**Sample Interview From *Runner’s World***

**I'm A Runner: Haruki Murakami**

**This novelist uses his running to make his books top-notch.**

By

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**Why do you run, when did you start?**  
I began running on an everyday basis after I became a writer. As being a writer requires sitting at a desk for hours a day, without getting some exercise you'd quickly get out of shape and gain weight, I figured. That was 22 years ago. I also took it as a chance to quit smoking. You see, I became rapidly healthier since the time I became a writer. You may call it rather a rare case. But because of that, I weigh now just as much as I weighed back then.

Before I became a writer, I was running a jazz bar in the center of Tokyo, which means that I worked in filthy air all the time late into the night. I was very excited when I started making a living out of my writing, and I decided, "I will live in nothing but an absolutely healthy way." Getting up at 5 a.m. every morning, doing some work first, then going off running. It was very refreshing for me.

I have always liked running, so it wasn't particularly difficult to make it a habit. All you need is a pair of running shoes and you can do it anywhere. It does not require anybody to do it with, and so I found the sport perfectly fits me as a person who tends to be independent and individualistic.

**How much do you run? Do you do straight mileage or any speedwork?**  
My goal was always doing about 60K per week: 6 days a week, 10K a day on average. Some days I run more, some days less. It depends. If it is not before a race, I run at a moderate pace at which I feel easy and comfortable. If it's training for a race, I sometimes focus on speed. But otherwise I usually just try to enjoy myself at a casual pace.

I should add, though, that since I also enter triathlons these days, I have added biking and swimming to my workouts. As such, I am now running only 3 or 4 days a week.

**You are moving to Boston soon and have run in Boston before. Where do you usually run in Boston?**  
I've run the Boston Marathon 6 times before. I think the best aspects of the marathon are the beautiful changes of the scenery along the route and the warmth of the people's support. I feel happier every time I enter this marathon.

As far as my experience goes, Boston is the most appealing marathon.

(Of course the New York City Marathon is also very exciting, but in a different way). The challenge is how to set your pace. It's tricky because there are many downhill slopes in the beginning part of the course, so I never know how fast I should go. No matter how many times I challenge the same course, there has never been a time I thought to myself "Yeah, that was the way to do it!"

However, no matter how challenging the race was, crossing the finish line at the Copley Plaza, going to Legal Sea Foods restaurant, eating steamed cherry stones and drinking Samuel Adams beer is one of the happiest moments of my life.

I used to run along the Charles River when I lived in the area before. I really like the course, though it can get really cold in the winter.

**Where is your favorite run anywhere in the world, and why?**  
My favorite run anywhere in the world? I recall when I lived on a small island in Greece. Because I was the only jogger on that island there was inevitably someone who would call out, saying "Why are you running?", "Isn't that bad for your heath?" or "Don't you want to stop for a shot of Ouzo?" It was quite amusing.

**I read that you ran every day while writing *Kafka on the Shore*. Do you work out plots and dialogue while running? How does running affect your writing?**

I try not to think about anything special while running. As a matter of fact, I usually run with my mind empty. However, when I run empty-minded, something naturally and abruptly crawls in sometime. That might become an idea that can help me with my writing.

However, in general, I try to get my mind relaxed and rested while running by not thinking about anything. I run to cool down my nerves that get heated up while writing.

**Do you listen to jazz or any other kind of music?**  
I normally listen to rock while running. I found that the simpler the rhythm, the better. For example, Creedence Clearwater Revival, John Mellencamp or The Beach Boys. I record this music on MD disks so I can listen to them with my Walkman on my run. There was this one time when I tried a 100K ultramarathon, I was tempted to listen to Mozart's *Magic Flute* from the beginning to the end, but I gave up on it in the middle of the course. It was exhausting. Since then I found opera not to be a good fit for running.

**You have expressed interest in running the New York Marathon again. What was the experience of running New York like for you before? What were the best and worst parts of the New York race?**

I've run the New York City Marathon 3 times so far. The great thing about the marathon is the fact that I can do sight seeing in that unique and gigantic city while running on my own two feet, taking all that time, to my heart's content.

On the course, there are truly amazing and diverse areas; each with its unique people and cultures--this scene and feel is only possible in New York. Also, I hit my best time in the New York City Marathon.

There is one problem with the marathon, though. You have to put up with the chill while waiting at the starting line, shivering, for a long time in the frigid breeze.

**As someone who has run a marathon a year for over 20 years, will you continue to do so? How has the experience of running (in marathons and daily) changed for you over the years?**

As long as possible, I would really like to complete one marathon per year. Though my time has been slowing down as I get older, it has become a very important part of my life.

One aspect that I have gained from running in the past 22 years that has most pleased me is that it has helped me develop respect about my own physical being.

I think to realize this is very important for all human beings.

To have such respect for your own body makes it possible to do the same for others. If more people on the earth shared this same feeling, there should be no terrorism or wars. Obviously, to our great disappointment, things are not that simple, that much I understand.

The most important qualities to be a fiction writer are probably imaginative ability, intelligence, and focus. But in order to maintain these qualities in a high and constant level, you must never neglect to keep up your physical strength.

Without a solid base of physical strength, you can't accomplish anything very intricate or demanding. That's my belief. If I did not keep running, I think my writing would be very different from what it is now.