

RUNNER'S WORLD

TRAINING PLAN

5K · Break 20 Minutes

This eight-week plan is designed for runners who want to finish a 5K in 20 minutes, or an average pace of 6:26 per mile. It features five days of running per week, including easy runs, tempo runs, intervals, plus long runs of 10 to 12 miles. Weekly mileage starts at 30 miles per week and peaks at 40 miles per week a few weeks before the race. Paces for each workout are prescribed.

| WEEK | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY | SUNDAY |
|------|-------------------------------|------------------------|---|--------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 | Day 1 Rest or Cross-Train | Day 2 4 Miles Easy | Day 3 6 Miles with 3 Miles at Tempo | Day 4 3 Miles Easy | Day 5 6 Miles Easy | Day 6 Rest or Cross-Train | Day 7 10 Miles LSD |
| 2 | Day 8 Rest or Cross-Train | Day 9 4 Miles Easy | Day 10 6 Miles with 4 Miles at Tempo | Day 11 3–4 Miles Easy | Day 12 6 Miles Easy | Day 13 Rest or Cross-Train | Day 14 12 Miles LSD |
| 3 | Day 15 Rest or Cross-Train | Day 16 7 Miles Easy | Day 17 7 Miles with Intervals | Day 18 5 Miles Easy | Day 19 4 Miles Easy | Day 20 Rest or Cross-Train | Day 21 10 Miles LSD |
| 4 | Day 22 Rest or Cross-Train | Day 23 6 Miles Easy | Day 24 7 Miles with Intervals | Day 25 4 Miles Easy | Day 26 5 Miles Easy | Day 27 Rest or Cross-Train | Day 28 12 Miles Easy |
| 5 | Day 29 Rest or Cross-Train | Day 30 8 Miles Easy | Day 31 Mile Repeats | Day 32 6 Miles Easy | Day 33 6 Miles Easy | Day 34 Rest or Cross-Train | Day 35 10 Miles LSD |
| 6 | Day 36 Rest or Cross-Train | Day 37 8 Miles Easy | Day 38 Mile Repeats | Day 39 6 Miles Easy | Day 40 6 Miles Easy | Day 41 Rest or Cross-Train | Day 42 12 Miles LSD |
| 7 | Day 43 Rest or Cross-Train | Day 44 6 Miles Easy | Day 45 Half-Mile Repeats | Day 46 4 Miles Easy | Day 47 5 Miles Easy | Day 48 Rest | Day 49 6–8 Miles LSD |

| WEEK | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY | SUNDAY |
|------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| 8 | Day 50 Rest or Cross-Train | Day 51 3–5 Miles Easy | Day 52 5 Miles with Intervals | Day 53 3 Miles Easy | Day 54 Rest or Cross-Train | Day 55 2 Miles Easy | Day 56 Race Day |

WEEK 1

Day 1, Monday · Rest or Cross-Train

Welcome to the Runner's World Break 20 Minutes 5K Plan. This eight-week plan is designed to help you cross the finish line of a 5K in 20 minutes.

Today, your training kicks off with a day of rest. Ideally, on rest days you should do no exercise at all. But it's okay to cross-train with a no-impact activity like stretching, yoga, or swimming. This week you'll have one more rest day, three short runs, and a longer run of 10 miles. On Thursday you'll do a tempo run, which will help train your body to run faster over a longer distance.

If you want to add miles, do it on an easy day. But don't extend any run by more than one or two miles, or add miles on Saturday (the day before your long run). Doing too much too soon is a recipe for injury.

Day 2, Tuesday · 4 Miles Easy

When you head out today, focus on maintaining a comfortable, conversational rhythm. These easy days are meant to strengthen muscles, build endurance, and burn fat, but the key is to keep the effort conservative so you're not worn out for the hard workouts ahead. You want to finish each run feeling like you have the energy to run longer. (Pace: 8:15/mile)

Day 3, Wednesday · 6 Miles with 3 Miles at Tempo

2-mile warmup
3 miles at tempo pace (6:53/mile)
1-mile cooldown

Today you'll do a tempo run. After a one-mile warmup, run two miles at your tempo pace (6:53/mile), then cool down with one mile of easy running. Your tempo pace should feel hard but controlled. You won't be able to talk comfortably at your tempo pace, but it should not feel as if you're racing.

