


## WARM-UP

7 mins 30 secs

### ■ Warm Up/Cool Down Jog

 No Equipment

 5 mins



### Instructions

- Participants jog around a predetermined area (e.g., outside of gym, around a marked course or other).
- Participants set their own pace, should be able to talk while jogging.
- Have participants jog for 5-10 minutes.

### Dynamic Activity

Have the participants form a circle around you, separated from one another by about six feet. On your signal, participants start to run in a clockwise direction. After 30 seconds, again on your signal, participants change direction. You can also direct them to speed up, slow down, and do drills such as high knees, butt kicks, A-skips, B-skips, and cariocas.

### ■ High Knees

 No Equipment

 30 secs

 Setup



This session includes a dynamic warm-up, and a focus on running form through body awareness, coordination, balance, and posture activities.

## Introduce the Activity

- Tell your participants the name of the activity and why they're doing it: Good runners have strong legs. This lesson will strengthen the muscles that help you lift your knees, which in turn will help you be lighter on your feet and will help you take longer steps without overstriding—and that makes you feel more efficient as a runner.
- Talk about the importance of using a good knee lift in running. Knee lift can help avoid plodding (moving slowly and heavily) and shuffling, and result in quicker turnover. Demonstrate a “Tin Man” walk—stiff-legged and slow. Ask them how fast they could run in this manner. (The answer: Not very!) Have them try a Tin Man walk.
- Tell the participants they will start marching in place with a high knee lift and then they will add in arm swing before doing a little game. Tell them that High Knees exaggerates the knee lift they would normally use in running to strengthen those muscles.

## Instructions

- Drive knees upward while taking short steps; thighs are parallel to ground.
- Take off and land on the balls of the feet.
- Look straight ahead, with a tall, stable posture; avoid a backward lean.
- Swing arms from the shoulder with elbows bent at 90 degrees; hands travel hips to lips.
- Swing arms in opposition to knee drives (left leg, right arm).
- Provide cues: “Knees up” “Thighs parallel to ground.”



This session includes a dynamic warm-up, and a focus on running form through body awareness, coordination, balance, and posture activities.

## **Assess the participants**

### **What to watch for:**

- Knee lift that is parallel to the ground
- Taking off and landing on the balls of the feet
- Looking straight ahead, with a tall, stable posture. Avoiding a backward lean.

### **Direction cues to share with participants:**

- “Lift those knees! Higher, higher!” (For those who are not lifting high enough)
- “Land on the balls of your feet! Not on your heel!”
- “Don’t lean back”

*Note:* Only give a participant one direction at a time.



## **Modifications**

- Game: pair participants up and have one participant do High Knees while the other stands in front of them, holding their hands motionless at a place where they would be good targets for their partner’s knees to hit. Have participants see how many knee lifts they can do in 10 seconds before switching roles with their partner.
- Play a version of musical chairs, designating spots with cones or something else. Have one less spot than you have participants. Play music as the participants march around in a circle doing High Knees, and then stop the music. The participants race to the available spots. The participant who doesn't get a spot runs once around the circle and then rejoins the group. Continue for as many rounds as you want.
- After the participants practice the activity, pair them up and have one participant do High Knees while the other stands in front of them, holding their hands motionless at a place where they would be good targets for their partner’s knees to hit. Have them change roles after about 20 seconds.
- For younger participants, hearing the beat of a drum may help them get their knees up!

## **Discussion**

When you've completed High Knees, talk to your participants about their experience with the activity. Here are some sample questions to get you started:

- Why is it good to have knee lift when you run? (Helps you run faster and lighter and not have heavy footsteps)
- What will a higher knee lift do to your stride? (By strengthening the muscles, it will help you be lighter on your feet and take longer steps without overstriding)
- How about your turnover, or how quickly your feet land and come off the ground? (It will quicken your turnover)
- When are high knees most important? (When trying to sprint or run really fast)
- Should you run with your knees as high as we did in this activity? (Not usually; this activity is exaggerated to help your legs get strong)

This session includes a dynamic warm-up, and a focus on running form through body awareness, coordination, balance, and posture activities.

