



## Montgomery High School Vikings

### Cross Country 101

A Guide for Parents & Guardians of Montgomery High School Cross Country

Welcome to Montgomery High School Cross Country! Whether this is your first season or you're a returning family, this guide is designed to help you understand the basics of the sport, how our team operates, and how you can best support your runner.

#### What is Cross Country?

- Cross country (XC) is a fall distance-running sport where athletes race over natural terrain—grass, dirt, trails, and sometimes hills.
- Race distances: Most high school races are 2 miles to 5km.
- Team scoring: Races are scored by adding the finishing places of the top five runners on each team. The lowest score wins. (Ex: 1st + 3rd + 7th + 12th + 20th = 43 points). The 6th and 7th runners can 'displace' other teams' scorers, making every athlete important.
- Seasons: Typically August–November, with league, regional, and state championship meets capping the season.

#### Training & Practice

- Daily practices: Usually after school; include warm-ups, workouts (easy runs, intervals, long runs), strength work, and cooldown.
- Rest & recovery: Sleep, nutrition, and easy days are as important as the workouts themselves.

#### Important Nutrition Notes

- Fuel before practice: A light snack 1–2 hours before (banana, granola bar, toast with peanut butter) helps energy levels.
- Hydration matters: Encourage water throughout the day, not just right before practice. Sports drinks are only needed on very hot days or after especially long/hard workouts.
- Post-practice recovery: Athletes should aim to eat within 30–60 minutes of finishing practice — ideally a mix of carbohydrates (to refuel) and protein (to repair muscles). Examples: chocolate milk, yogurt with fruit, turkey sandwich.
- Balanced meals: Consistent meals with fruits, vegetables, lean protein, whole grains, and healthy fats help athletes stay healthy and energized.
- Avoid energy drinks & soda: These can dehydrate and don't provide sustainable energy.

## Meets (Races)

- Schedule: The full meet schedule can be found on our team website: Viking XC Meet Schedule. Some meets are Varsity-only or JV-only. Coaches will let families know at least two weeks in advance who is racing.
- Transportation: Coaches are not permitted to arrange carpools for practices or meets. However, parents may coordinate with one another. A Google Sheet (organized by Mary) is available for families who would like to coordinate rides.
- Arrival times: Each meet has specific check-in and warm-up needs. These will always be shared in the weekly Sunday newsletter. Please check carefully for athlete arrival times and plan accordingly.
- Course setup: Races are on loops or out-and-back courses with marked paths. Spectators usually walk to different viewing spots to cheer.
- What to bring: Uniform, racing shoes, water, healthy snacks, warm clothes, and sometimes folding chairs or blankets for downtime.

## How Parents Can Support

- Encourage consistency – Remind your runner that showing up to practice every day matters.
- Prioritize rest & nutrition – Sleep, hydration, and healthy meals fuel performance.
- Be positive – Focus on effort, teamwork, and improvement rather than times or places.
- Volunteer – Help with snacks, course support, or organizing team events.
- Cheer loudly – Runners often say a familiar voice in the middle of the course gives them a big boost.
- Stay informed – Read the weekly Sunday newsletter (posted at The Running Vikings) for schedules, updates, and important reminders.

## Common Cross Country Lingo

- PR: Personal Record (fastest time ever).
- Splits: Times for each mile (or segment) of a race.
- Pack running: Team strategy where athletes run together.
- Threshold/tempo run: A steady workout just below race pace.
- Long run: The weekly cornerstone run that builds endurance.

## Common Running Terms

- Warm-up / Cool-down – Easy running before and after workouts or races to prepare the body and aid recovery.
- Stride-outs (strides) – Short, fast accelerations (about 80–100 meters) used to improve running form and leg turnover.
- Intervals – Repeated fast runs (e.g., 400m or 800m) with short rests in between to build speed and stamina.
- Tempo Run (Threshold) – A steady, comfortably-hard pace (just slower than race pace).
- Long Run – The longest run of the week, essential for building endurance.
- Fartlek – 'Speed play' in Swedish; unstructured intervals of faster running mixed into an easy run.
- Recovery Run – A slow, easy run meant to help the body bounce back.
- Negative Split – Running the second half of a race faster than the first half.
- Kick – The finishing sprint at the end of a race.
- Cadence / Turnover – The rhythm or steps per minute while running.
- RPE (Rate of Perceived Effort) – A scale (1–10) runners use to judge how hard they're working.

## Keys to a Great Season

- Communication – Let the coaches know about injuries, illnesses, or schedule conflicts.
- Patience – Distance running is about gradual improvement.
- Community – Cross country is a family; everyone supports one another.
- Culture – Effort, humility, and teamwork matter more than medals.

## Final Note

Cross country is unique because it teaches resilience, teamwork, and self-discipline. Your support as parents and guardians helps athletes not only run faster, but also grow as people. Thank you for being part of Montgomery High School Cross Country!