

Running Reflections & Goal Setting Exercise for 2026 Workbook

What did you do last
year that you're
proud of?



- 1) Look back at your year of running and exercise. Take some time and go through any running journals, logs, photos or apps that track your runs and fitness.



****I want you to take time with this first exercise because it shows us what we did well and what makes us feel good about our training and our performance. This is what we want more of and these are things that we should celebrate!

Identify at least 3 performance “wins,” small or large.

A) *These could include things like completing your first 5K or 50K. Maybe you attempted a new distance this year? Were you able to get your hydration and nutrition dialed in for the race? Did you finish stronger than you have in the past? Be specific about exactly what it was that left you feeling like this performance goal was a “win,” for you.*

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Identify at least 3 specific training “wins,” large or small.

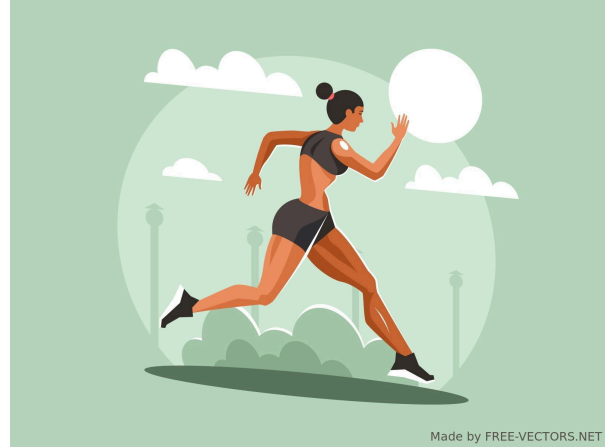
B) This is where we look back at the process. Maybe you integrated a strength program into your year? Maybe you were proud of a high-volume week that you accomplished or a high-vert week? A win could include getting through a training block that felt incredibly challenging or even a single run that you were proud of finishing. Another “win,” could be that you hired a coach or joined a running group or invested in some sort of education that helped inform your training?

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What are areas in your running
& fitness that you want to
improve on in 2026?



2) After looking back through your races and training logs or maybe a journal or the photos on your phone where you documented your fitness journey, write down 1 or 2 areas that you believe you could improve on during 2026?

Identify 1-2 areas that you could improve upon

A) *An example might be “more strength and mobility,” or “getting more protein in after my runs.”*

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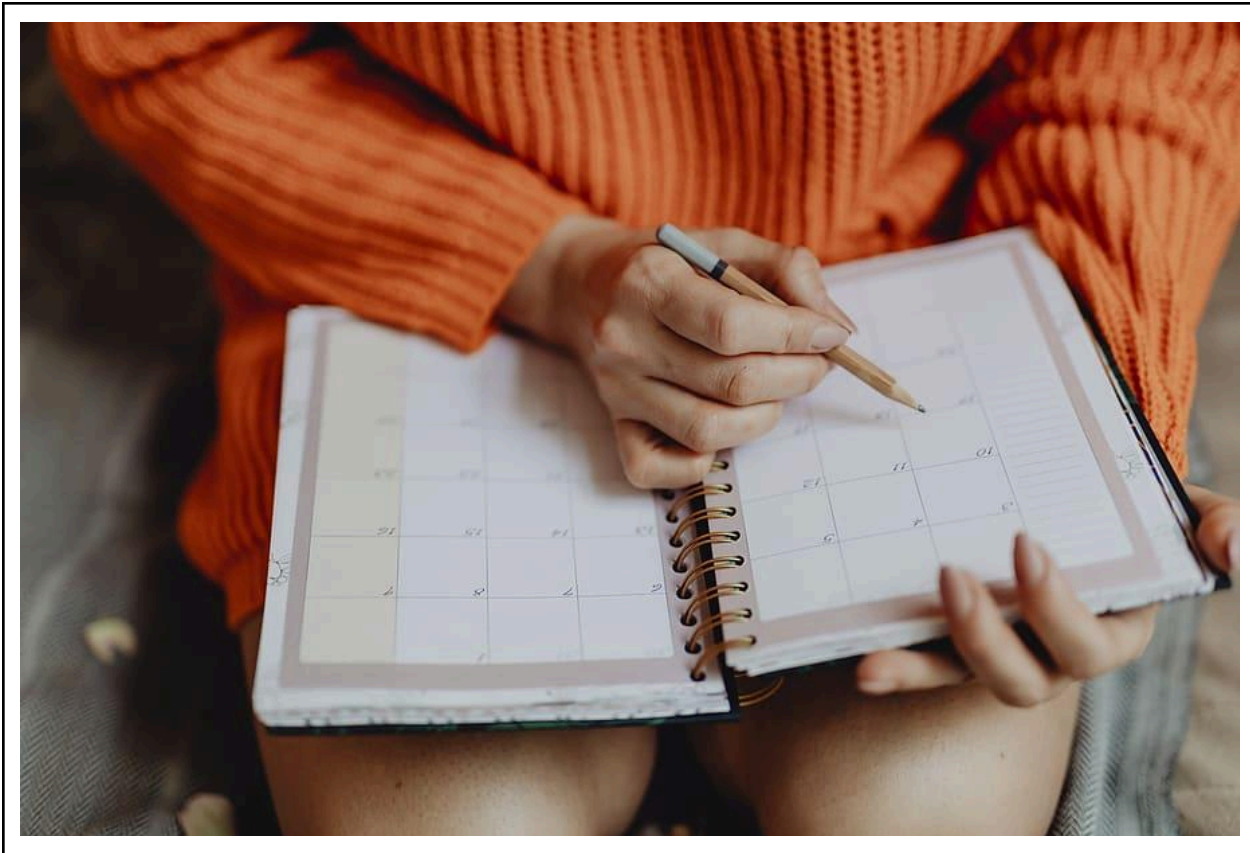
Write specific actions you can take to make those improvements

