# Good Form Running (GFR) K-5 Lesson

**Objective:** To teach the four steps of GFR. Lesson extension activities are also provided to support the teaching of GFR throughout the school year.

**Equipment required:** 4 cones, GFR posters, metronome or music for beat, running shoe (with mid-foot marked with tape).

**Introductory Activity - Happy Laps:** This exercise can be used as a warm-up activity before the GFR instruction. The purpose of this activity is to define the running area as well as provide an icebreaker activity to GFR. Set 4 cones around the gym to form a "running track." On a signal, the students run 3 to 4 laps around the cones. As students pass the teacher they are to share a big smile.

**Teaching hint:** Ask students to share their biggest smile as they pass the teacher. Have students run in the same direction, outside the cones. Emphasize the joy of running.

**Instruction** - The following are suggestions for implementing GFR instruction:

1. **Posture (Reset):** Gather the students and ask them to stand with what they think is poor posture (shoulders slouched, hunched over, etc.). Have the students practice walking in place with their shoulders slouched. Stop and discuss good posture and demonstrate what good posture should look like. Explain to students that when it comes to posture, we want our bodies standing tall like a tree. Have the students stretch their arms overhead and reach to the sky, so their bodies are standing as tall as they can be. Next, from the stretched and standing tall position, have the students lower their arms to their sides at a 90-degree angle.

   **(Verbal Cues:** “Reset” or “Bring down the sunshine” for K-1 students, “Posture-Reset” for 2-5 students).

   **Points to Emphasize with Students:**
   - Have the feet facing straight ahead, with knees bent slightly (can be referred to as “soft knees”).
   - Head should be level, with eyes looking forward.
   - Arm movements should be easy, relaxed and natural (like tapping a drum).
   - Arms should not cross the midline (can be referred to as “hands lead the way”).

   **Supportive Activity:** Have students line up around the running track and practice running using good posture. Repeat Happy Laps while focusing on posture.

2. **Mid-Foot:** Gather the students around and discuss with them the different ways our feet can hit the floor (heels first, toes first, etc.). Next, have the students practice running in place on the heels of their feet. Ask the students, “How does it feel to run on your heels?” Then, have the students practice running in place while up on their toes. Ask the students, “How does it feel to run on your toes?” Finally, demonstrate for students the proper way for their feet to contact the ground while running (softly, with mid-foot first, to promote balanced running and to minimize pounding).

   **(Verbal Cue:** “Soft, pancake feet”).

   **Points to Emphasize with Students:**
   - Feet should contact the ground with mid-foot first.
   - Feet should land softly and under the hip line.
   - Run light, as if floating, to avoid pounding.
**Supportive Activity:** Show students a running shoe, where the mid-foot is marked with tape. Have the students sit down and find the mid-foot spot on their own shoes. Repeat happy laps. Have the students focus on doing their posture-resets and landing on their mid-foot.

### 3. Cadence:
Gather the students around. Ask them to define the word “cadence.” Explain that cadence means *moving to a beat*. Most people run at a cadence of 150-160 beats per minute (BPM). In GFR, we need to run at a cadence of 180 BPM. Introduce a metronome and/or play music with a beat of 180 BPM. Have students stand in place, moving their feet to the cadence of 180 BPM. At this point, it is very important the students have a visual of what running at this cadence looks like. The instructor should demonstrate what it looks like to use a cadence of 180 BPM, while running in place. The instructor should then move from a very slow running pace, to a more moderate speed, to a fast speed (all while maintaining the cadence of 180 BPM).

*Notice - cadence is a beat, not a speed.*

(Verbal Cues: “Moving to a beat” and/or repeat the phrase “short, short, short,” to the beat of the cadence).

**Points to Emphasize with Students:**
- Short quick strides.
- A pretend drumbeat can be emphasized (Arms should be relaxed with hands pointing straight ahead, lightly tapping the drum. Remember - Arms do not cross the mid-line).

**Supportive Activity:** Repeat the Happy Lap exercise focusing on posture/reset, landing on the mid-foot, and using proper cadence while running in one direction around the cones.

