

THE POSTERIOR CHAIN FIX

Wake Up Your Glutes. Power Your Push-Off. Stop Hammering Your Quads.

AN ACTIVATION + DRILL PROTOCOL FOR RUNNERS 30+

[@dobetterfitness](#) · Running Gait Mechanics Expert

THE GUIDE TO FINDING THE BACK SIDE OF YOUR BODY

Why You Can't Find the Back Side of Your Body

If your quads burn out by mile four, your hamstrings cramp on hills, or your low back is the first thing to complain after a long run — you're not lazy and you're not undertrained. You're posterior chain blind.

Most runners I assess can't actually feel their glutes or hamstrings working. The body defaults to the strongest available mover — the quads — and the back side of the body, the engine that should be driving you forward, goes quiet.

The fix isn't more squats. It's teaching the back side of your body where it lives, then training it loud enough that it can't be ignored on the run.

The Big Toe Secret

The most counterintuitive thing I tell runners: **how you use your big toe at push-off is the single biggest unlock for the posterior chain.** Push the ground through your big toe — not the ball of your foot, not the outer edge — and your hamstring and glute fire on their own. Skip the big toe and you'll roll off your outside foot every step, and your quads will pick up the bill.

The Hyper-Awareness Rule

You can't change what you can't feel. The whole point of the work in this guide is to make your glutes and hamstrings so loud, so aware, that they're already firing before your foot hits the ground. Once they're hyper-aware, they start showing up automatically. That's when the running mechanics quietly fix themselves.

Promise: Four weeks of the activation library + the wall-to-ladder progression and most runners I coach stop saying "I can't feel my glutes." They start saying "I can't NOT feel them."

The Wake-Up Drill Library

These are short on purpose. Run through 2–3 of them before every easy run, and the full set 2× per week. The goal is a **fire**, not a workout. If you can't feel the target muscle, slow down, shrink the range, or drop the load until you can.

Rule: If you can't feel the glute or hamstring on a rep, that rep doesn't count. Quality of fire over quantity, every time.

#	Drill	Reps	Why It Works
1	Toe Yoga	2 × 10/side	Wakes up the big toe + foot intrinsics
3	Side Plank with Top-Leg Raise	2 × 8/side	Fires glute med + glute max together
4	Standing Clamshell (against wall)	2 × 10/side	Glute med in a closed-chain stance
5	Isometric Elevated Bridge	2 × 30s	Direct hamstring activation
6	Single leg Hip Thrusts	2 × 10/side	Loads the hamstring and glute — finds posterior chain
7	Ankle Inversions with Mini Band	2 × 20/side	Helps arch strength + ankle stability
2	Hallux Flexion with Mini Band	2 × 12/side	Prioritizes Big toe in the pushoff
8	Knees-Soft, Hips-Back Calf Raise	2 × 12	Reframes a calf raise to find the glute

Tip: Pair the drills with a cue, not a count. As you do each rep, ask yourself: “Did I feel my glute?” If the answer is no, the rep didn't happen — regress the position until it does.

From Drill to Stride: The Progression

Activation drills wake the muscles up. The progression below teaches them to fire under speed — which is what your run actually needs. Spend 1–2 weeks at each step before moving on.

STEP 1 — The Wall Drill (Weeks 1–2)

Hands on a wall, body angled forward at ~45°, feet under hips. Add a mini-band above the knees. Run through march variations: high-knee march, alternating march, double-double, then high-tempo march. The band forces the standing-leg glute med to engage on every single rep. **Dose: 4 × 20s before runs.**

STEP 2 — The Stepper Plyometric (Weeks 2–3)

Move to a 6-inch stepper. Single-leg pogos onto and off the box, then bounding step-ups with a stick landing on top. Glute and hamstring are now firing under load and time pressure — exactly what running asks of them. **Dose: 3 × 6/side.**

STEP 3 — The Agility Ladder (Weeks 3–4)

Once the wall and step feel automatic, move to ladder work — single-leg in/out, lateral runs, fast feet. By now your posterior chain is firing *before* your foot lands. That's the goal. **Dose: 4 × one ladder length.**

Lifting Cue: Toes Up

On RDLs, deadlifts, hamstring curls, and kettlebell swings — peel your toes up slightly inside your shoes. This shifts your weight into your heels and forces your hamstrings to do the lift instead of your quads bailing you out. Small cue, massive change in what fires.

Mobility That Actually Matters

Two restrictions silently shut the posterior chain off. If they're tight, none of the drills above will fully translate.

- **Hip extension.** If your hip can't extend behind your body, your glute physically can't fire at push-off. Couch stretch, hip flexor reach, 90/90 with active extension.
- **Ankle dorsiflexion.** If your ankle can't bend deep, you'll roll off the outside of your foot and bypass the big toe entirely. Knee-to-wall test, weighted heel-elevated squats, banded ankle distractions.

The 4-Week Rule: Activation library 2×/week. Wall→Step→Ladder progression 2×/week. Toes-up cue on every posterior-chain lift. Don't add mileage for four weeks. Then run an easy 5K and ask yourself the only question that matters: ***can I feel my glutes?***

Want Eyes on Your Posterior Chain?

This guide gives you the framework. But knowing whether your glute is actually firing — versus you just thinking it is — usually takes a trained eye. After 800+ gait reviews, here's how to take the next step.

- 01** [Book a Call](#) We'll spend 15 minutes on your running: your goals, what's not working, and the one or two posterior chain leaks costing you energy. From there, we'll walk through how coaching together would look if it feels like a fit.

- 02** [Download the Do Better App](#)
"PRE-RUN" Activation library, run drills, mobility flows, and strength work — daily workouts specifically for runners

- 03** **SF Local? Join the Run Club** Follow [@progressionrunclub](#) for weekly group sessions and free content.

- 04** **Stay in the loop** If you got this PDF through a comment, you're already on the list. Expect one email a week — drill of the week, client breakdowns, and honest running takes.

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Medical disclaimer: This guide is educational and not medical advice. If you're actively injured, consult a qualified provider before starting new activation, plyometric, or mobility work. Stop any exercise that produces sharp pain.