

How You Measure Up – By Terry Mackintosh – www.runnersworld.co.za

Want to know how far and how fast you're walking? Here are a number of simple ways to calculate your distance and pace – and see how well you're doing in training.

When you become a regular walker, one of the first questions you will likely be asking yourself is, "How far and how fast did I go today in training?" That's because most walkers (and runners) base their perceived progress on distance and time on their feet.

As far as distance is concerned, there are several ways to measure the distance walked:

- Pre-measure your walking routes using your car's odometer. While this is never exactly accurate, it does give you a good indication of the distance of your route.
- Measure your walking routes by cycling the route using a bicycle fitted with a computer that records your route's distance.
- Walk along roads where roadwork officials have placed kilometre signposts. The one disadvantage of such roads is that they tend to be busy ones.
- Buy a pedometer. These are generally inexpensive and can be purchased from most sports shops. It requires a simple calibration the first time you are ready to use it, but once calibrated, it can be used to easily and effectively clock your distance.
- Walk on the inside lane of a 400-metre athletics stadium track. Every five circuits amounts to a 2km distance. So, for example, if you do 10 laps in 24 minutes, this will give you a very good indication of your pace on unmeasured routes off the track. Based on this, you will know that if you walk at a similar speed and time outside on the road, you will have probably covered about 4km.

There are also various ways in which you can measure your pace:

- Simple division. The easiest is to make a note in your logbook of the time and distance walked each day. Then, in order to determine your walking pace, you simply divide the time walked by the distance walked. For example, if you walked for 30 minutes on a pre-measured course of 5km, your walking pace is 6 minutes per kilometre.
- Counting steps. Another way to gauge your pace is by counting how many steps you take in one minute and then use the table below as a guide to calculate your pace. Remember that this is only an estimate as stride lengths vary from person to person.

Steps/min	Mins/km
120-125	10:45
130-135	9:45
140-145	8:30
150-155	8:00
160-165	7:20
170-175	6:45
180-185	6:00
190-195	5:30
200-205	5:00
205-210	4:30
210-215	4:00

A variation on the above is to count the number of steps you take in a 15-second period. The top elite race walkers will take about 55 steps per 15 seconds, which equates to a pace of around four minutes per kilometre, and as such they would cover about 15km in one hour.

Most above-average competitive walkers walk at speeds of about 50 steps in 15 seconds, which translates roughly to a speed of around five minutes per kilometre, or 12km per hour. At the other end of the walking spectrum, beginners and novice walkers usually manage around 30 steps, giving a walking speed of around 6km per hour or about 10 minutes per kilometre.