Day 4, Thursday · 3 Miles Easy

On easy days, cross-training should involve a sustained aerobic effort with an activity like cycling or using an elliptical trainer, for the same amount of time you'd spend on the day's mileage. If you plan to incorporate cross-training into your preparation and want to try a new activity, be sure to do it in this early base-building stage of training. In the weeks before the race, you'll want to avoid trying new activities because of the risk of injury so close to your goal event.

Run 3 miles easy today. (Pace: 8:15/mile)

Day 5, Friday · 6 Miles Easy

As your training gets under way, invest in shirts, shorts, pants, underwear, jog bras, and socks that are made of technical, lightweight fabrics that wick away moisture. These fabrics, which go by names like Dri-Fit and CoolMax, help prevent blisters and chafing. (Pace: 8:15/mile)

Day 6, Saturday · Rest or Cross-Train

Today you have the choice of resting or cross-training. Don't worry about losing your fitness on rest days. Rest builds strength, reduces fatigue, and prevents injuries. Since most running injuries come from overuse, a day off at least once a week can help prevent a three- or four-week forced layoff down the line due to a strain or a stress fracture.

Day 7, Sunday · 10 Miles LSD

Sundays will be reserved for long, slow distance (LSD) runs to build your endurance. Long runs improve aerobic capacity, develop your strength, and get you accustomed to spending a longer time on your feet. Don't worry too much about your pace on long runs; just focus on the distance you want to cover for the day. (Pace: 8:15/mile)

WEEK 2

Day 8, Monday · Rest or Cross-Train

This is week two of training. Your training will be nearly identical to last week, with three short runs, a tempo run, and two days of rest. Your long run will increase to 12 miles.

At this stage, focus on establishing a running routine that blends well into the rhythm of your daily life. Figure out what times of day are most convenient to run, and find a variety of safe, traffic-free, and convenient routes that you can take on a regular basis.

Day 9, Tuesday · 4 Miles Easy

If you're an early morning runner, be sure to prep for your run the night before. Set your automatic coffeemaker to brew before you wake. Turn off the computer and TV at least 30 minutes before you hit the sack. And be sure to eat well: Have slow-digesting carbs like broccoli, beans, and lentils. If you skip dinner or eat fast-digesting carbs like rice, bread, or sugary desserts, your glycogen levels will be depleted, making it even harder to muster the energy to get up in the morning. (Pace: 8:15/mile)

Day 10, Wednesday · 6 Miles with 4 Miles at Tempo

1-mile warmup
4 miles at tempo pace (6:53/mile)
1-mile cooldown

Warm up with one mile of easy running, then run at your tempo pace for four miles. Cool down with one mile of easy running.

Day 11, Thursday · 3–4 Miles Easy

As much as possible, try to incorporate hills into the early stages of your training. Hills build leg and lung power. You won't feel fast going up hills, but you'll feel strong. Pick a variety of short and long hills to keep your mind and muscles engaged. Just focus on sustaining an even, steady effort. (Pace: 8:15/mile)

Day 12, Friday · 6 Miles Easy

Worn-out or ill-fitting shoes can lead to injury. It's best to replace your shoes every 300 to 500 miles. Shop at a specialty running store, where trained professionals will evaluate your gait, recommend the shoes that offer the fit and support that your feet need, and let you take them for a test run. (Pace: 8:15/mile)

Day 13, Saturday · Rest or Cross-Train

When you first start training, it's easy to think that more is better. But whenever you run instead of resting, or go harder than you should, you raise your risk of exhaustion, burnout, and injury. Stay focused on your bigger objective of getting to the starting line healthy, and staying energized for your quality workouts. This will help keep your training more consistent and increase the chances that you'll reach your race-day goals.