## Inclusion Strategies

*Classrooms are filled with learners who demonstrate a variety of needs and abilities, including ESL participants, those with disabilities, and gifted/talented participants. Consider these adaptations as you work to modify the lesson for participant success.*

- For participants with mobility impairments, work on arm drive; if possible, allow the participant to use spotters and aids to help manipulate the leg movement.
- To get the proper knee height, place a string at the height you want the participants' knees to be at, or have participants take turns holding a fun noodle at the appropriate height.
- Have pictures or visual display of the before and after phases of the high knees to show participants how their bodies should look before, after, and during the movement.
- Allow participants to do high knees at their own pace, walking around the gym, and only when ready, start jogging and doing high knees.
- Allow participants to lie on their backs and practice the motions there. If the participants still don't understand the proper movement, assist them with moving their legs up and down.
- Have participants partner up and mirror each other, to allow for more practice and a visual with their peer, also working on socialization.

## ■ Butt Kicks for Runners

 No Equipment


 30 secs



- Drive knees upward while taking short steps and bringing thighs parallel to ground. Bring the heel of the raised leg to the glute.
- This drill will look very similar to the high knees drills.
- Swing arms in opposition to legs.
- Align head with spine and look straight ahead.
- Keep shoulders on top of hips.
- Keep pelvis in neutral position.

■ **A-Skip**

 No Equipment


 30 secs



- Skip forward while lifting knee to waist height and flexing foot upward (ankle dorsiflexed). Keep back leg straight during toe-off.
- Continue moving forward, alternating legs.
- Strike ground with mid-foot or forefoot underneath the body.
- Swing arms in opposition to legs.
- Align head with spine and look straight ahead.
- Keep shoulder on top of hips.
- Keep pelvis in neutral position.
- When doing this drill for the first time, walk through it to get the motion down and gradually progress to skipping.

■ **B-Skip**

 No Equipment

 30 secs



- This movement is very similar to the a-skip, except with the added movement of snapping your leg back down right after you drive up your knee.
- Skip forward while lifting your knee to waist height and flexing foot upwards (ankle dorsiflexed). Keep back leg straight during toe-off.
- Once the knee is raised and your thigh parallel with the ground, quickly use glutes and hamstrings to pull your leg back down, landing on the ball of your foot under the body, in a pawing motion.
- Continue moving forward, alternating legs, and pulling the ground with your mid-foot or forefoot underneath the body.
- Swing the arms in opposition to the legs
- Align the head with the spine and look forward
- Keep the shoulders on top of the hips
- Keep the pelvis in neutral position
- When doing this drill for the first time, walk through it to get the motion down and gradually progress to skipping.



## ■ Carioca - High Knee (Grapevine)

 No Equipment

 30 secs



- Stand sideways at the start line, feet shoulder-width apart.
- Cross the outside (trailing) foot in front of the lead foot and then cross it behind the lead foot.
- When crossing one leg in front of the other, lift the knee up and over to get a better stretch of the outer hip muscles.
- Continue crossing in front, crossing in behind.
- Stay on the balls of feet.
- Maintain upright posture.
- Stretch the arms out roughly parallel to the ground and hold them still or swing them in a controlled, fluid, side-to-side motion in opposition to the movement of the legs.
- Repeat in the opposite direction, now crossing over and behind with the other foot.
- Start slowly and after mastering the footwork pick it up to a brisk pace while maintaining good form.



## SKILL LESSONS & ACTIVITIES


55 mins

### Form Introduction

Analyzing and correcting participants' form and technique is key to teaching them to become more accomplished runners. Review the "Form 101" activities below, designed to assist you in identifying good and bad running form and delivering easy-to-follow corrective instruction.

