

Running in the Dark

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Fall is my favorite time of year. The air turns crisp and cool and being outside is so enjoyable. And the arrival of fall generally means one thing for runners: the days are getting shorter. It's time to face the facts that you will most likely be running in the dark at some point soon. Whether you run in the morning or at night, it is more important than ever to stay safe when running outside in the dark.

Wearing reflective gear is the top priority when running in the dark. Items such as vests, flashlights, blinking lights, reflective strips, arm bands, etc. are no guarantee of safety, but they are your best tool for drivers to see you as you run. I, personally, like to wear anything from the Brooks Nightlife line. These brightly colored clothes are the first thing the eyes see and will help you get noticed by drivers more so than just lightly-colored clothing. They also have plenty of reflective material (on both the front and back of the apparel) that will be illuminated when light hits it.

Wearing reflective gear on your arms, legs, and feet, rather than just on your torso or head, is also important since drivers are more likely to see the reflective or glowing light when it's in motion. Things you can wear are reflective bands you can place on your arms and legs. Look for a vest that has full coverage on the front and back so you have 360 degree reflectivity, such as the ones we carry from Brooks and Amphipod. There's also the smaller non-vest version that allows you to get the reflectivity and wear it over bulkier items such as jackets. Whatever you wear, any reflective gear, worn anywhere on the body, is better than no reflective gear.

We also carry some blinking lights that will definitely be seen on a dark run. These can be worn anywhere: your shirt, arms, even your hat. And they can definitely be bright and blinding, all the better to see you on a dark run 😊

Here are some other things to keep in mind:

1. **Don't wear headphones.** Wearing headphones reduces your ability to hear a car, a voice, a dog or a potential attacker. You also tend to tune out your surroundings when listening to music, even when at a low volume. You need to be able to pay attention as much as possible when running in the dark.
2. **Don't wear dark colors in the dark.** White, orange and yellow running apparel is the easiest to see at night. Black, brown, dark blue or green blend into the night and won't be seen. If you have no other option than wearing dark clothing, cover yourself in reflective material (vest, blinking lights, etc.).
3. **Wear a billed cap and clear glasses.** The bill of a cap will hit an unseen tree branch or another obstacle before the obstacle hits your head. Clear glasses, such as the ones we carry from Tifosi, will protect your eyes from unseen objects and are especially handy when it rains. Anyone that has run into a tree branch can attest to the importance of these items!
4. **Think about wearing a headlamp or carrying a flashlight.** Headlamps and flashlights are light and small and can illuminate a dark street in front of you. We have some excellent head lamps from Petzl that have certainly helped me out on a dark run. For someone that's pretty clumsy, I need all the light I can get 😊
5. **Always carry a cell phone and ID, including something with emergency contact information.**
6. **Run with a partner.** Another runner may spot a car or hear something strange before you.
7. **Run against traffic.** It's easier to avoid traffic if you can see it.
8. **Run behind vehicles at intersections.** Even if a car or truck has stopped at a stop sign, there's no guarantee the driver has seen you. Trust me on this.
9. **Try to make eye contact and acknowledge a driver.** The interaction could be the difference between having an enjoyable run and one that ends in tragedy.

Happy Running!

Jenn Gill is the Director of Marketing and the Head Coach and Running Group Coordinator for Fleet Feet Sports, Gaithersburg. She also offers personal coaching online and in-person. To learn more about her services go to www.coachienn.com; to ask her any running related questions, contact her at jenn@coachienn.com