Day 14, Sunday · 12 Miles LSD

On any run of 75 minutes or less, you'll likely be fine with just water or sports drink. But any time you're running longer, you'll want to refuel while you're on the road. Aim for 30 to 60 grams of carbs per hour. You can get those carbs from sports drinks, energy gels, or other snacks. Experiment with different brands and flavors to figure out what gives you a boost without leaving you with an upset stomach. (Pace: 8:15/mile)

WEEK 3

Day 15, Monday · Rest or Cross-Train

Welcome to week three of training. This week you'll have three short runs and two days of rest. On Sunday your long run will drop to 10 miles. On Wednesday you'll do some interval training. This will help you develop the speed endurance you'll need for the race.

To keep cool on hot days, hit the trails instead of pounding the pavement. Hard surfaces can retain a lot of heat, and the shade from trees will help you keep down your core temperature.

Day 16, Tuesday · 7 Miles Easy

When you're hitting the road, don't forget the sunscreen, no matter the season. Use a product with an SPF of at least 30 that protects against UVA and UVB rays that says "broad spectrum." Apply it 20 minutes before heading out. (Pace: 8:15/mile)

Day 17, Wednesday · 7 Miles with Intervals

2-mile warmup
8-10 x 400 at 1:33 with 200 easy run recovery
1-mile cooldown

The above workout progresses like this: Run two miles easy and then (on a track or measured path) run 400 meters (1/4 mile) in one minute and 33 seconds followed by a very easy jog for 200 meters (1/8 mile). Repeat that sequence 7 to 9 more times before you cool down with an easy 1-mile run.

Don't run on empty; you'll run farther and faster and feel better if you fuel up before you go. Have 100 to 200 calories within an hour of heading out to your run. Try these quick prerun snacks: A handful of low-fiber cereal, half a bagel with honey, graham crackers with a teaspoon of honey, one cup of fat free yogurt, and a banana with a handful of nuts.

Day 18, Thursday · 5 Miles Easy

Good running form can help prevent injuries and make running feel easier, especially on these longer runs. Try to run tall and avoid hunching over. Keep your chin up and look straight ahead. Relax your shoulders, and shake out your arms to stay loose. (Pace: 8:15/mile)

Day 19, Friday · 4 Miles Easy

Be sure to keep some runs in your routine that you do purely just for fun. What type of workout do you most look forward to: a social five-miler with friends, or a club track session that revs your engine? While certain workouts are important to meet training goals, you must balance those with ones you look forward to, or risk losing the desire to run at all. (Pace: 8:15/mile)

Day 20, Saturday · Rest or Cross-Train

If you're looking for a good cross-training activity, jump in the pool. Swimming builds strength in the upper body and core, which will help you maintain good form during races and hard workouts. To keep the workout interesting, try changing strokes each lap, or do intervals, in which you swim hard for a lap, rest for 30 seconds, then sprint again and try to beat your time. If it's been awhile since you've been in the pool, sign up for a swim-fitness class to refine your technique.

Day 21, Sunday · 10 Miles LSD

Hook up with a buddy or a running club when you're running longer than usual—you'll be surprised how easily the miles roll by when you're in good company. Don't know other runners? Log into our online community at runnersworld.com/forums, where you'll find regional groups and forums. Or contact a running shop in your area. (Pace: 8:15/mile)

WEEK 4

Day 22, Monday · Rest or Cross-Train

This is week four of training. You'll have three easy runs, and your long run will return to 12 miles. On Wednesday you'll head to the track for intervals.

If it's hot on the day when you plan to do speedwork or run long, reschedule the workout for another day. As long as you don't do two hard workouts—like a speed session and a long run—back to back, it's fine to switch the schedule around.

Day 23, Tuesday · 6 Miles Easy

Shin splints are common among beginners and seasoned runners alike, and that soreness and pain along the shinbone tends to come on after ramping up mileage or intensity too much without enough rest. Running on uneven road surfaces or wearing worn-out shoes can also bring them on. If you feel shin splints coming on, take it easy and check your log. You may need to back off a bit. (Pace: 8:15/mile)

Day 24, Wednesday · 7 Miles with Intervals

2-mile warmup

1x400 at 1:33 with 200 easy run recovery

3x800 at 3:12 with 400 easy run recovery

1x400 at 1:33 with 200 easy run recovery

1-mile cooldown

The above workout progresses like this:

Run 2 miles easy and then (on a track or measured path) run 400 meters (1/4 mile) in 1 minute and 33 seconds followed by a very easy jog for 200 meters (1/8 mile). Then run 800 meters in 3 minutes and 6 seconds followed by a very easy jog for 400 meters. Do 2 more 800-meter intervals and then one more 400-meter interval before you cool down with an easy 1-mile run.

