

A woman with long brown hair tied in a ponytail is running on a paved path. She is wearing a bright pink tank top, black shorts, and black and white running shoes. She is captured in a dynamic running pose, with her left leg forward and arms pumping. The background features a scenic view of a body of water at sunset, with the sun low on the horizon and its light reflecting on the water. Silhouettes of trees and a distant shoreline are visible. The overall mood is energetic and serene.

RUNNING IN VIBRAM FIVEFINGERS®:

A guide to transitioning





← OUR FOUNDER,
VITALE BRAMANI

I. INNOVATION, QUALITY, PERFORMANCE

For more than 75 years, Vibram® has been a trusted leader in performance and innovation. **Our founder, Vitale Bramani**, lived in Milan, Italy and developed the first rubber sole on a mountaineering boot, which changed the way the people moved, up down, and across the Earth forever.

Vitale's experience as a mountain guide and climber in the Italian Alps convinced him of the need for performance rubber soles on footwear. What followed was a success story and the production of millions of soles for the best shoes in the industry. In 2006, **Vibram® introduced the next generation of innovative performance sole design**: one that can make us more aware of our feet and more connected to our environment. **We call it Vibram FiveFingers®.**



Wearing a pair of Vibram FiveFingers® is very different from wearing conventional footwear. The thin, flexible, and deconstructed sole allows the foot to curl and flex. **The toes are separated – just like on our feet!** Because of these features, every step taken in FiveFingers is an experience in texture, ground feedback, and awareness that can keep us better connected to our environment.



Since the launch of **Vibram FiveFingers® in 2006**, many things have contributed to the popularity of minimalist running. The *New York Times* bestselling book *Born To Run*, and a vocal and progressive FiveFingers user base, are just a few things that have inspired consumers to put on FiveFingers and start moving.

So, how are we supposed to do this minimalist/barefoot thing?

The truth is there isn't a single correct approach. Vibram® believes that moving and running in FiveFingers can make us more connected to the environment around us. Come join us and explore the joys of minimalist running.

We hope this guide will help you discover how YOU can get back to movement's natural roots!



GETTING TO KNOW YOUR FEET

II. FIRST THINGS FIRST: GETTING TO KNOW YOUR FEET

When it comes to running – or any type of exercise – very few people stop and think about two important tools:

your feet. They contain bones, joints, muscles, and sensory receptors – **collectively forming two of the body's most beautifully efficient mechanisms.** It's about time we get to know them!

In some cases, we have become so shoe dependant that our feet have become almost mysterious to us. Most people even criticize their feet: arches too high or flat, too wide, too narrow, curled toes, long toes, short toes, etc. The powerful architecture of our feet often becomes hidden, disliked, and incredibly sensitive.

1 GET TO KNOW YOUR FOOT

LOOK: Take off your shoes and socks. Take a good look at your feet. Become familiar with the shape and condition of the feet. This will help you understand and identify the changes that may take place as you transition to moving and running in FiveFingers.



TOUCH: Massage is one of the best ways to stimulate the feet—and it feels good! Try these exercises sitting down and barefoot.

1. Run your fingers between your toes – push back and forth, twisting your hand a little
2. Use your elbow to rub the entire base of the foot
3. Use your hand to push toes back and forth creating a gentle stretch
4. Administer gentle pressure with your thumbs, moving towards your toes



1. Run fingers between toes



2. Use elbow to rub entire base



3. Use hand to push toes back and forth



4. Administer gentle pressure with thumbs



FEEL: Feet are excellent at collecting “information” and we believe that the feedback we get from our feet make us more aware of our environment, leading us to a better workout and a healthier lifestyle.

- Walk on different surfaces. This is one of the most obvious and easiest ways to stimulate and exercise the foot. With bare feet or in Vibram FiveFingers®, explore your home and its surroundings. Notice how your feet feel on smooth vs. rough surfaces and try to sense/recognize the signals that your feet send to your brain.

You may notice that your foot strike and stride will adjust to different surfaces when barefoot. Experiment on safe, controlled terrain such as grass, carpeting, pavement, dirt, pebbles, and smooth rock – keeping your eyes open for potential hazards or unfriendly objects.



Walk on carpet



Walk on smooth stone



Walk on dirt



Walk on pebbles



FOOT FITNESS: STRENGTH TRAINING FOR YOUR FEET



FOOT FITNESS: 2-WEEK STRENGTH TRAINING PROGRAM

Now that you have begun to familiarize yourself with your feet, you may have noticed that they are pretty weak. Maybe it's hard to spread or control your toes? Perhaps being barefoot for an extended amount of time leaves your feet sore or tired? To begin the transition to moving and running in Vibram FiveFingers®, we recommend the following foot strengthening exercises before you take your first step.

