



## **How to Fall When Running Trails**

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Unfortunately, it isn't always easy to keep your feet on the ground when you are running trails, especially when the terrain is technical, the footing loose, or if you are on slick ice or snow. With the prospect of falling looming heavy, you will benefit from knowing how to fall properly so that you'll be safe, run with less fear, and limit your exposure to serious injury.

1. Know how best to fall so as to minimize the carnage. Like all things physical, this is a learned skill. Unfortunately, the lessons are taught at the school of hard knocks
2. Try to recover from a loss of balance. Depending on what triggers the fall — catching a toe on a root, slipping on loose rock or ice, or merely losing your concentration and tipping like a klutz — you may be able to recover by re-distributing weight if you can respond quickly enough.
3. Catch yourself with a long stride or lateral lunge, if that will suffice to steady your body. However, sometimes such corrective attempts are not worth the effort because they can cause muscle strain, joint damage, or throw your weight off in the other direction, like a driver who overcompensates.
4. Apply the “stop, drop, and roll” reaction when you can't prevent your fall. This approach should not be taken when you are on rocky, cactus-infested, or heavily foliated terrain. You should, however, try to cover your head with your arms to reduce the chance of a head injury. Absorb a fall with the greatest available space of soft tissue and body mass. Rolling or sliding is usually the best bet, especially if the alternative is a twisted or torqued ankle, knee, or arm joint.
5. Resist the urge to put your hands out to stop the fall. That leads to broken wrists, which is not too uncommon among trail runners.
6. Relax, as best you can. Try to slow down time and be as resilient and flexible as possible because that will mitigate the damage of the fall.

Tips: Practice falling on a grassy hill, sand dune, or snow bank, putting on layers of old sweats for padding as you hone your rolling and sliding skills. If you are prone to ankle problems, wear higher collared shoes, wrap your ankles, or investigate another kind of ankle support. In falling, the goal should be to emerge from the fall without any “real” injury, keeping the damage to a “mere flesh wound” a la Monty Python’s Holy Grail.

For more information, go to: [www.trailrunner.com](http://www.trailrunner.com) and [www.runningtimes.com](http://www.runningtimes.com)