### 4. Lean:
Lean can be the hardest aspect of GFR to teach. However, students should be aware that the “lean” they use while running is a very important component of GFR. Demonstrate for the students the proper way to lean while running (slightly forward, from the ankles), as well as improper ways to lean while running (forward and from the waist, backwards, etc.). Divide the class into half. Have one half of the class line up on a sideline. On a signal, direct the students that are lined up on the sideline to lean from their ankles, and let gravity lead them into a jog. Have the students take 4 to 5 jogging steps and then stop. Then, have the students reset their bodies (posture-reset), and repeat the process. Repeat sequence with the second group.

(Verbal Cue: “Let gravity do the work”).

**Points to Emphasize with Students:**
- Use gravity to generate forward momentum.
- Reset posture, then lean tall (from the ankles) into a jog.
- Lean from the ankles without bending at the waist.
- Keep weight slightly forward and flex at the ankles.

**Supportive Activity:** Once each group has practiced the lean, arrange all students on the running track and practice all of the elements of GFR in Happy Laps. Begin with having the students do a posture-reset. Next, have them jog in place while landing on their mid-foot, using proper cadence. Finally, have the students practice the lean and let gravity lead them into the group run. Provide cues as necessary.
**Examples of How GFR Can Be Integrated into a K-5 PE Program**

1. Integrate extension activities (listed below) on a daily basis
2. Encourage participation in the Feelin’ Good Mileage Club (Post GFR poster on a marquee on Mileage Club Track)
3. Implement “Walking Wednesdays” (or an after-school walking/running club)
4. Remind students of GFR during field day activities/include GFR extension activities in field day
5. Integrate GFR on report card assessments
   - Skill testing on four steps of GFR
   - Cardio testing (for 3rd Grade – 10 minute run, for 4th Grade – 12 minute run)
     - Award students with GFR Challenge Certificate at the end of the year (see separate page)
     - Share a healthy snack

**Lesson Extension Activities:** To reinforce GFR skills, it is recommended that extension activities continue to be introduced to physical education classes throughout the year. The following are some activities that may add greater depth and understanding as well as provide motivation and reinforcement to the continued success of the GFR student.

### 1. History of Good Form Running Discussion

- **Materials:** Computer access to the internet.
- Use the Playmakers GFR website and share the sample GFR videos to demonstrate GFR in action. While playing videos, periodically pause to show the runners using all four GFR steps.
- Share the *History of Good Form Running*:
  
  Curt Munson and John Benedict, co-owners of Playmakers, started Good Form Running™ (GFR) after discovering that a few simple changes in their running form could have a significant positive impact. They began testing the basic tenants of GFR with the Playmakers staff early in 2006 and by April of that year, the first GFR clinic opened to the public. Since 2006, they have experienced dramatic results by teaching these form principles to hundreds of runners and walkers. They believe that GFR is the most important development in their careers in the sporting goods industry. Grant Robison, ten-time All-American and Olympian, joined the Playmakers staff in 2006 and immediately became involved with the development of GFR. Having spent much of his career injured, Grant found that his mechanics were inefficient and needed improvement. Since incorporating GFR into his training regimen, Grant has been injury-free.
  
  GFR is the product of years of teaching clinics, reading books and articles, and studying other running form philosophies, not to mention numerous years of learning through trial and error. Instead of a complex biomechanical analysis, GFR focuses on four essential points: posture, mid-foot, cadence, and lean. With simplicity as a primary focus, GFR has reached thousands of runners since 2006. In 2010, GFR partnered with New Balance. This partnership has made GFR available to a worldwide audience.
  
  The creators of GFR believe that helping people learn to run light and easy creates much less friction on the shoes that they wear, allowing their shoes to last longer. More importantly, learning to run light and run easy with the four points of GFR results in less friction on our bodies, which leads to better health.

### 2. Happy Laps Cardio Warm-Up

- **Materials:** Four cones; metronome set for 180 beats per minute.
- **Description:** This activity could be done periodically at the beginning of class. Set out four cones around the gym to form a running track. On a signal, students run a designated period of time around the cones to a cadence of 180 beats per minute. As students pass the teacher, ask that they share a big smile.

