

The Importance of Title IX and Its Impact on the World of Running

Discover how Title IX transformed women's sports and affected the global running community.

Updated: October 1, 2024 by [Caroline Cross](#)



This year marks the 50th anniversary of Title IX, the civil rights law that authorized gender equality in government funding for education and sports in the United States. For women, this was a pivotal moment in history that opened doors, forever changing the scope of girls' athletics and the world of running.

History of Title IX

On June 23, 1972, Title IX of the Education Amendments Act was signed into U.S. law by President Richard Nixon, prohibiting sex-based discrimination in federally funded education and athletic programs.

In addition to sports and athletics, Title IX also addresses nine other key areas: access to higher education, career education, education for pregnant and parenting students, employment, learning environment, math and science, sexual harassment, standardized testing, and technology.

What did athletics look like before Title IX?

Before Title IX, few opportunities existed for female athletes, and girls experienced inferior treatment when it came to the availability of resources such as equipment, training time and facilities, coaching, and publicity.

What changes did Title IX bring about?

Title IX was implemented to help correct the imbalances in participation in sports and the discrepancies in treatment between the sexes. Although it did not stipulate economic equity in athletics, it helped enforce equal access and standards.

How did Title IX affect sports in general?

This landmark law opened the door for women's sports to grow and flourish in America, especially on the competitive stage. In 1972 the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU), the governing body for marathons in the U.S., allowed women to officially compete in distance road running (such as the iconic Boston Marathon).

Impact on Running

The enactment of Title IX had a monumental impact on the world of running by allowing women to run longer distances and officially compete in marathons. Before Title IX, women were not allowed to run long distances or enter races over 880 yards.

Many brave pioneers set the wheels of change in motion before the passing of Title IX. Some notable women in the running community during that time are Roberta Gibb, Kathrine Switzer, and Nina Kuscsik.

As running became a more popular sport during the 1970s, more women started competing in marathons (even though it wasn't until 1972 when their race times were officially recorded).

Rise of Female Athletes

Since the passing of Title IX, female participation in sports has grown exponentially. While inequities remain even today, by requiring schools and universities to provide equal access and resources for women, Title IX dramatically increased the participation of women in sports at every level.

Fifty years ago, the preceding generation of women ran a more difficult course. The early days of Title IX had emphasized equal participation rather than competition, and the budget for girls' sport was very modest.