#### ■ Form 101: Introduction

 No Equipment

 5 mins



### Overview and Key Benefits

Improving your participants' running technique will help them:

- Run with greater ease and efficiency
- Be less prone to injury
- Become more aware of their body mechanics.
- Improve their endurance while getting stronger and faster



## Guidelines


- Running is a technical sport, and sound running technique is a learned skill, not an innate ability. It needs to be taught and practiced.
- The best way to teach form is by regularly practicing specialized exercises and drills; relying on instructions alone can lead to injury. Drills break good form into manageable elements. They also isolate and exaggerate movements of the running stride to build the strength, power, and efficient neuromuscular reactions needed for each component of running.
- Consider each participant's strength, mental maturity, skill, and motivation when designing your training. Participants are different; the training and coaching you give them should vary accordingly.
- Always account for the specific body build of each of your participants. A variety of structural differences can cause flaws in running form that drills may not completely correct. Additionally, puberty can cause rapid changes in body build during the early high school years, which can make some movements feel awkward at first. Avoid pushing your participants to do movements that are uncomfortable, and if you become aware of structural problems, consult a sports expert.
- Remember that while there is no single perfect form for running, there are techniques that are safer and more efficient than others, which can lead to better performance.
- As important as good form is, your primary goal as a coach is to keep running fun.

## Additional Points

- In general, high school athletes are capable of focusing on the finer aspects of form and training for peak performance. At this age, it is important to teach both the body mechanics behind good form and the logic behind your teaching methods.
- We demonstrate widely accepted elements of good running form in our other Form 101 segments: Fundamental Athletic Skills, Running Posture, Leg Movements, and Arm Movements.

### ■ Form 101: Running Posture

 No Equipment

 10 mins



This session includes a dynamic warm-up, and a focus on running form through body awareness, coordination, balance, and posture activities.

## Run Tall

Running tall will increase lung capacity, leading to increased endurance and a more powerful running stride. It will also help participants properly position their center of gravity and maintain proper alignment, which will prevent injuries and allow for efficient running.



- Spine straight.
- Shoulders back with a slight forward lean.
- Stable torso (solid core).
- Head up, chin is parallel to the ground.
- Align the head, hands, knees, and feet to face forward.

Do not hunch over, lean far forward or backward, look up or down, rotate the hips back, or let the body drop toward a sitting position.

## Stay relaxed

A general sense of relaxation can have a positive psychological effect on participants by promoting feelings of ease, comfort, and control. It can also improve performance by saving the body's supply of oxygen for the muscles needed for the running motion. Releasing tension allows the joints increased range of motion for fuller, more fluid movements.

It is especially important to relax muscle groups not directly involved in the running motion:


- Facial muscles
- Jaw
- Neck
- Shoulders
- Hands

## Avoid common inefficiencies

- Head bobbing
- Head shaking
- Body swaying
- Body twisting
- Knees and toes pointing inward or outward
- Hands angling inward

## ■ Form 101: Arm Movements

 No Equipment

 5 mins




### Instructions

- Swing the opposite arms and legs in sync while running.
- Pump the arms in line with the direction of movement. Arms should not swing across the body, and the elbows should point backward, not outward.
- Swing the arms from the shoulders, not the elbows. Keep the elbows bent and focus on driving them backward.
- Hold the elbows at about a 90-degree angle. Allow the elbow angle to fluctuate slightly during the arm swing, but don't stray beyond 70 degrees to 120 degrees.
- Have the hands pass the body at about hip level. Avoid holding the arms so high that they swing above the waist or so low that they swing below the hips.
- Swing the arms powerfully through a full range of motion. Distance participants' hands should move from their hips or a bit further back to their chests. When sprinting or running uphill, the hands should move from the back pocket, or a bit further back, to the chin.
- Keep the shoulders and hands relaxed. The shoulders should be down, not tight, and the hands should be relaxed but stable, not clenched in a fist, hyper-extended, or flopping around.