### 3. Grand Prix Racing

- **Materials:** Four cones for racetrack, four Grand Prix racing posters.
- **Description:** Students are put in partners. One student from the partnership runs a lap; the other partner waits and listens to the racetrack announcer, who announces activities that the runner must perform during their GFR lap. See attached lesson.
4. “Blast-Off” Countdown Activity

- Materials: None.
- Description: Arrange the students so they are spread out throughout the room. When the teacher gives a ready signal, students stand with their arms stretched overhead (posture reset), and then lower their arms to their sides at a 90-degree angle. When everyone is in the proper position, the teacher signals the students to begin an oral countdown (“10...9...8...7...6...” etc.). As the students count down, they should gradually lower themselves into a crouched position. At the end of the oral countdown, the students shout “blast off” and jump upwards. After the students land, they run to a wall, touch it, and then quickly return to their original spot. Repeat sequence.

5. Jake the Snake

- Materials: One long rope with a ball tied on the end (Jake), four tape marks (X) on the racetrack for start of GFR, GFR poster as reinforcement at the starting “X” spots.
- Description: Students stand around the center circle. The teacher stands in the middle and spins “Jake”. Students are to jump with two feet over Jake. If Jake hits the student, the student goes to an “X” on the race track and runs one lap using the four steps of GFR, then returns to the game.

6. Run, Stop and Pivot Drill

- Materials: None.
- Description: Have children start in the GFR posture position. On a signal, students run, stop, and pivot. Begin with teaching a 90-degree pivot and gradually move to teaching a 180-degree pivot. Relate the starting posture position to GFR and/or emphasize mid-foot (pancake feet) during the running phase of the drill. Also relate the use of the pivot to various sports activities, such as basketball, soccer, and football.

7. Chain Run

- Materials: None
- Description: Students must stay in a straight line, running at a cadence of 180 beats per minute. The last person in the line must sprint to the front (maintaining the 180 beats per minute, just at a quicker pace). The students must cooperate and work as a team to maintain a constant pace so every “caboose” runner can reach the front of the line.

Additional Materials to Supplement GFR

- Digital Metronome: (Suggested metronome: DM 50 Seiko. A clip-on metronome with a clear and loud beat. Approx. $25).
- Athletic shoe (marking the mid-foot with tape).
- iPhone, iPad, iFlip camera or other digital camera, to record students running (for critiquing, tracking progress, as a pre/post assessment)
- Search Pandora or iTunes for songs with 180 beats per minute. Use when practicing GFR to stay on cadence. See sample link for suggestions: [http://running.about.com/od/musicforrunning/a/Running-Songs-At-180-Bpm.htm](http://running.about.com/od/musicforrunning/a/Running-Songs-At-180-Bpm.htm)
- Lower elementary cadence chant (see separate page).
- iPhone and iPad Apps:
  1. Pro Metronome (for cadence)
  2. Coach’s Eye (for video taping and critiquing students’ running form)
  3. Cadence Run DJ (searches your iTunes library for songs with 180 BPM)

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**Good Form Running Chant**  
(Meant for K-2 use)

Reach for the sky  
And bring down the sun  
Now take your arms  
And tap on your drums.

Let’s move our feet  
To this special beat  
Then let’s start to run  
And have a lot of fun!

**Move your feet**  
....
**To the beat**  
....
**Tap your drum**  
....
**And have some fun**  
....

(Repeat bolded text to a cadence of 180 beats/min while students practice running in place.)
**Grand Prix Racing Lesson Plan**

**Activity Description:** As one person runs a lap, the other partner must listen to the racetrack announcer, *(the teacher)*, and tell their partner what exercise to perform with each command!

**Verbal Commands:**

1. “Spin out!”..........................5 Seat spins
2. “Flat tire!”..............................10 Arm circles
3. “Out of gas!”..........................Walk backwards 5 steps
4. “Overheated engine!”................10 Jumping Jacks
5. “Speed bump!”........................10 High Knees
6. “Car crash!”..........................10 Twists

**Pit Crew:** Students who are in the pit crew stand against the wall, out of the runner’s way, and are stationed next to the posted (above) commands that are hanging on the wall (post 4 or 5 of the above commands to spread out the students). As one partner finishes a lap, they must reach out and tag the other partner’s hand to switch. Keep an eye on the lead runner and blow the whistle to freeze the students so they can all hear the announcement. Communication is vital in this activity, and since all the pit crew members will be yelling to their partners simultaneously, it might be helpful to have the pit crew members use nonverbal gestures so their partner can understand the activity they must perform before continuing on in the race! Encourage the steps to GFR!

