybe you've just been swept into the barefoot running movement (Born to Run anyone?) and are looking for more information on the subject, if so then this is the book for you.

Rob says

I blasted through this book in a few days, and I'm planning to follow the 8-week plan and drills for making the transition to a "natural running" style. Given that I'm on board with Danny Abshire's recommendations,

why only 3-star rating? Two flaws.

First, the author makes too many references to his shoe company. Even though I believe he's sincere in recommending a certain type of footwear based on peer-reviewed scientific literature and his own experience, I couldn't help but think of the book as an advertisement for his brand of shoes.

Second, there is too much detail in the first 8 chapters, and too little in the concluding 2 chapters. Many points are stated over and over and over and over and... you get the idea. He didn't need 8 chapters to describe the problems associated with heel-strike running and the benefits of switching to natural running. I think he could have stated the case much more succinctly. At the same time, it's hard to figure out how to do some of the exercises from the text and pictures -- the training section could benefit from more detailed explanations.

Depending on the results I achieve by following the program, I may change this rating. After all, if a book can improve my physical health, I'd be convinced to give it 5 stars regardless of writing flaws. From one author to another, I'm thankful that Abshire undertook the effort to put his knowledge to paper.