Practice the exercises below in **3 sets of 20 reps, 3-5X/week for two weeks**. Your feet may feel tired afterwards, but you should not be in pain. Ultimately, this series of exercises should be part of your running warm-up routine.

1. Heel Raise
2. Toe Flexing
3. Toe Grip
4. Toe Spread/Tap



1. Heel raise



2. Toe grip



3a. Upward toe flex



3b. Downward toe flex

5. Exaggerated Eversion/Inversion
6. Grabbing towel on the floor with toes → pass to other foot
7. **Walking in FiveFingers:** Never underestimate the power of just being barefoot or in Vibram FiveFingers®. Start with just 10 minutes a day, and eventually work up to one-to-two hour intervals of general, day-to-day activity in your FiveFingers. This is an excellent way to slowly build strength and begin to transition into FiveFingers.



4a. Toe spread



4b. Toe tap



5a. Exaggerated eversion



5b. Exaggerated inversion



6a. Grabbing towel on the floor



6b. Passing towel to other foot

READY FOR A TEST RUN?



3 TEST RUN: CREATE A PERSONAL PLAN FOR SUCCESS

Up to this point you should have taken steps to get to know your feet better and worked on foot strengthening exercises. Now you're ready for a test session to explore the light and joyful feeling of barefoot/minimalist running!

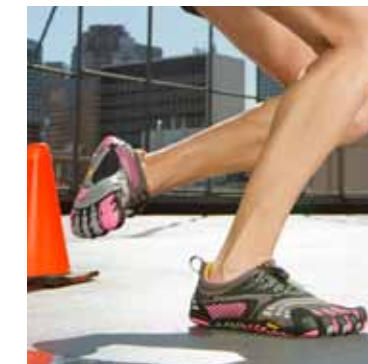
One of the reasons that “barefoot” or minimalist running has become increasingly popular is that it is synonymous with freedom and exploration. Give yourself the gift of time and patience as you explore this “alternative” way of running and moving. Forget about splits, time, distance, and PRs for a little while and focus on running for the pure joy of connecting with your body and your environment in a new way. Your patience will pay off in the long run as you emerge from this experience with a refreshed outlook on running.

We suggest a four part process to create a plan for your first run:

Choosing a surface, barefoot technique, measurable distances,

and a simple training plan. Please note there is no single training and transition program that is suitable for everyone. You should try and discover what works best for your body in order to make this transition successful!



Choosing a surface: Hard or soft? The answer might surprise you. With proper forefoot or midfoot strike form, running on hard surfaces can be comfortable and safe. A good way to learn proper barefoot running technique is to begin on a smooth, hard surface such as pavement.



Running on soft surfaces such as grass, dirt trails, or sand can also be extremely pleasurable. Just know that the softer the terrain, the less likely you are to land *lightly* and with the most compliance. Because of this you may find that you are still heel striking which may make your transition to a harder surface more difficult.

Whatever surface you choose, make sure to select a controlled familiar environment to begin your training. “Choosing” a surface actually means learning where to place your feet and how to negotiate every single step. In time, it becomes a high-speed reiterative process and contributes to a spectacular feeling of self-awareness.

Barefoot Technique: A good landing should feel gentle, relaxed, and compliant. Try these two phases to learn recommended barefoot technique.

PHASE 1	PHASE 2
<p>Minimalist runners typically land on the ball of the foot towards the lateral side. It’s probably better to land with your foot nearly horizontal, so you don’t work your calves too much.</p> 	<p>After the front of your foot lands, let the heel down gradually, bringing the foot and lower leg to a gentle landing. (It’s like when you land from a jump, flexing the hip, knee and ankle.) Again, the landing should feel soft, springy, and comfortable.</p> 

Hints for minimalist running:

- **Do not over-stride** (this means landing with your foot too far out in front of your hips). Over striding while forefoot or midfoot striking requires you to point your toe more than necessary, which may cause stress on your feet. It often feels as if your feet are striking the ground beneath your hips. This is similar to the way one’s feet land when skipping rope or walking in place.
- **Land Lightly.** Not sure if you’re landing correctly? Try **running totally barefoot** on a hard, smooth surface (e.g. pavement) that is free of debris. Sensory feedback will quickly tell you if you are landing too hard. Light runners are quiet runners. Try to make as little noise as possible when you land.
- **DO NOT HEELSTRIKE!** If you just can’t seem to get the feel for landing on your midfoot, try the following.
 - Walk backwards, leaning slightly forward. Then try to do it faster, making sure there are no obstacles in your way.

