Common mistakes
Leaning too far forward with your torso is a common mistake made when uphill running. It limits your range of movement at your hips and your knees, which in turn will shorten your stride length (you want a long stride to enable you to cover a further distance with the least amount of energy, it is better to have 10 long strides in 20s than 20 short ones within the same time frame, as you use less energy, enabling you to run more effectively and for a longer period of time) and the amount of drive you have to go up the hill. Stride length shortens and cadence increases. If you don’t look up, this can create tension in the shoulders as they will become rounded from the weight of your head on your neck, and this will limit your ability to breathe deeply leading on to a quicker onset of lactic acid.

How it feels
It may feel more natural to lean into the hill, but if you over extend after a while you will feel excessive pain in your shoulders and hips, as they are too tense and the muscles cannot respire properly, which causes the build up of lactic acid in them. In the hips as well, if you lean into the hill for too long you will start to feel as if your hip flexors are being ‘squashed’ as they will not have the necessary amount of space needed to perform a full range of movement. This will also affect the amount of power you can draw from your calf muscles, as the back leg will not be able to extend properly preventing you from landing on your toes, and accessing the power in your calf muscle to push off and drive the next stride.

How it looks
It will look like you are almost parallel with the gradient of the ground, your shoulders will be rounded and your back leg will not be able to extend fully.

How to improve
You should focus on equal effort and not equal pace, running up a hill is harder than running on flat ground, and therefore will be slower. You should look ahead to prevent your shoulders from rounding- remember to not lean forwards with your shoulders also- and enable the body to take in as much air as possible to help with respiration (this will fuel your muscles to work more effectively) also focus on leaning into the hill with your hips and not your torso, as this will allow you enough stability that your don’t fall backwards, but also allow your hips and knees to have enough room to produce the angles they need to produce good long strides. Try to run with your hips and drive with your knees rather than your feet as this helps you maintain a tall posture and avoid over striding.

Good uphill running technique

• Arm at right angle.
• Back leg fully extended, ready to push off from toes on back leg.
• Front leg at almost right angle.
• Torso angled towards the ground slightly, leading with hips.
• Head facing forwards with shoulders back.

Bad uphill running technique

• Arm has wider angle.
• Back leg has a bend in it, preventing runner from landing on their toes.
• Front leg has a wider angle.
• Torso angles towards the ground, runner not looking where they are going.
• Head facing down, rounding shoulders slightly.