**Visual Representation of Grand Prix Race Course**
Run Faster, Run Easier, Run Healthier

Teacher

Date

School Name

4 Steps to Good Form Running:

1. Posture, Mid-Foot, Cadence, I Can

Good Form Running Challenge!

For Participation and Exceptional Effort in the

Participant Name

Our school district is proud to recognize

Good Form Running Challenge
How Good Form Running Reflects the National Standards

**Content Standard 1: A physically educated person demonstrates competency in motor skills and movement patterns needed to perform a variety of physical activities**

Running is a part of several physical activities, games, and sports. Almost every child runs for play or purpose. Good Form Running enables the child to develop running skill in a manner that is easier, lighter, and less prone to injuries. Good Form Running skills can be easily transferred to any other activity that involves running.

**Content Standard 2: A physically educated person demonstrates understanding of movement concepts, principles, strategies, and tactics as they apply to the learning and performance of physical activities**

Good Form Running instruction provides the knowledge needed for students to identify elements of correct form for fundamental skills and use them in performance. Older students apply their knowledge of Good Form Running’s critical elements to provide feedback to others and to self-evaluate their own performance and improve movement skills independently.

**Content Standard 3: A physically educated person participates regularly in lifelong physical activity**

Developing good habits in any activity increases the likelihood of participation throughout a lifetime. This can occur by encouraging healthy eating from a young age, regular teeth brushing, and physical activity. Good Form Running makes running easier, and helps children to run healthier. Both of these factors contribute to the overall enjoyment of running for pleasure, running as a part of other sports, or running during fun game-play at leisure. Students knowingly select and participate in activities during their leisure time that are moderate to vigorous in nature and that they find enjoyable. They recognize that participation in moderate to vigorous physical activity has both temporary and lasting effects on the body and voluntarily choose to engage in activities that contribute to improved health. Students begin to utilize the skills and knowledge acquired in physical education class during their leisure-time physical activity.

**Content Standard 4: A physically educated person achieves and maintains a health-enhancing level of physical fitness**

Students engage in a variety of activities that serve to promote health-related physical fitness. They enjoy these activities for the pleasure experienced from simply moving and may not associate the activity with the development of physical fitness. Good Form Running instruction will help students to make the connection that running improves cardio-respiratory endurance.

**Content Standard 5: A physically educated person exhibits responsible personal and social behavior that respects self and others in physical activity settings**

Young children discover the joy of playing with friends and experience how social interaction can make activities more fun. By improving motor skills, children have gained a basis and appreciation for working with others in cooperative movement, sharing, working together to solve a problem, and/or tackling a challenge. Good Form Running instruction can promote these concepts. Running by nature can be social; people run with others as much for social interaction as for exercise. By learning Good Form Running, running can more easily become a social activity as critical elements of running are applied on a regular basis, making running easier and more enjoyable.

Older students come to recognize the role of physical activity in understanding diversity. Running is a sport in which members of a community include and support each other, respecting the limitations and strengths of group members. Good Form Running instruction can help students to realize that others are participating with correct form, even if they are not the fastest runner, similar to other sports where skill instruction is the focus, rather than outcome (basketball shooting form vs. number of baskets scored).

**Content Standard 6: A physically educated person values physical activity for health, enjoyment, challenge, self-expression, and/or social interaction**

Young children are the most active segment of our population. They are physically active because they enjoy merely participating. By practicing Good Form Running, students sense the challenge of experiencing new movements and enjoy learning new skills. They feel joy as they gain competence in them. Success and improvement are attributed to effort and practice.

Physical activity can increase self-confidence and self-esteem as students discover renewed enjoyment in participation. Physical activity can provide confidence as students start to take steps toward independence. Good Form Running helps students to develop these attributes as they become more proficient in the critical elements of running with good form.