It's best to do speedwork on a track, where the ground is flat and the distance is measured. But you can do these mile repeats on a flat stretch of road or a treadmill if necessary.

Day 25, Thursday · 4 Miles Easy

If you're feeling energetic on an easy day, you may have a tough time holding back. Resist the temptation to speed up; it's better to save your energy for the hard workouts. To keep your easy runs relaxed, hook up with a friend who runs at a slower pace or take along the dog. You'll be more likely to take it easy and enjoy the run more. (Pace: 8:15/mile)

Day 26, Friday · 5 Miles Easy

Deal with blisters before they become painful enough to throw off your gait. Covering your blister with a Band-Aid or moleskin is ideal. But if home is miles away, adjust your laces. Tightening them could stop heel slippage (a common cause of blisters); loosening them could take pressure off a hot spot. (Pace: 8:15/mile)

Day 27, Saturday · Rest or Cross-Train

If you're trying to shed pounds as you train, consistency is key. Try to consume about the same number of calories on weekends as on weekdays. If you feast on whatever you want on Saturdays and Sundays, you'll cancel out five days' worth of healthy eating.

Day 28, Sunday · 12 Miles Easy

If you need to recharge your training, map out a new route. Trying new courses will introduce your body to different elevations and can liven up your staid routine. Check out our route finder at runnersworld.com/routes, or click on the route icon on the left side of the training log. (Pace: 8:15/mile)

WEEK 5

Day 29, Monday · Rest or Cross-Train

This is week five of training. After this week you'll have three weeks until race day. This week you'll ratchet up the intensity of your runs. You'll have three easy but longer runs, and your long run will be 10 miles. On Wednesday you'll have mile repeats.

What you do when you're off the road has a big impact on your running, especially during weeks like these, when you're pushing your body farther and faster than it has gone before. Get plenty of sleep—eight hours is ideal—take the rest days on the schedule, and be sure to fuel up with at least 100 to 200 calories before your run. Stay hydrated, too: Throughout the day, you want to have half your body weight in ounces. That is, if you're a 150-pound runner, you want to have at least 75 ounces of fluids, ideally water. Be sure to refuel after your hard workouts with carbs and protein so you can bounce back strong.

Day 30, Tuesday · 8 Miles Easy

Be sure to run on a variety of surfaces, like soft trails, not just concrete. Varying the surfaces will help you prevent injuries by giving certain muscles and joints a rest while strengthening other muscles and joints. (Pace: 8:15/mile)

Day 31, Wednesday · Mile Repeats

1-mile warmup
4 x 1 mile at 6:25/mile with 800-meter recovery
1-mile cooldown

It's okay to listen to music on the run, particularly on these high-intensity days. Studies have shown that on top of helping athletes work harder, music also reduces perceived exertion and gives your mood a boost. Put on your running tunes before you go out, and you'll be more likely to lace up and get out the door. Runner's World has collected playlists from the nation's top runners, along with songs that scientists have proven will help you pick up the tempo. You can find the perfect sound track for your next run on the [playlists page on runnersworld.com/music](https://runnersworld.com/music).

Day 32, Thursday · 6 Miles Easy

Don't avoid the hills—run for them. Running hills develops efficiency, endurance, and power. Ascending an incline uses more muscle fibers than running on level terrain, and climbing longer hills makes the body recruit muscles when they're fatigued, which helps develop your finishing speed. If you have no hills nearby, run on highway overpasses, bridges, or in parking structures. As you approach an incline, shorten your stride while maintaining the same cadence. Small, quick steps will help reduce the effort. (Pace: 8:15/mile)

Day 33, Friday · 6 Miles Easy

Icing an injury or a sore area can reduce inflammation and speed recovery. To maximize the benefits, ice for 10 to 20 minutes at a time, five times a day. This keeps tissue temperature low to minimize inflammation. (Pace: 8:15/mile)

Day 34, Saturday · Rest or Cross-Train

Don't underestimate the impact that the stress of work, deadlines, chores, bills, kids, and lack of sleep can have on your runs. All those factors can impact how much energy you bring to your training.

