CROSS COUNTRY · AGES 11 TO 13

Ages 11 to 13: three calm weeks before tryouts.

Short sessions at home are enough to arrive ready.

3 sessions a week of 15 to 20 minutes, from SSTracker's at-home cross country plans for 11 to 13 year olds. Two weeks build up, the third eases off, and the day before tryouts is a rest day.[1]

WEEKS	SESSIONS A WEEK	MINUTES A SESSION[2]
3	3, at most	15 to 20

Two weeks build up, then the last week eases off.

Week 1	Learn the sessions, one day at a time. Do sessions 1, 2 and 3, with a rest day between. Write your self-check number in session 1.
Week 2	The same sessions again, a little smoother. Repeat sessions 1, 2 and 3. Let your child lead the one they like most.
Week 3	Lighter, so your child arrives fresh. Sessions 1 and 2 early in the week, with the self-check again in session 1. Rest the day before tryouts.

With two weeks to go, start at week 2. With four weeks, do week 1 twice. Pick days that fit your week, with a rest day between sessions.

This packet online, with links to every drill: sstracker.app/tryout-prep/cross-country

1. Sessions: SSTracker's at-home cross country plans for 11 to 13 year olds. Every drill here is open at ages 11 to 13 in the app.
2. Session limits: SSTracker's own rule for age 11, at most 4 days a week and 45 minutes a session.

Every area coaches watch at tryouts is something that grows.

Many tryouts look at a few areas like these. SSTracker's own tryout notes use these five, a coach notes only what they saw, and there is no overall grade.[1]

Pace	Quick first steps grow with practice and with rest. Arriving fresh helps more than one extra hard day.
Technique	Clean touches grow with many short, calm tries. The sessions here give your child lots of them.
Reading the game	Looking up and choosing well grow by playing. After a game, ask about one good choice they made.
Physical	Balance, landing and core strength are part of every warm-up here. Every body grows at its own pace.
Attitude	Trying again after a mistake, listening and cheering a teammate are things every player can bring.

Skills these sessions train: Hills & Terrain, Race Tactics, Pacing.

Your child compares only with their own earlier number.

The test: Short Hill Repeats: your own number.

Week 1, first session _____

Week 3, first session _____

What feels easier now? _____

Compare only with your own week 1 number. Any number is fine: it shows where you are today, not who you are.

1. Tryout areas: the five areas in SSTracker's own tryout notes for coaches.

Every session starts with the same moving warm-up.

Cross Country Warm-Up, Ages 11 to 13[1]

1. Jog easy for 1 minute, then skip, side shuffle and backpedal for 1 minute.
2. Moving warm-up over 10 to 15 yards and back: high knees, heel flicks, carioca each way, then open-the-gate and close-the-gate walks (lift the knee and turn it out, then in).
3. Leg swings, 10 forward and back and 10 side to side each leg; then walking lunges with a twist toward the front knee, 6 each leg.
4. Plank on your forearms for 20 seconds, then a side plank for 15 seconds each side, body straight like a board.
5. Balance on one leg for 20 seconds each side, reaching the free foot slowly forward, to the side and behind.
6. Jumps: 5 squat jumps with soft landings, then 5 side hops landing on one foot and holding still for 2 seconds, each leg.
7. Build-up runs: three runs of about 15 yards at half speed, three-quarter speed and nearly full speed; walk back each time.
8. Sport moves: 3 relaxed strides of about 50 yards, building smoothly to a comfortable quick pace; walk back between each.

In these sessions the warm-up is the short version, 4 minutes: steps 1, 6 and 8. The full routine takes 10 minutes.

A flat, clear space with room to run. Stop if anything hurts: a warm-up should leave you ready, not tired.

Every session ends with a few minutes of gentle stretches.

Cross Country Cool-Down Stretches, Ages 11 to 13: each stretch held 15 to 20 seconds, never to pain.

