

Speed training for Hounslow

Why do ultra runners particularly on a course like Hounslow need to do some form of speed training?

There are many reasons including

1. Increasing your maximal aerobic capacity
2. Improving your ability to use lactate
3. Increase your aerobic pace
4. Improve your dynamic flexibility
5. Improve your running economy
6. Increase The Training load
7. Increase your downhill speed

All of these will aid your performance at Hounslow

Types of Speed Training

Interval Training

Given Hounslow is primarily up or down hill you'll gain more benefit doing your speed training on a slight hill. The gradient of hill shouldn't be steep at all as you want to be able to run fast. Very few of us can run up a 15% slope with any kind of speed more than a shuffle! Leave that training for your hill repeats. If you haven't got a gradual hill like that then a slightly undulating track will work well.

Pick an incline that takes anywhere from 2-7 minutes long to run and do repeats with the recovery on the way back down. Begin with around 15-20 minutes of hard efforts and build that up to around 30-40 minutes.

For example you might start with 5 x 3 minute efforts and progress to 5 x 7 minute efforts or if you prefer going by distance you might start with 5 x 800m and build to 5 x 1 mile or 2km. The pace should be the fastest possible you can sustain for all efforts.

Once you can tolerate both speed work and downhill running (from your hill training sessions) you can then flip your sessions around so the downhill is where you run faster and the uphill is the recovery. This will increase the load on your legs and also increase leg turnover. One thing you may notice watching the very best descenders is how quickly their legs move when running downhill- very short fast strides. That's what you should be aiming for in your downhill speed sessions.

Tempo Training

Building from speed sessions are Tempo runs which should form the backbone of an ultra runner's training program. Long hard runs at pace does wonders for your endurance. Long in this context means up to an hour.

A typical session might be 3 x 20 minutes hard or 2 x 30 minutes hard with 2-5 minutes recovery.

For Hounslow I would run these over hilly but runnable terrain. These should feel like tough sessions and you should be pretty happy to finish. Build up to these though - start at a pace that feels a little too easy and as you learn what pace you can sustain you can start pushing harder.

Dont include more than two higher intensity sessions per week - one hill repeat session and one Interval / Tempo session is enough for most of us.