

**The Art of the Power Walk**  
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It must seem odd that I would write about this topic. After all, walking is something that each of us does everyday. So why then should I feel the need to take a closer look at it? I've realized that in my 10+ years of coaching majority of people who come to me for training have failed to incorporate good, solid and effective walking into their program. They assume that because they are preparing for a "running race" that they just need to run. In fact, it's quite the opposite. Keep in mind that only your top 5 to 10% of racers will actually run the entire event, especially when it comes to stage racing. For everyone else, being a good power walker will get you to that finish line day after day. It's a skill that needs to be trained, developed and worked on. Learning to power walk is no different than learning to be a good hill climber or fast descender!

I encourage power walking to be trained with and without your pack on as you prepare for the G2G. In the early months of training, one to two hour power walks sans pack will start to prepare your neuromuscular system as well as your hip flexors for the training and mileage that will follow. The great thing about power walking is that it's easy on the body and can be done virtually anywhere. Once your body has adjusted and can withstand two hours of walking without any issues, drop your time back down (for example 1hour) and add your weighted 20+lbs race pack. Begin to pyramid back up, adding 15-20mins of power walking each week. Two power walking workouts a week will serve you well. As the race draws nearer and your volume is up, your body will be prepared to take the power walking skill with a pack on and incorporate it into your long runs. You might even find that your long steady state endurance run on a Saturday pairs nicely with a long power walk on the Sunday.

Train in various terrain types as you practice your power walking. Sand, hills, flat roads and trails are all ideal choices. Remember the following as you learn the art of the power walk:

- 1) Stand Tall – Chest should be lifted! Maintain a proud posture. Remember the phrase "Stand Tall, Walk Tall."
- 2) Roll your shoulders down and back. Check in from time to time to make sure you are not hunched over. Aim to keep an "Active Upper Body."
- 3) Keep your elbows bent at 90 degrees and swing them forward and back. Arms should never cross the mid line of the body. Fast power walking though, DOES require use of the arms and the entire upper body (triceps, biceps and deltoids). In addition, if you let your arms dangle straight you are much more likely to experience hand and wrist swelling. Strengthening the entire body in your G2G preparation is key!

4) Look ahead to where you want to go. Again, standing tall will help with this. Keep your eyes lifted and focused and your chin parallel to the ground.

5) Breathe – focus on your breath and work to maintain an even, steady pattern. Note that talking will slow you down. It's hard to walk fast and have a conversation at the same time! Cut the chit chat and knock off some miles.

6) Move with purpose – keep track on your watch and stay focused. Looking about, talking and moving without a sense of urgency will not help with increasing your pace.

7) Avoid over-striding – Take smaller steps with a higher cadence to go faster. Initial contact is made with your heel and ends with a toe push off. Let your foot roll through the motion.

8) Stretch – Sometimes the inability to power walk well is due to tight hip flexors and low back. Regular stretching is a must.