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HEALTH & FITNESS

THESE HEADPHONES PROMISE TO BE YOUR NEW RUNNING COACH—BUT DO THEY WORK?

A marathon runner and a newbie try A.I. coaching earphones to improve their form.



Written by [Sarah Kovac](#) and [Kate O. McCarthy](#)
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Running is a pretty basic human function—even toddlers can do it. But there's a right and wrong way to run if you want to avoid injury, and it's not always immediately obvious when your form or gait needs to be tweaked. For that reason, coaching earphones like the **Run Free BIO Pro** go beyond keeping you entertained with your **favorite running playlist**. These wireless earbuds have built-in sensors that analyze your gait and posture in real time and give you feedback to help you correct any mistakes.

To find out how well they work, we tasked two of our editors to try running with Run Free BIOs for a couple of weeks. They represent two extremes of running experience:

Kate McCarthy, Reviewed's Social Media Editor, is an experienced runner who has **completed multiple marathons** and knows well what can happen if one's form gets sloppy.

Sarah Kovac, our Smart Home Editor, has always liked the idea of running but has been plagued by foot pain any time she's tried. She resigned herself to the knowledge that she'd probably never run with any regularity.



Editor Kate McCarthy is an experienced runner who has completed several marathons.

What is the actual fit of these earbuds like?

Both testers have always struggled to find earbuds that stay put in their ears during activities, but each found that the **Soul Run Free Pro Bio** earbuds actually stayed secure during their runs; a true game changer.

The thin wire that connects each earbud was hardly noticeable and the power switch on the right side didn't weigh down the earbuds nor drag them out of the ear when running pace increased. The earbuds are adjustable in several different ways and you can choose which earbud size fits best in your ears. On top of that, the impressive sound quality was able to make each **workout even more enjoyable**.

How does the built in coaching work?

From our experienced runner: This fitness app promised a built-in workout coach, which I assumed would be a variation of track or tempo workouts. However, this coach focused on your running mechanics and how to improve them, instead of specific workouts. I received my first correction when looking down at my phone to change the song—a monotone British woman telling me to put my head up, then congratulating me once I did. This became common over the next few miles, I'd go to change a song, British lady would appear inside my head and I'd be incredibly annoyed.

The only other comment I received during my run was about easing up on my foot strike while running downhill. Once I'd get to flat ground again, the voice would congratulate me on evening out my stride and not pounding so hard on my legs. I found the voice to be a bit annoying, plus, I felt like I was in a constant state of waiting for someone to correct me, instead of just **enjoying my music**. However, you can turn off the voice coaching and still collect the data on the app. The only downside is that you have to use the app and earphones simultaneously, you can't just turn on the app without having the earbuds connected via Bluetooth.



Instead of by your side, the Run Free Bio Pro earbuds are like having a coach right inside your head.

From our newbie runner: As I set out my first day running with them, it immediately coached me to watch out for my head angle (I was looking down too much), and toward the end of my run it notified me that my left leg was weaker and that I should be aware of my symmetry. I was indeed getting tired, and I could tell that I was pushing up harder with my right foot than my left. Wow! I came home tired but not in pain, so I considered that a good sign.

The second time I went out for a run, I found myself being coached to adjust my head angle almost the entire time. One moment my head was too high, one moment it was too low, even though I felt like I was just barely adjusting my head up and down when it told me to. Unfortunately, by the end of my third run, the foot pain was back in full force, and I knew I couldn't keep pushing. It bummed me out, because I really loved using the headphones.

footage not found

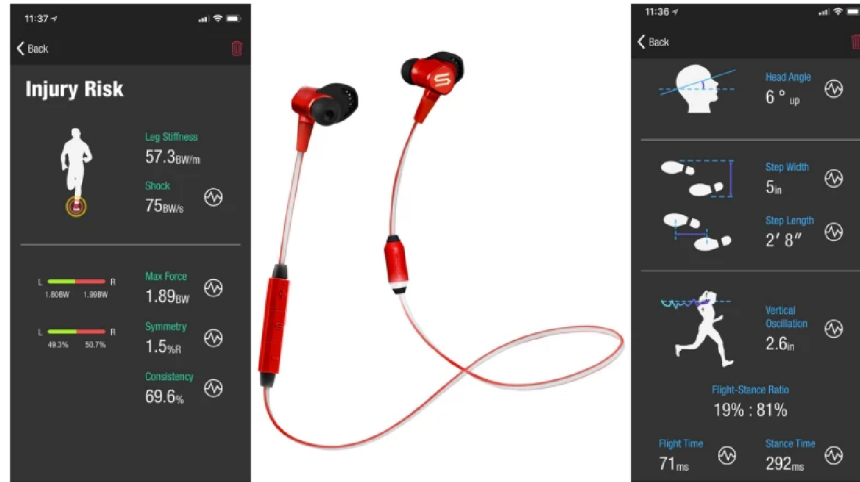
And here's Sarah during one of her many record-breaking marathon runs.

How the app's data can help improve your run

From our experienced runner: The best part about these earbuds? Taking them off and looking at the data on the app. The app showed me data such as the degree of my head angle, length of my steps and even how long both of my feet were in flight. As a more experienced runner, this was immensely helpful and I made some small tweaks to my stride as I went out the door the next day. This sort of information might be a little intimidating or even overwhelming for someone just getting back into the running groove. However, the app provides an explanation about what each point of data means and what the normal range recreation runners should fall into. They also tell you the range an elite runner would be in, which is great if you want to be reminded that you will never reach certain levels of athleticism in your life.

From our newbie runner: What these do not do is coach you to a better *run*. They coach you to be a *better runner*, but they do not push you toward any particular goal. If you are running, then they help you to run better, and that's it. They will not give you a running program.

One thing I wish the headphones would do is to coach me even if I'm just walking quickly. The coaching prompts don't kick in until you're actually running. I realize that posture and stride while walking are probably different from those required for a good run, but if these would help me to be a better walker, I would totally use them all the time.



The Run Free Pro Bio can collect and analyze a surprising amount of data from a single run.

Who should use the Soul Run Free Pro BIO earbuds ?

After testing these earbuds over multiple runs, we can confidently say that these are for a very specific type of runner. If you have specific time or fitness goals you're looking to improve on, this may not be the program for you. Instead, you may want to find an app that gives you different workouts to put into practice, or even work with a personal coach or running group. However, if you're a beginner, like to run just for fun or don't need a structured running program, this earbud/app combo would be great fit. The specific pointers on your form can aid you in making tweaks to improve your running, all while you do the workouts and runs that you're comfortable with.

Get Run Free Pro Bio Running Earphones for \$149.99 at Soul Electronics

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