In these sessions the cool-down is the short version, 3 minutes: steps 1 to 4 only. The full routine takes 6 minutes.

1. Warm-up and cool-down: SSTracker's routines for this age, with the research at sstracker.app/warm-ups-and-stretches.

Have these ready before the first session.

FOR THE SESSIONS AT HOME

- Cones
- A parent or partner
- Moderate hill
- Gentle grassy slope
- Gentle grassy hill
- Open field
- Watch
- Race course or park map

Week 1: learn the sessions, one day at a time.

Do sessions 1, 2 and 3, with a rest day between. Write your self-check number in session 1.

Session 1: Hills & Terrain at home — 20 min ◯

1.	Warm-up, short version: steps 1, 6 and 8	4 min
2.	Short Hill Repeats	4 min
3.	Downhill Control	5 min
4.	Hill Bounding Steps	4 min
5.	Cool-down, short version: steps 1 to 4 only	3 min

Drills: Short Hill Repeats, Downhill Control, Hill Bounding Steps

Session 2: Race Tactics at home — 20 min ◯

1.	Warm-up, short version: steps 1, 6 and 8	4 min
2.	Cone Corner Turns	4 min
3.	Course Walk Plan	5 min
4.	Shortest Line Running	4 min
5.	Cool-down, short version: steps 1 to 4 only	3 min

Drills: Cone Corner Turns, Course Walk Plan, Shortest Line Running

Week 1 continues with session 3.

Session 3: Hills: Hill Bounding Steps — 15 min ◯

1. Warm-up, short version: steps 1, 6 and 8 — 4 min
2. Hill Bounding Steps — 4 min
3. Effort Ladder — 4 min
4. Cool-down, short version: steps 1 to 4 only — 3 min

Drills: Hill Bounding Steps, Effort Ladder

Week 2: the same sessions again, a little smoother.

Repeat sessions 1, 2 and 3. Let your child lead the one they like most.

DAY	WHAT	MINUTES	DONE
Day 1	Session 1	20	◯
Day 3	Session 2	20	◯
Day 5	Session 3	15	◯

Week 3: lighter, so your child arrives fresh.

Sessions 1 and 2 early in the week, with the self-check again in session 1. Rest the day before tryouts.

DAY	WHAT	MINUTES	DONE
Day 1	Session 1 + self-check	20	◯
Day 3	Session 2	20	◯
The day before	Rest. Pack the bag together.	·	◯

Pack the bag together the day before.

ON TRYOUT DAY

- What the program asks for: read its sign-up together.
- A full water bottle.
- The shoes and gear your child trains in, already worn in.
- Any safety gear the program asks for.
- A snack and a warm layer for after.

The night before, calm matters more than practice.

- No new drills tonight. The work is already done.
- Pack the bag together, then set it by the door.
- A normal dinner, some water and the usual bedtime.
- Tell your child one thing you saw them grow at in these weeks.
- Nerves are normal. Say so, and that you feel them too sometimes.
- Whatever happens tomorrow, your love and pride stay the same.

AFTER TRYOUTS

- Ask what was fun, and what they want to practice next.
- Talk about their own growth, never about other children.

When to stop

- Stop if anything hurts, knees and heels too.
- Stop if landings get noisy or wobbly, or form breaks down. Rest, then try again easier.
- Thunder: go inside. Heat signs (dizzy, headache, feeling sick, confused, unusually tired): stop, rest in the shade and drink water.

After a knock to the head [1]

- Stop right away. No more play today. See a doctor before playing again.
- Call 911 for danger signs: throwing up again and again, a seizure, can't stay awake, a headache that gets worse, slurred speech, or one pupil bigger than the other.

Whatever happens at tryouts, your child is enough.

Practice makes progress, because there is no such thing as perfect.

More free drills, warm-ups and weekly plans: sstracker.app/drills. No account needed.

1. After a knock to the head: the CDC's HEADS UP guidance (same words as every SSTracker stop card).