## ■ Form 101: Leg Movements

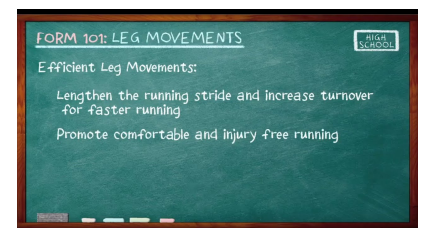
 No Equipment

 5 mins




### Instructions

- The best way to safely increase stride length and stride rate is by focusing on specific elements of the stride outlined below.
- Take off and land mid-foot or on the balls of the feet. Avoid landing flat-footed, on the heels, or way up on the tiptoes.
- Run lightly on the feet, with a footstrike that feels almost springy, and as quietly as possible. Avoiding pounding or plodding.
- Land with the foot and knee pointed in the same direction the body is traveling.
- Avoid leg collapse, the sinking of the hips and knees as the feet strike the ground. The head and hips should stay relatively level over the course of the stride.
- Actively paw the ground upon landing and push off quickly with each step. Avoid scuffing the feet or landing passively.
- Extend the ankle, knee, and hip joints upon takeoff.
- Lift the foot toward the butt quickly after pushing off the ground.
- Drive the knees forward and upward as the legs swing forward. This does not mean to lift the knee straight up—the ideal knee lift feels more like driving the knee forward.
- Pull the toes toward the shins (also known as dorsiflexing the ankle) as the leg swings forward and prepares to land. When the foot is under the knee, the foot should be parallel to the ground.
- Adopt a stride length that feels natural and comfortable. Ideally, the feet should land directly beneath the hips or as close as possible. Avoid understriding, or taking short, choppy steps, and avoid overstriding, where the foot lands well in front of the body.
- The components of a longer and faster stride will be exaggerated when sprinting as compared to distance running. Distance participants still want to develop the capacity to run faster, but they need to balance speed training with endurance training.



## ■ Body Awareness and Coordination

 No Equipment

 5 mins



### Instructions

- Have participants form a circle around you.
- Have them jog in place, and lead them in the following movements to demonstrate correct form:
  - Arms bent 90 degrees at the elbow and moving in a natural motion, with hands between hip and shoulder height.
  - Knees lifted high with feet landing directly under the body's center of gravity.
  - Shoulders pulled back.
  - Head held high, focusing straight ahead with torso "running tall".

## ■ Funky Run

 No Equipment

 15 mins



 Setup

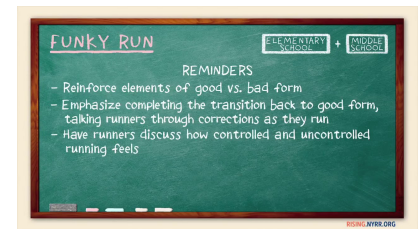
## Introduce the Activity

- Tell your participants the name of the game and what it's about. Say something like, "Today for a little while we're going to ignore everything we learned about good running form and are going to run as funky as we can! We'll see what that feels like, but first let's remember some of the things we should try to do when running normally."
- Discuss the basic elements of good running form: Running tall (remember the beanbag on your head!), back straight, head steady, eyes straight ahead
- Relaxed hands and shoulders (don't crush those chips!)
- Strong arm swing from the shoulder, passing the hips and not crossing the body (bang those drums!)
- Just right steps (no monster steps/over striding!)
- Running on the balls of their feet, with quick turnover (remember the springs on your feet and foot fire—like moving quickly on a hot stove to keep your feet from burning!)
- Tell participants they will start running normally, then switch to a "funky run" on your command before switching back to running normally to finish.
- Demonstrate good form, then transition to an example of a "funky run" where you do the opposite of one or more of the good form elements you discussed, and finish by returning to good running form.
- Encourage the participants to pay attention to how they feel while running in their funky style compared to running with good form.

