



Alberto 300s - Guide

Four-hundred-meter intervals are a staple of training for many runners. It's easy to understand why. Four hundred meters is exactly one lap around a standard outdoor track. Nice and tidy.

Of course, the neatness of the 400m distance is not the only reason it has become a training staple. Running intervals of this distance is also a great way to get in race shape. A fit runner can complete a dozen such intervals in a session at roughly his or her one-mile race pace, with equal-distance jogging recoveries between intervals. This type of workout does a nice job of increasing fatigue resistance and comfort at relatively high speeds.

If the simplicity of the one-lap interval has a downside it's that it leads runners away from less neat-and-tidy interval lengths that may also be beneficial to them. For example, 300m intervals, or three quarters of one lap of the track.

The legendary runner-turned-coach Alberto Salazar (Mo Farrah and Galen Rupp's coach) is a big fan of 300's—so much so that all of his runners do them, while 400m intervals appear sparingly in his training programs. Obviously, 300m intervals can be run a little faster than 400m intervals, yet they do not administer quite the same endurance challenge. Salazar prefers them for long-distance runners especially for precisely this reason: they provide a little more of what's missing in the other types of workouts that fill these athletes' training logs: long intervals, tempo runs, long runs, and easy runs.

For example, many of Salazar's star runners do a set of 300's about once every other week, whether they're training for track races or a marathon. Because this type of workout is not super-specific to either type of racing (meaning Salazar's runners run the 300's at a pace faster than they do in a 5K, 10K or marathon events), it is not approached progressively in the context of the training cycle. In other words, the workout does not become increasingly challenging with the addition of intervals each time an athlete does it. Rather, they do the same session almost every time to first develop—and then maintain—speed. Salazar saves the progressive approach for more race-specific types of workouts.

Specifically, many of Alberto's athletes typically run 7 x 300m fast with 300m jogging recoveries between intervals. This is a good, solid workout but hardly a killer. Any runner can do it, although not every runner can complete his or her 300's as fast as Mo Farrah!

If you've never done 300's before, it will take a session or two to get used to them. You're likely to run them too fast the first time, resulting in inflating

interval times as the workout progresses, and you're almost certain to become more comfortable running 300's as time passes (initially, that last 100 meters of each interval seems excruciating). A perfectly executed set of 300s is one in which the interval times are consistent from start to finish and the last interval is more or less an all-out effort, meaning you'd be unable to match that time if you ran another 300.

Some coaches prescribe as many as ten 300's in a session. There's nothing to be gained by doing more, whereas you can start with as few as five and get something out of them. Seven 300's appears to be the magic number for many of Alberto's athletes, and if it's good enough for them it ought to be enough for the rest of us!

Alberto 300s - Pace Calculator

<i>300s Time (Mins/Secs)</i>	<i>Pace Equivalent (Mins/Mile)</i>
1:01	5:30
1:07	6:00
1:12	6:30
1:18	7:00
1:23	7:30
1:29	8:00
1:35	8:30
1:40	9:00
1:46	9:30
1:57	10:00