Day 35, Sunday · 10 Miles LSD

If at all possible, do some of your training on the racecourse. Previewing the hills, turns, and narrow spaces will help you feel more confident and relaxed going into your big goal event. If you're not able to run on the course, look at the course map and elevation chart, which should be posted on the event website. Try to do some runs that simulate the same pattern of elevation change that you'll face in the race. (Pace: 8:15/mile)

WEEK 6

Day 36, Monday · Rest or Cross-Train

Welcome to week six of training. This week you'll have three easy runs and head back to the track for mile repeats. Your long run will be 12 miles.

Have a black toenail? It's caused by pooling of blood under the nail, which is caused by the toe rubbing or hitting the top of your shoe. It's best to leave it alone; the black nail will grow out in a few weeks or months. If it hurts, best to see a doctor.

Day 37, Tuesday · 8 Miles Easy

Be sure to watch out for cars, and don't expect drivers to watch out for you. Always run facing traffic, so you can see cars approaching. When crossing an intersection, make sure you establish eye contact with the driver before proceeding. If it's dark out, wear reflective clothing, a headlamp, and/or carry a flashlight. (Pace: 8:15/mile)

Day 38, Wednesday · Mile Repeats

1-mile warmup
4 x 1 mile at 6:20 with 800-meter recovery
1-mile cooldown

Today you'll do the same speed session as last week. Be sure to take the time afterward to recover properly. Stretch and ice any sore spots, and refuel within 30 minutes of finishing the workout—even if you feel queasy—so you can bounce back strong. You'll want a snack with a 3:1 ratio of carbs to protein. And be sure to rehydrate, too.

Day 39, Thursday · 6 Miles Easy

Make your racing plans public. Tell your friends and family exactly what you plan to do. You'll think twice about skimping on your training if it's not a secret. (Pace: 8:15/mile)

Day 40, Friday · 6 Miles Easy

Most experts attribute cramps in the calf or other leg muscles to dehydration or fatigue. If you get a cramp, massage the area, and resume running at a slower pace. (Pace: 8:15/mile)

Day 41, Saturday · Rest or Cross-Train

Normally, runners should make sure to eat lots of fiber from beans, vegetables, and whole grains. But the night before a hard workout or a race, high-fiber foods can cause uncomfortable gas. Cut back on fiber three days before a major workout like a long run, or your race.

Day 42, Sunday · 12 Miles LSD

When you're tired, especially on long runs, the natural tendency is to tighten up in the arms and hunch up the shoulders. When you notice this, drop your arms to your sides and gently shake them out as you exhale. (Pace: 8:15/mile)

Day 43, Monday · Rest or Cross-Train

This is week seven of training. After this week the race will be one week away. You'll have three shorter runs and your long run will relax to between 6 and 8 miles. On Wednesday you'll head to the track for 800s, half-mile repeats.

Day 44, Tuesday · 6 Miles Easy

It's easy to mindlessly run the same routes, at the same speed, every day. Before long, you can get stuck in a training rut and become unmotivated. You'll also increase your injury risk by taxing muscles in the same way every day and not allowing for recovery. Mix things up by changing your running routes regularly, even if it's just running the same route in the opposite direction. Run with different partners throughout the week. Meet a slower friend on an easy run one day, a faster friend for a tempo run, and recruit your dog to accompany you for a third workout. (Pace: 8:15/mile)

Day 45, Wednesday · Half-Mile Repeats

2-mile warmup
4 x 800 at 3:06 with 400-meter recovery
2-mile cooldown

A glass of chocolate milk makes for the perfect post-track treat. It has bone-building vitamin D and calcium, and the ideal amounts of carbohydrates and proteins that tired muscles need for recovery. Research has proven that milk beats water and sports drinks at restoring fluid levels after bouts of exercise in the heat.