This session includes a dynamic warm-up, and a focus on running form through body awareness, coordination, balance, and posture activities.

## Instructions

- In groups of three or four of similar ability, have your participants begin jogging, using normal form.
- About a third of the way through, call out “Funky Run!” prompting them to run with any terrible, silly, or exaggerated form they can think of.
- About two-thirds of the way through, call out “Normal Run!” and have them switch back to their normal running style.
- You can also call out specific “funky moves” for participants to do, Such as “Funky long steps!” or “Funky arm movements!”
- Emphasize making the transition back to good form. Assist those who are having trouble by talking them through corrections as they run.
- Perform 3 or 4 repetitions of this activity, each between 2 and 5 minutes depending on the fitness level of the participant. For less-fit groups, include a walk phase. Allow 2-3 minutes rest between each repetition for hydration and to correct running form.



## Assess the participants

### **What to watch for:**

- Good running form (when they are supposed to be running normally)
- Quick transitions back to good form after “funky” running

### **Direction cues to share with participants:**

- “Run tall!”
- “Relax your [hands/arms/shoulders]! Don’t crush that chip!”
- “Bend your elbows!”
- “Use your arms more!”
- “Swing your arms straight, not sideways! Remember to bang those drums!”
- “Light on your feet! Remember foot fire! Quick turnover!”
- “Land on your springs, in the middle of your foot!”
- “Lift your knees!”
- “Use your Just Right stride - not too long!”

*Note:* Only give a participant one direction at a time.

## Modifications

- Call out specific “funky moves” you want your participants to do. For example, call out “Funky long steps!” or “Funky arm movements!”
- Have each group do a follow the leader, alternate the participants at the front of the line, and each leader has to come up with a funky run for the rest of the line to follow.
- Create a course with cones and between certain color cones are the Funky Run Zones, and each color represents a certain part of the body that is funky: head, arms, legs, hands.

This session includes a dynamic warm-up, and a focus on running form through body awareness, coordination, balance, and posture activities.

## Debrief Questions:

- How did the “funky running” feel compared to normal running?
- What were some of the differences between funky running and normal running?
- What are some of the basics of good form for arms, legs, etc.?
- What is one thing you think is a little funky about the way you run that you might work on?

## Inclusion Strategies

*Classrooms are filled with learners who demonstrate a variety of needs and abilities, including ESL participants, those with disabilities, and gifted/talented participants. Consider these adaptations as you work to modify the lesson for participant success.*

- Encourage partners to run together and “mirror” the other’s “funky running” style for fun.
- Remember that some participants may already have a “funky running” style (e.g., participants with cerebral palsy or other type of physical disability) so encourage “individual” styles of running and not a single “best” style.
- Demonstrate using specific cues for participants with intellectual disabilities. Free expression (funky running) may be too abstract an idea for some learners to grasp.

## ■ Bricks & Feathers

 No Equipment

 10 mins



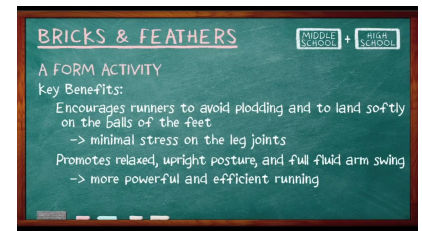
 **Safety**

**Safety**

Ensure students are in sight at all times

## Instructions

- Identify a running course where your participants can run for 5 to 10 minutes while remaining in your sight.
- Show them the course and explain that they will run while you call out “Bricks!” or “Feathers!” every 15-30 seconds.
- When you call out “Bricks!” they will run like they have bags of bricks on their backs. Demonstrate running with “bricks”:
  - Landing with heavy feet
  - Shoulders hunched
  - Stomping on the ground
  - Short strides
  - Restricted arm movements
- When you call out “Feathers!” they will run light and easy, as if they have feathers on their backs. Demonstrate running with “feathers”:
  - Landing lightly on the balls of the feet
  - Running with a relaxed upright posture
  - Longer strides
  - Fluid arm movement



## Cues

### ***Direction cues to share with participants:***

- “Feel those bricks! They are so heavy!”
- “Don’t march [or prance]! Keep running!”
- “Light as feathers! Light on your feet!”
- “Get those bricks off your back!”

