

Chasing Extraordinary

A 'How To' guide for newbie marathoners

'Improve Your Posture'

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I loooooove watching people move.

I love looking out for all the slight adjustments you make – that you often don't even realise you do. These little cheats or tells are how your body hides its weaknesses.

Now running a marathon is of course all about your feet taking every single step of the whole 26.2 miles that takes you from the start to the finish line.

You can run them all.

Maybe walk a few.

Perhaps even skip along for some if you want too.

To help keep your feet a runn'n, the key is to keep your body as strong, as balanced and as injury free as possible.

I'm going to help you get one step ahead of yourself and 'run' you through a few body movement exercises to see what's going on so you can deal with any weaknesses before they create injuries.

Knowledge is power!

Let's get to work.

Check You Out

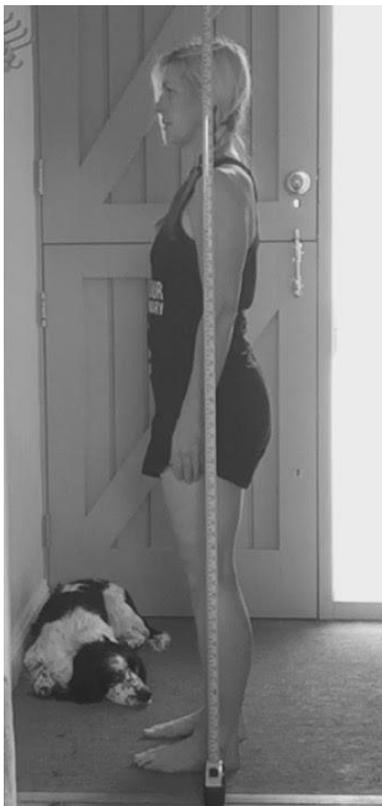
First off, you gotta work out what natural posture you've got going on. This'll be a little bit interactive - it may help to have a friend or partner around.

You'll need:

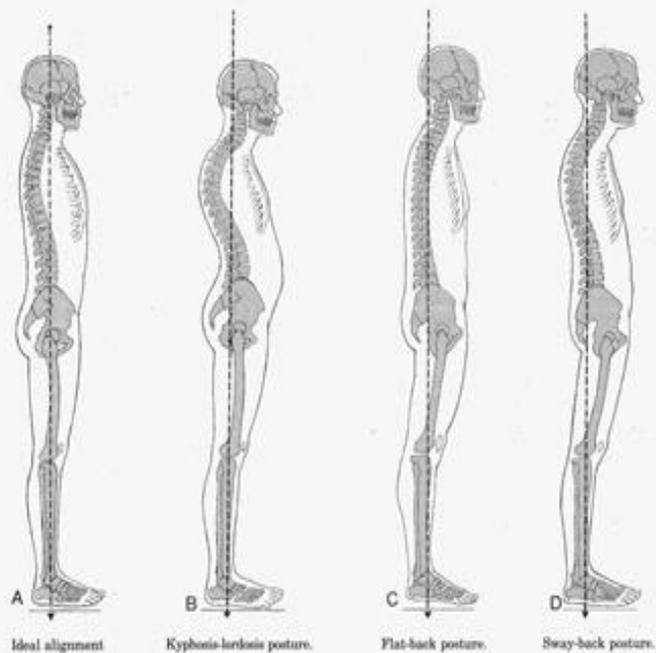
- a drop line (which you can build using a length of string and a weight)
- a camera to photograph the results.

Build a drop line and set it up.

1. Grab a length of string (the length of a door opening drop) and tie a weight on the end.
2. Attach the drop line to the door frame (using a nail or a drawing pin) ensuring the line is in the middle of the opening. I'm actually using a weighted tape measure - that works too.
3. Wear tight fitting clothing (lycras if you've got them), we want to see the shape of your back and all the alignment points of your body listed below.
4. Stand behind the drop line, then turn side on to it. Ask your partner to get you to stand with the drop line aligned with your hip bone. Stand with feet at hip width apart. Relax and take the photo.



Four Types of Postural Alignment



Now compare where the following alignment points are in comparison to the drop line.

- ear
- shoulder
- elbow
- hip (which is the point that the drop line should line up with)
- knee
- ankle

And have a good look at the shape of your back.

Which of the four types of postural alignment pictures best reflects the photo of your postural alignment?

Type A – Ideal Alignment	[]
Type B – Kyphotic-Lordotic	[]
Type C – Flat Back	[]
Type D – Sway Back	[]

The common injury traits and some recommended rehab for each type of postural alignments are listed below. These includes some stretching and some strengthening exercises.

PLEASE NOTE

When I ask you to stretch I want you to think more about easing into your range of mobility with each breathe rather than trying to get into your furthest range of movement position and then holding it. Slow and gentle continuous movement on the out breathe for a period of time will improve the range of movement and your flexibility over time.

Type A. Ideal alignment

Well done! This is a perfect posture.

Recommendation: Keep doin' what you're doin'.

Type B. Kyphotic-lordotic posture

Kyphosis is shoulders rolled and head forward out of alignment with the shoulders, you look a little hunchback when looking side on. Lordosis is deep curvature of the lower part of the spine.

Likely tight muscles of a kyphotic-lordotic posture include thigh muscles at the top of the leg, the deep hip flexors, lower back muscles, front chest muscles and back of the neck muscles.

The likely weak muscles include glutes (your butt), hamstrings (back of legs), abdominals (tummy) and upper back.

Recommendation: Regular stretching and massage to open up the chest and relax the over-stretched back, neck muscles, and hip flexor muscles. Strengthening exercises to address the weak muscles.

