

## **Fartlek Training: What Is It, Benefits, Tips, and Workouts**

Fartlek training is more than just a funny word—it's a game-changing workout that can do wonders for your heart rate. Runners are constantly searching for new workouts to add to their training plan. Running workouts need to be varied in order to push the body to new feats and allow it time for rest and recovery.

If you run with the same hard effort for every training session, you'll get burnt out. Variety is the secret ingredient for successful high-intensity interval training workouts, and variety is what fartleks are all about.

For experienced runners, many turn to a fartlek run as a new challenge that breaks up their normal routine. Fartlek sessions are a challenging workout that pushes runners outside their comfort zone and combines a mix of warm-up pace, speed work, sprinting, and cool-downs into a constant interval training session designed to increase your heart rate.

### **What Is a Fartlek Run?**

A fartlek run is defined as "continuous training with interval training." The word "fartlek" is Swedish for "speed play," highlighting its focus on a medley of fast and slow bursts of running during the duration of the workout.

Fartlek running is a form of interval training that keeps the runner in constant motion. It is a long run featuring varied lengths of resting pace and fast-pace segments. Fartlek training can be done anywhere and isn't considered just a track workout.

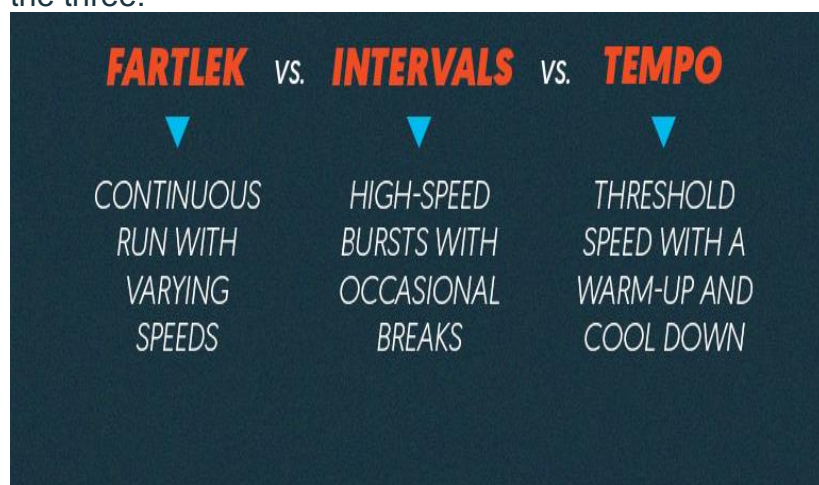
### **What Is Fartlek Training?**

Fartlek training incorporates fartlek runs into your weekly routine. It *does not* mean that all you do is fartlek runs—you're just adding these into your schedule.

Since fartlek training involves up-tempo paces, it's best to cycle these in week to week with your tempo runs and interval training. These can all be challenging workouts, so we recommend just doing one per week and cycling weeks for which one you do.

Of course, if you like fartlek training and feel like it's giving you great performance gains, cycle it in more often.

So, are we introducing fartleks into our training plans just because it's a cool name? Well, if it sounds strikingly close to interval training and tempo runs, you're not wrong. A fartlek is a type of interval run that incorporates tempo. However, there are still key differences between the three:



As you can see, a fartlek is a continuous run with varying speeds, while interval training sometimes allows you to take a brief rest. Tempo runs involve a warm-up and cool-down with your threshold speed mixed in the middle.

### **Benefits of Fartlek Training**

You might be wondering, “Why would you do fartlek training?”

There are many benefits to incorporating a fartlek run into your training plan, including variety, speed, and improved focus. Let's take a look at each one in depth.

#### **Variety**

If you feel like your long runs have gotten stale, you're not alone. One of the biggest challenges for runners is keeping themselves engaged. You can run the same running trail over and over again and lose some of the zest and excitement you may have once had in your routine.

Fartlek runs are unique because they can be done anywhere—on running trails, on a treadmill, and even on the track. They allow for a change of scenario and are less rigid on exact timing like interval runs. Instead, they add some exciting variations to your run with a mix of jogging, sprinting, and speed work.

#### **Speed**

Fartlek runs are one of the best ways to improve your endurance and your speed, so you have enough energy to kick it into overdrive when it counts on your way to the finish line during a half marathon, marathon, or other race.

Since fartleks force your body to be in continuous motion, you can better anticipate mid-race changes to run faster to catch up or pass an opponent. The hard effort you exert depending on your fitness level in your training workout will be what you can draw from in a race.

### **Improved Focus**

Don't just go through the motions on your run. A fartlek session forces you to stay engaged and make active decisions about your running pace. You won't just maintain a steady pace throughout the entire workout; you'll be switching it up as you go, making different intervals based on what you're trying to accomplish.

For example, if you're running on a looping trail, you might run your race pace from telephone pole to telephone pole and then slow up. A fartlek forces you to make active decisions mid-run in order to adjust your pace and challenge yourself.

### How to Do Fartlek Running Workouts

Fartlek workouts add variety into your training, but you can also change up how you do them to ensure that they never get old.

However, each fartlek running workout typically is structured as follows:

- 10 minutes of warm-up pace
- 1-3 minutes of race pace
- 1 minute of resting pace
- Repeat this 4-8 times
- 10 minutes of cool-down pace

You can scale the race and resting pace variations depending on how much long-distance cross country running you're seeking to complete.

It's okay if your first fartlek workout doesn't go exceptionally well. Keep at it and don't be afraid to take breaks. Really focus on the bursts of speed work in the middle and concentrate on delivering optimal performance during those moments. As with any new workout, you'll increase your endurance and be able to achieve more as time progresses.

Fartlek training runs are almost a necessity for people looking to improve their speed during their next race. The varying and sudden burst of speed work can train the body to deploy this when it is needed in the final stretch of a long race.

You'll be more well-rounded and stronger as an athlete who has been exposed to a variety of workouts, movement patterns, and physical demands, all of which will help you be a better runner.

Runners should change up their training schedule to include critical threshold runs, fartlek workouts, interval training, and even Tempo runs. A healthy training plan incorporates all of these types of workouts to give the body new challenges to face and overcome.

Now that you have the basics of a fartlek workout and how to complete it, you can hit the trail and go to work to improve your endurance, speed, and overall fitness level.