(Going forward, the last two can be used any time you see participants running with heavy, pounding steps.)

*Note:* Only give a participant one direction at a time.

## Debrief Questions

When you've completed Bricks and Feathers, talk to your participants about their experience with the activity. Here are some sample questions to get you started:

- How did it feel to run with bricks?
- How about with feathers? Did that feel better?
- How did your feet land during the bricks phase? (They landed with heavy, plodding foot strikes)
- Did your feet land differently in the feathers phase? (They landed lightly and quietly)
- Compare your posture in each phase. (They were more hunched over in the bricks phase, and more upright in the feathers phase)
- How about your stride in each phase? Was it different? (The stride was longer in the feathers phase)
- What did you change in your running between “bricks” and “feathers”?
- If you had to run a long race, how would you run? (“feathers”)
- If you were sprinting, how would you race? (“feathers”)



## Modifications

- Make this a tag game by splitting participants into two groups: the Fast Fawns and the Plodding Ogres. The Fawns start a few seconds ahead of the Ogres, running straight down a field, and the Ogres plod after them. Switch roles at the end of the field: The Ogres are now Fawns and the Fawns are now Ogres. In another round let the Fawns chase the Ogres.

## Inclusion Strategies

*Classrooms are filled with learners who demonstrate a variety of needs and abilities, including ESL participants, those with disabilities, and gifted/talented participants. Consider these adaptations as you work to modify the lesson for participant success.*


- Consider using different cues for children with intellectual disabilities such as “tiptoeing” vs. “stomping” their feet as they run.
- Let participants know they will only run for a short distance. Reinforce proper running form when completed to minimize confusion.

## COOL-DOWN

15 mins

### ■ Warm Up/Cool Down Jog

 No Equipment

 5 mins



#### Instructions

- Participants jog around a predetermined area (e.g., outside of gym, around a marked course or other).
- Participants set their own pace, should be able to talk while jogging.
- Have participants jog for 5-10 minutes.

### ■ Group Stretch


 10 mins



#### Instructions

- Gather in a central location to perform static stretches.
- Ensure you are positioned so that all can make eye contact with you.
- Lead participants through the stretches. If performing as a cool-down; use this opportunity to review the skills from the lesson. Perform each stretch once, holding for 20-30 seconds. If performing as a flexibility session, take time during each stretch to explain the purpose of each stretch and what is being stretched. Perform each stretch 2-3 times, holding for 20-30 seconds each time.

This session includes a dynamic warm-up, and a focus on running form through body awareness, coordination, balance, and posture activities.

● **Glute Stretch**  No Equipment



- Start by lying flat on the back with the knees bent and the feet on the ground.
- Relax the torso and neck, letting the head rest on the ground.
- Rest one ankle on top of the opposite knee.
- Reaching through the legs, gently pull the bottom thigh toward the chest, raising the bottom foot off the ground.
- This stretch should be felt in the glutes of the top leg.
- Don't overstretch; maintain a comfortable level of tension. Hold the stretch for 30 seconds, repeat on the other side.

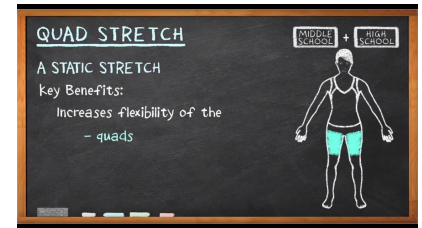


This session includes a dynamic warm-up, and a focus on running form through body awareness, coordination, balance, and posture activities.