Day 46, Thursday · 4 Miles Easy

If you have aches and pains during a run, it's best to go to a doctor who specializes in sports medicine. While a general doctor might tell you to simply stop running, a sports-medicine specialist can figure out if your injury is something you can and should run through, or whether you should take a step back and focus on another race down the road. (Pace: 8:15/mile)

Day 47, Friday · 5 Miles Easy

Now is a good time to make sure you're all set with gear for the race. If your favorite shorts are getting threadbare, replace them now and get plenty of practice running in the new ones before race day. (Pace: 8:15/mile)

Day 48, Saturday · Rest

When you're shopping for new running shoes, be sure to take the pair you currently wear with you. The sales staff can tell a lot about your foot type and biomechanics from the wear patterns on the soles of your shoes. If you wear inserts or orthotics, bring those along, too.

Day 49, Sunday · 6–8 Miles LSD

Today is your last long run before race day. Use it as a dress rehearsal. Try out the gear and shoes you plan to wear for the race. Practice the mantras and mental strategies to stay focused and calm even when you start to feel fatigue. Visualize yourself giving the event all that you have, and finishing feeling strong. (Pace: 8:15/mile)

Day 50, Monday · Rest or Cross-Train

This is the final week of training. Your race is this weekend!

Your hard-core training may be done, but there's still plenty you can do to increase your chances of being your best on race day. Be sure to get plenty of sleep, and iron out all your race-day logistics as soon as possible, so you can enjoy your big weekend.

You'll have three short runs and two days of rest. You'll have a short session of intervals to get the fast-twitch muscle fibers firing, and your legs feeling race ready. Resist the temptation to run farther or faster this week. Save your energy for the race.

Don't try anything new this week. From now until the race, stick to the foods that you digest well, and that keep you energized for your runs.

Day 51, Tuesday · 3–5 Miles Easy

You've put in all the hard work of training, but have you made a goal for the race? To avoid getting too attached to a number on the clock, pick three goals: one you're confident you can accomplish, one you think you'll probably reach, and a best-possible finishing time that may be a stretch. Having multiple goals will ensure that you walk away from the finish line with a sense of accomplishment. (Pace: 8:15/mile)

Day 52, Wednesday · 5 Miles with Intervals

1-mile warmup
6 x 400 at 1:33 with 200 easy run recovery
1-mile cooldown

For a lot of runners, the taper is the toughest part of the training cycle. Phantom pains crop up during the final weeks before the race, and it's hard to know whether they're real or just the result of nerves. A massage can help relieve any prerace discomfort while helping you relax.

Day 53, Thursday · 3 Miles Easy

You're close enough to race day to start checking the weather forecast and thinking about what to wear. Whatever the conditions are, you've probably run in them before. If you need help choosing proper attire, check out the "What to Wear" tool at runnersworld.com/what-to-wear. (Pace: 8:15/mile)

Day 54, Friday · Rest or Cross-Train

You may be nervous that you've rested too much, but relax—you've done enough. Just rest up for Sunday's race. Eat light meals throughout the day, and eat an early dinner and get plenty of sleep.

Day 55, Saturday · 2 Miles Easy

It's a good time to double-check all your race-day logistics. Do you know when you'll get your bib number? When you need to get to the starting line and where you're going to park? These may seem like little details, but if you leave them up in the air, they can cause a lot of unneeded stress just before the race, when you feel least equipped to handle it. (Pace: 8:15/mile)

Day 56, Sunday · Race Day

It's race day. Good luck! It's best to start at the back and run more slowly than you think you should in the first few hundred meters and then ramp up to your 6:26-per-mile race pace. The biggest mistake runners make is going out too fast. Stop at aid stations as you need to. After you cross the finish line, be sure to walk and stretch immediately to reduce soreness and stiffness in the days ahead.

And congratulations. The race lasts only a few minutes, but the pride of knowing you've completed the training and the race endures for much longer.

After you've recovered, consider training with Runner's World again. Check out the other training plans we've designed for 5Ks, 10Ks, half marathons, and marathons.