B) An example could be that you want to improve strength but you feel like there's not enough time in the day. A specific way you could add strength would be to do lunges as you walk to your home or car after your run. Or you could do squats 3x a week while you brush your teeth. To add more protein you could pre-make or purchase protein shakes to have when you're done running.

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3) What is on your calendar for 2026? Mark It Down Now!



Performance Goals

There is something very powerful about putting an event on the calendar. It gives us a goal post to try and get closer to with every run or workout that we do. It gives us something to work towards and get excited about. I know that not everyone is competitive or wants to be in a race-styled format. You can plug in a DIY (do it yourself) event and put that on the calendar! I would suggest putting at least 3 things on the calendar. Pick a race that excites you and even makes you a little nervous. That is your “A” race. The other two events can serve as race-day practice events and training events. These are your “B” and “C” races. Of course you care about them, but they can fit right into your training. These could be local races that you could just show up to without any big race fees or travel expenses. If you’re looking for ultra races, searching on [Ultra Signup](#) is a great way to start. Others can be found by just typing into your search browser “running races near me,” along with the distance you’d like to run.

“A” Race

“B” Race

“C” Race

Training Goals to Meet Performance Goals

Once you put the race or races on the calendar the next part of this goal-setting process is to think about how you’re going to get there. What is your training plan going to be? It’s a big question and there are many online resources which I refer to as “static” or “generic” training plans. They can range from a Couch-to-5K or a 20-week 50K training plan. Some of these are free and some cost money. Some are good and some are not.

You can also consider hiring me to help train, coach and support you through this process from beginning to end. Click here for more information on my [1:1 Coaching Plans](#). We will work through the goal-setting, go over any previous or current injuries, troubleshoot in real-time and communicate weekly on how your training is going. Those are just a few of the benefits.

