

Beach/Sand Running

If you enjoy this type of terrain and you enjoy a bit of suffering, then there are huge gains to be had compared to someone who hates running on sand and the respiratory burn that comes with it.

Wind

If a section of the course is on a beach, then it's more than likely that the wind will be blowing along 1 length of it.

Headwind

Oddly, runners do not use drafting as an energy saving tactic like cyclists do, but at 6:30 min/mile pace into a 10mph headwind, the headwind will cost you 12sec per mile.

If you drafted behind just 1 runner at the same pace and wind speed, you would save yourself 2-3 secs per mile. Over 10k that's enough energy saved to outsprint the person you are drafting, or 12-18 secs which could be approx. 4 or 5 places in a XC race.

Be sure to pick out the biggest athlete near you to shield behind (James Davies is a good place to start).

Tailwind

A tactic hardly anyone uses.

A 10mph tailwind will gain you approx. 6 secs per mile. You need to run tall and let the wind hit as much of your body as possible. But beware, your stride length may increase which you may not be used to.

Small gains tactic – if you run behind someone with a tailwind, you will be denying them 100% of the tailwind, so effectively you should be running easier than them at the same pace. Likewise if someone is behind you, then move a bit to the side to gain every advantage from it.

Flat Hard Sand

Firstly, you should be continuously scanning the terrain ahead of you to check the best line, you'll be amazed at the debris that is washed up that you have to go around if you spotted it last second.

Flat Soft Sand

Think of hills and this is the similar action and pain you will go through.

You need to shorten your stride, up your cadence and use them arms to propel yourself forward. Scan the terrain in front of you, and try and plant your feet in other people's footprints as this will mean the sand is partly compacted.

Uphill Soft Sand

Be prepared to suffer, and if you enjoy a bit of pain in the knowledge that you are making other people suffer more than you, then all the better. It's the best attribute you will have for hill and/or sand running.

Technique

- Look ahead
- Engage your core
- Short strides
- Fast cadence
- Use arms leg you've never used them before!
- Try not to step in virgin sand – try and pick out other compacted footprints and use them, even if they may result in you running at a 5 to 1 or 10 to 2 running style of your feet going out at an angle.
- Find a rhythm and maintain it to the top and just over the dune.
- Enjoy it

Downhill Soft Sand

You will only spend a very short time going downhill, so use every second to relax and recover while not compromising your speed. Take deep breathes to get your HR down because this nice feeling isn't going to last long!

Technique

- Engage your core
- Tilt your body down the hill (90deg to the slope)
- Don't worry about impact to knees etc as the angle you are hitting the soft sand will cushion the impact.
- Use long bounding strides
- Carry elbows a little higher than normal to counter act some upper body rotation
- Just go for it.