A great stretch for this posture is the one I call 'chicken wings'. Put your hands on your butt, fingers pointing down to the ground and either pull your elbows into the midline of your back, or have a friend or partner push your elbows together into the midline of your back. Hold for 5 seconds and release ... ooooooh it feels good.

Stretch	Strengthen
Hip flexor lunge	Single leg bridge
Downward dog	Single leg Romanian deadlift
Chicken wings	Leg raises
Neck stretches	Prone lat pull down

Stretch

Moving into each of these positions. Take 20-30 seconds per position to breath and move a little deeper into the stretch on every out breathe. It slows and calms your breathing and improves the range of your mobility.

- Hip flexor
- Downward dog
- Chicken wings (if you have a partner who can pull your arms into the middle of your back, this makes the stretch even better).
- Neck stretches (10 seconds per stretch)



Strengthen

Using the timings of 20 secs work and 10 secs rest, complete 3 rounds:

- Single leg bridge (each leg)
- Single leg romanian deadlift (each leg)
- Leg raises
- Prone lat pull down

<https://youtu.be/eUOqrP7Wnbw>

Type C. Flat back posture

Flat back posture, or posterior pelvic tilt, is an improper alignment of the pelvis and can lead to wear and tear of the pelvic joints.

This posture will limit your body's ability to act like a spring – you're not absorbing the shocks and spreading them across the body.

Without this spring you're likely to be overloading your joints.

The back of your leg muscles may be overworking, all leading to an increased risk of overuse injury.

Recommendation: Stretching and core strengthening exercises with the aim of reducing the strains on your ligaments and tendons.

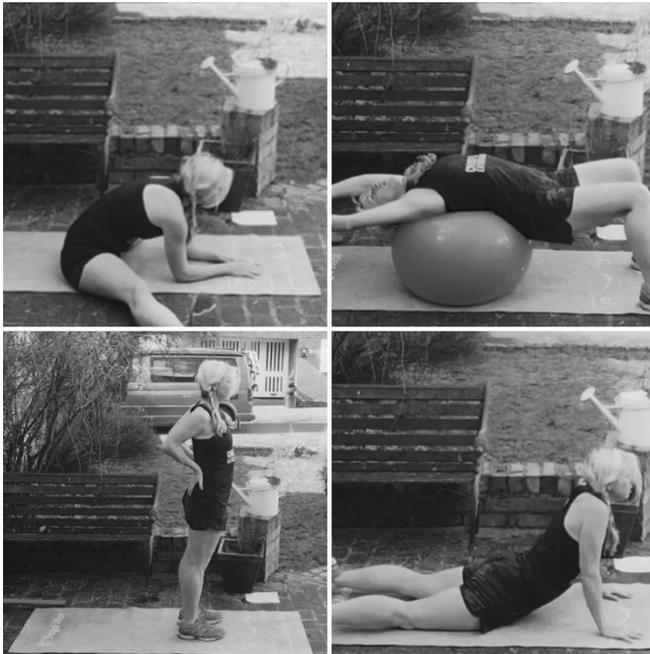
A brilliant stretch for this posture is the 'back curl on stability ball'. Lie on your back over a stability ball keeping your feet flat on the ground. The ball provides a great curve for your spine to flow over.

Stretch	Strengthen
V sit forward lean	Side plank taps
Back curl on stability ball	Plank
Chicken wings	Leg raise
Cobra	Prone back raise

Stretch

Moving into each of these positions. Take 20-30 seconds per position to breath and move a little deeper into the stretch on every out breathe. It slows and calms your breathing and improves the range of your mobility.

- Vsit forward lean
- Back curl on stability ball
- Chicken wings
- Cobra



Strengthen

These exercises will help to strengthen your body if you have a Flat Back posture:

- Side plank taps
- Plank
- Leg raise
- Prone back raise

Using the timings of 20 secs work and 10 secs rest, complete 3 rounds.

<https://youtu.be/AjaZVNWcGY4>

Type D. Sway back posture

Sway back is when your lower back is hyperextended (exaggeratedly curved). Your poor low-back joints will be overloaded and there'll be weakness in your glutes.

You'll be at increased risk of mid-back pain, because you'll be over-hunching somewhere in your mid-back.

You'll probably be overworking the neck muscles too, which can lead to head and neck aches and pains.

Recommendation: Stretching and core strengthening exercises with the aim of reducing the strains on your back's ligaments and tendons.

If you have this posture, a stretch you'll get great benefit from is the 'downward dog'. Standing with your feet together, put your hands on the ground and walk the hands forward until you create an upside down V (butt high up in the air). Try to lower your heels to the ground, whilst stretching out the arms. Keep your neck in line with your spine by looking at your knees in that inverted V position.

Stretch	Strengthen
Downward dog	Single leg bridge
Childs pose	Side lunge
Chicken wings	Csit
Neck stretches	Y and T arms

Stretch

Moving into each of these positions. Take 20-30 seconds per position to breath and move a little deeper into the stretch on every out breathe. It slows and calms your breathing and improves the range of your mobility.

- Downward dog
- Childs pose
- Chicken wings
- Neck stretches



Strengthen

These exercises will help to strengthen your body if you have a Sway Back posture:

- Single leg bridge
- Side lunge
- Csit
- Y and T arms

Using the timings of 20 secs work and 10 secs rest, complete 3 rounds.

<https://youtu.be/lj3lEZbgYQQ>

Okay, so you may have some remedial work to do but that's okay – it's all about understanding that your body is a continual work in progress, whether it's remedial or maintaining.

'Create the day that creates your success'

~ Nikki Love

Keep in touch

I'd love to hear how you get on, so why not come on over and say howdy on:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/nikkijlove>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/nikkilovefitlife/?hl=en>

Website: <http://nikkilove.co.uk>

Twitter: @nikkilovefit