● **Quadriceps (Quad) Stretch**  No Equipment



- Standing upright, bend one knee behind the body, grasping the ankle with the hand from the same side. Gently pull the foot toward the glutes, bringing it as close as you can without overstretching or causing pain.
- Keep the knees together throughout the stretch.
- Keep the body upright and hips level.
- Keep the feet in line with the body.
- Don't lean in any direction or pull the foot out to the side.
- If necessary, use the free arm to brace the body against a wall or other support for balance.
- Hold for 30 seconds; repeat with the other leg.

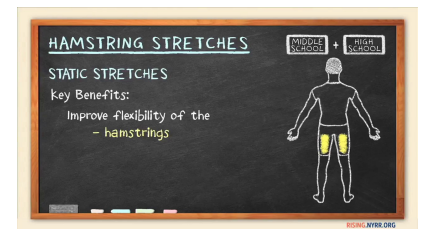


This session includes a dynamic warm-up, and a focus on running form through body awareness, coordination, balance, and posture activities.

## ● Floor Hamstring Stretch No Equipment



- Lying on the back, raise one leg as high as it will naturally go; keep the other leg flat on the ground. Grasp the raised leg at the back of the thigh, just below the knee, and pull it gently toward the upper body to feel a good stretch through the hamstrings.
- Keep both legs as straight as possible.
- The hips should remain on the ground.
- The torso and neck should be relaxed and the head should stay on the ground.
- Flex the toes toward the shins to feel more of a stretch.
- Avoid bouncing or overstretching.
- Breathe deeply and stretch the raised leg a little closer to the body on each exhale.
- Count 10 seconds as the torso folds forward, then hold for 20 seconds; repeat with other leg.



This session includes a dynamic warm-up, and a focus on running form through body awareness, coordination, balance, and posture activities.

● **Calf & Achilles Stretch**  No Equipment



### Calf Stretch

- Brace against a wall or other support with arms outstretched at shoulder height.
- Take a large step backward with one leg.
- Bend the front knee while keeping the back leg straight and the back heel planted on the ground.
- Lean forward slightly while actively pushing the back heel into the ground to feel a good stretch in the calf of the back leg.
- Keep the back straight and the shoulders squared.
- The knee of the lead leg should never extend in front of the toes.
- To intensify the stretch, step farther back with the trailing leg.
- Hold for 30 seconds; repeat with the other leg.



### Achilles Stretch

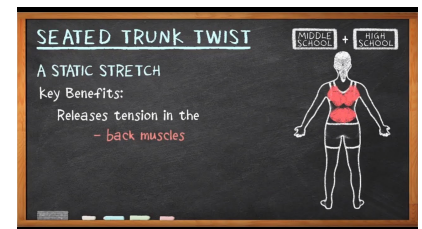
- Move the back foot forward a bit and bend the back leg slightly while keeping both heels on the ground.
- Keep both feet facing forward and the back heel planted firmly on the ground.
- Keep the back straight and the shoulders squared.
- The knee of the lead leg should never extend in front of the toes.
- Hold for 30 seconds; repeat with the other leg.

This session includes a dynamic warm-up, and a focus on running form through body awareness, coordination, balance, and posture activities.

## ● Seated Trunk Twists No Equipment



- While seated and with the legs straight out in front, bend the right leg and cross it over the left.
- Place the right foot flat on the ground next to the left knee.
- Place the left elbow on the outside of the bent knee, gently pushing the leg inward.
- Put the right hand on the ground behind the body for stability while keeping the right arm straight and gently twisting the torso to the right. Avoid leaning back during the twist.
- Hold for 30 seconds; repeat on the other side.



## ● Arm Stretch: Tricep Crossover Arm No Equipment



- Keep the neck and spine straight.
- Make sure not to bend the upper body backward or sideways.
- Bring the right arm across the body.
- Use the left hand or forearm to hold the right arm against the chest.
- Hold for 30 seconds and repeat with the other arm.