- Walk or run uphill. It is virtually impossible to heel strike first.
- Jump on two feet and notice how you land.
- Run forward while jumping rope. Have the rope cross under your foot on every other step. (**hint:** select one foot for the rope to go under)





Measurable Distances:

“How far should I run?” If you are an athlete with a “no pain, no gain” mentality, you may want to reconsider that approach. You may find that you are using different muscles in your feet and lower legs that you might not be used to using. A gradual transition based on a personal level of comfort is highly recommended. We also recommend that you not overdo it, because you may injure yourself by doing too much too soon.

Don’t forget this is about having fun and enjoying your run! Getting injured due to going too hard too Quickly is NOT fun.


Please listen to your body at every step of this process. You will thank yourself in the long “run”.

On the following page you will find a sample training plan that may help you build distance in a comfortable manor.

Sample Training Plan

WEEKS 1 AND 2	WEEKS 3 AND 4	WEEKS 5 THROUGH 12	WEEKS 13 AND ON
–Foot Training (pp. 10 -11) 3-5X/wk	– Warm up with Foot Training (pp. 10 -11) – Gently stretch your calves and arches	– Warm up with Foot Training (pp. 10 -11) – Gently stretch your calves and arches	– Warm up with Foot Training (pp. 10 -11) – Gently stretch your calves and arches
Wear FiveFingers for 1 to 2 hour intervals per day (simple day-to-day activities: sitting, standing, walking, etc.)	Run 10%-20% of your normal running distance (in traditional shoes) no more than once every other day.*	Each week, increase your running by no more than 10% of your distance from the previous week. Continue to run no more than once every other day.*	At this stage you may be able to experiment with your distance, speed, and frequency. Continue to gradually increase your distance, but listen to your body every step of the way.
	Practice foot stretching and self-massage as described on p. 5. Include calf massage as part of this recovery process.	After each run, practice foot stretching and self-massage as described on p. 5. Include calf massage as part of this process.	After each run, practice foot stretching and self-massage as described on p. 5. Include calf massage as part of this process.

This is not a hard and fast rule, but a general guide. Consult a professional for a more detailed training plan geared toward minimalist running. If your muscles become sore, do not increase your training. Take an extra day off and maintain your distance for another week.

A man and a woman are stretching on a stone path at dusk. The man is leaning over a stone wall, stretching his back and legs. The woman is standing and stretching her leg. The background shows a stone wall with lanterns and a view of a town and mountains.

LISTEN TO YOUR
FEET →

A few more suggestions:

- **Stop if your arches or the top of your foot is hurting, or if anything else hurts!** Sometimes arch and foot pain occurs from landing with your feet too far forward relative to your hips and having to point your toes too much. It can also occur from landing with too rigid a foot and not letting your heel drop gently.
- **Stop and let your body heal if you experience pain.** Sore, tired muscles are normal; bone, joint, or soft-tissue pain may be a sign of injury.
- **Always be patient, and build gradually.** It can take several months to a year to make the transition to running in FiveFingers.
- **In the beginning, remember to carry your traditional footwear in your hands as a backup.** If you need to stop in the middle of a workout, you can put on your old running shoes and return home.
- **A gradual transition doesn't mean a setback in your training.** If running is your primary form of exercise, gradually increase the proportion of forefoot or midfoot striking by about 10% per week over the course of several months as you reduce running in your old style. Remember, this is an experiment to find something that suits you. To make a clean break from traditional heel striking, supplement running with biking, swimming, cardio machines, and fitness classes to maintain your fitness level, while giving primary running muscles a chance to recover.

Part of the reason we love running in Vibram FiveFingers® is because it helps us build relationships with other minimalist runners and fitness activists. This sense of community has generated friendships, inspired debates, and helped us all learn. Although many people consider running a solo sport, we like to think that the FiveFingers movement has created a new team sport. This will soon become YOUR journey as you develop a new appreciation for your body.

LOVE YOUR RUN.

LISTEN TO YOUR BODY.

TREAD LIGHTLY.

START WITH YOUR FEET.



If you are wearing FiveFingers for the first time, we suggest a gradual transition based on your personal level of comfort and fitness, as you may be using different muscles in the feet and lower legs. Gradually increase usage only as you adapt. This transition period can be different for each individual. It is advisable to check with a physician prior to initiating in any physical activity. For more information please visit **www.vibramfivefingers.com**

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www.vibramfivefingers.com