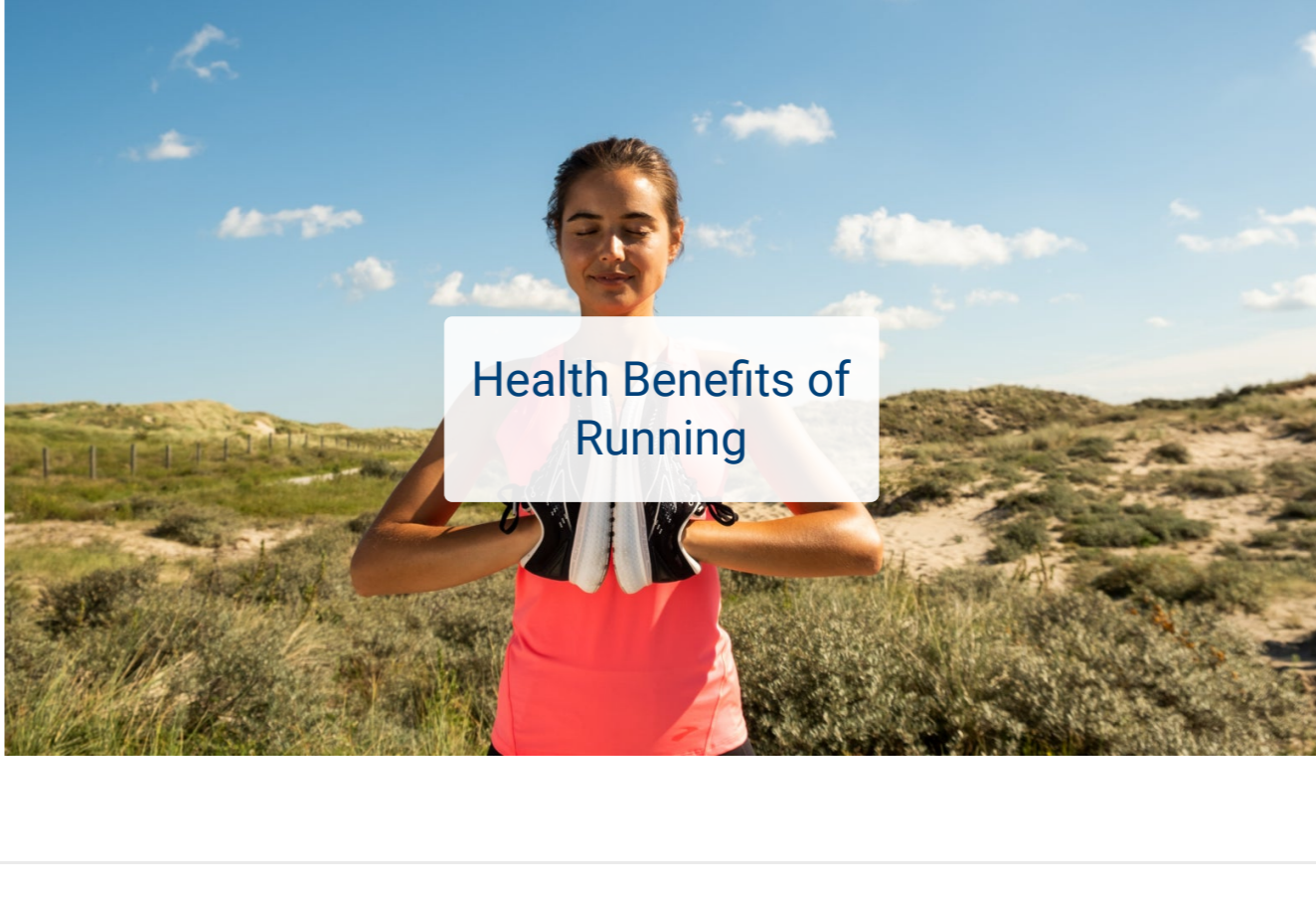
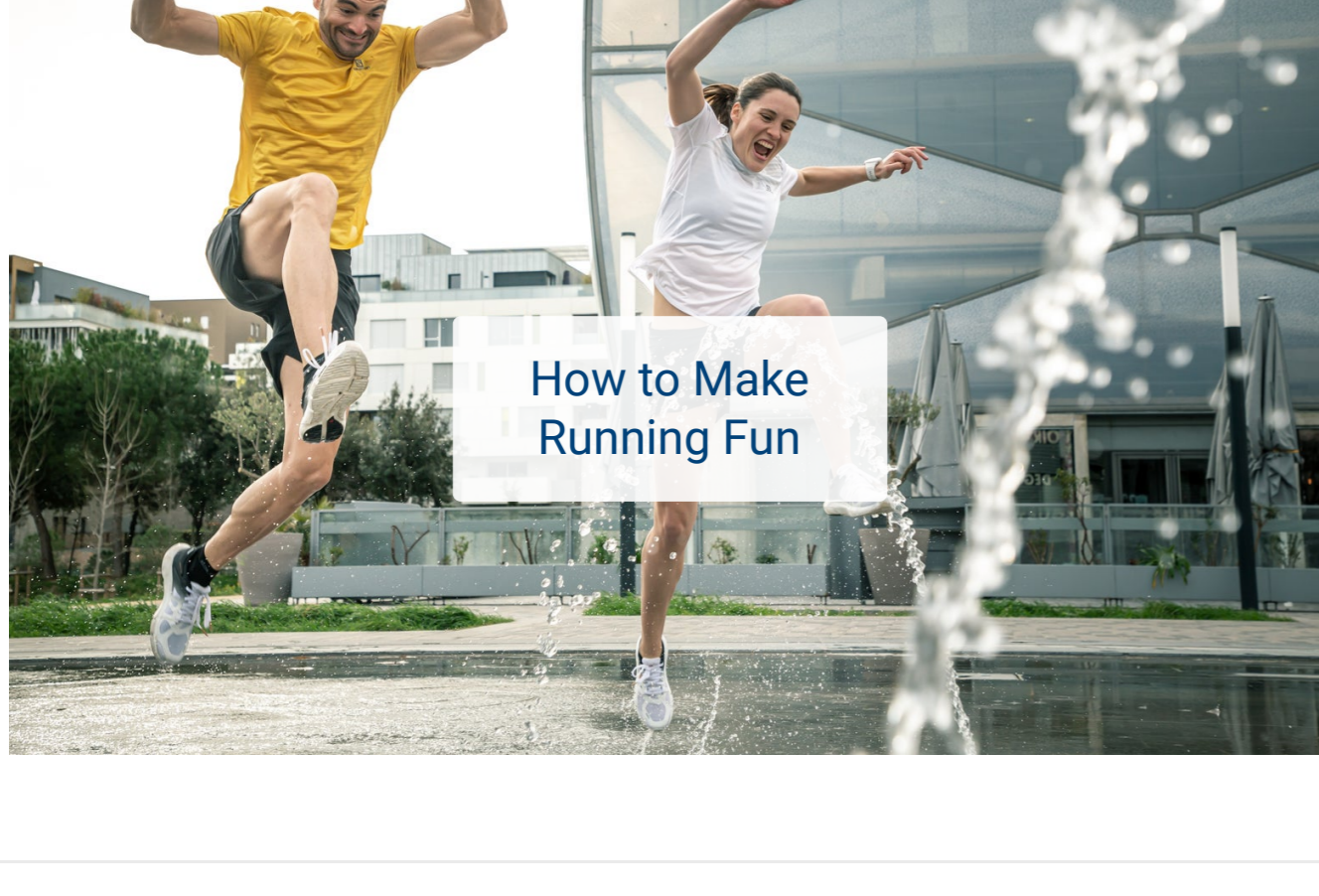
Nowadays, with so many high-profile female athletes in the spotlight, it shows how far women's athletics have come in terms of visibility and accessibility. More opportunities have emerged for young women to turn the sport they love into their careers.

Success Off the Field

The seismic impact of Title IX is not only felt in sports but in academia as well. Title IX is attributed to decreasing the dropout rate of girls from high school and increasing the number of women pursuing higher education and completing college degrees.

While we have many more miles to go, great strides have taken place since the authorization of Title IX, and we are excited to see what the next 50 years hold as the baton passes to the next generation of young girls.

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Caroline is a lifelong, avid runner who enjoys the outdoors. Whether on the road or on the trail, running or hiking, being surrounded by the sights and sounds of nature is her ultimate happy place. [Read More From Caroline](#)

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