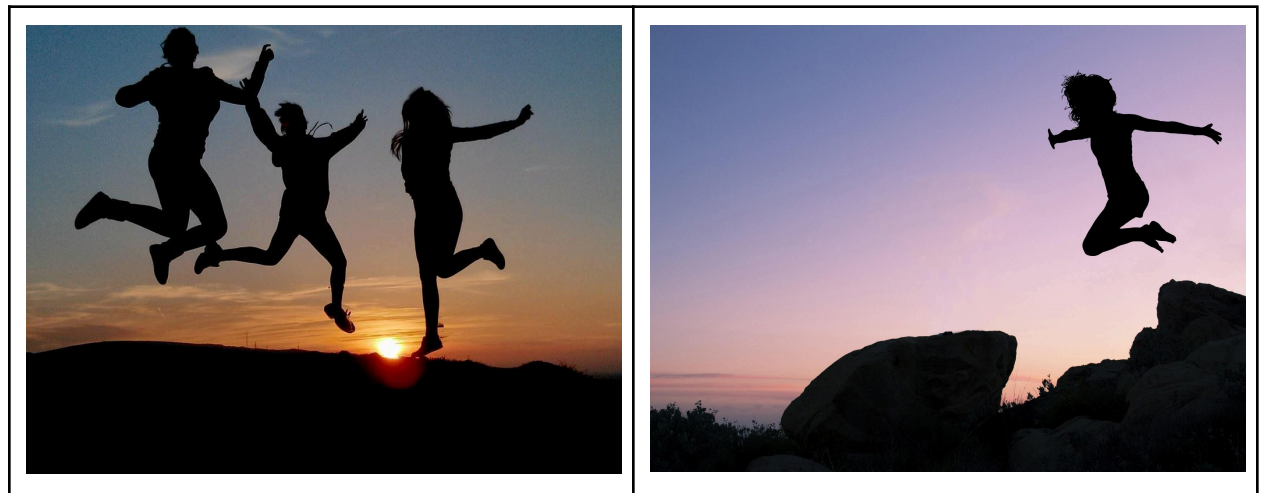
Whether you want a coach or have a coach or use a paid online or free online training plan, you definitely want a plan to follow. The demands of your particular race or event will determine what type of specific training components you’ll need to focus on. These could include more speed workouts (for faster, flatter races,) or more vertical gain (for races that involve lots of climbing,) or higher volume because you’ve picked a substantial ultra-distance to tackle.

Write down 3 aspects of training that you want to incorporate into your training to feel prepared for your races in 2026

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Fun Training Goals

Fun Training Goals

Now, let's get into the fun part and the increase in joy! Running is hard. It's very taxing on the body and mind but as we know it also produces innumerable benefits for overall mental and physical wellness and health. It makes us feel good and we deserve to feel good and strong in

our bodies. Think of ways that you can make your runs more enjoyable. Here are some suggestions from me:

- a) Go somewhere new at least once every two to three weeks. Find a new route. Try a new trail. Run on a different road. You can go to the app “All Trails” and find any number of trails near you or routes near you. Go to a public park or a college campus. Most importantly, GET OUTSIDE. The sun and the air and off-gassing of the trees and flora and fauna is so critical to our emotional well-being.
- b) Go for a hike. That’s right. Not a run but a hike. This is a great way to explore trails and slow down and enjoy your surroundings up close. Hiking is great for your body and mind and builds strength in different muscles than running does. Also, if you’re an ultrarunner, chances are, you’re going to be hiking A LOT during your races. So have fun with it and “yes,” it counts as a run!
- c) Take photos of your runs if you have a smartphone or collect things that you find on your run. Make it a bit of a scavenger hunt. If you take a smartphone with you then snap a picture or two to help you remember the run or “stamp” the run in your mind. If you don’t take a phone with you (which is also great) then maybe look for a special treasure. It could be a leaf that has an interesting shape or a small stone that catches your eye or a pine cone. You don’t even have to take it, just look for something that makes you happy.
- d) This is my favorite. Running uses the same muscles over and over again. I would challenge you to walk backwards for 3 minutes after one run each week. Walking backwards engages a different set of muscles and ligaments and tendons that we don’t want to forget about because they help support our anatomical system as well!

Pick 1 or 2 that you are interested in incorporating to your training plan. Fun and joy are a critical part of training to avoid burnout (and just to smile more!)

I’d love to hear what you discovered about yourself as an athlete this year and what you’re looking forward to working towards in this coming year. Please feel free to send me your answers at erinmaryquinn@gmail.com



It's so exciting to create an architecture of your training because then you get to color it in every day and find meaning and purpose in all of the steps leading up to the race. When you do that, the race isn't the only important thing, the process to getting there is! The race or event becomes a celebration of everything you've been doing up to that point.

I will be creating a *Mental Skills for Runners* workbook for 2026. If you're interested, sign up for my newsletter by going to my [website](#) or simply email me at erinmaryquinn@gmail.com You can also follow me on Instagram [@erinquinnultraruncoach](#) or [Facebook](#)

Happy Writing and Happy Trails!
—Erin Quinn

