

RUNNER'S WORLD

TRAINING PLAN

Marathon · Beginners

If you're ready to take the challenge of covering 26.2 miles, why not do it with the best? Train with Runner's World, the worldwide authority on training and racing for more than four decades. This 16-week program will help you cross the finish line fit and injury-free. It is geared for those who have run for at least a year, three to four times per week on average. Each week features three days of running at an easy pace, a long run, and three days of rest. The long runs, which many rookies dread from the get-go, start at just eight miles and gradually build to 20 miles a week toward the end of the program.

WEEK	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
1	Day 1 Rest	Day 2 2 Miles Easy	Day 3 4 Miles Easy	Day 4 2 Miles Easy	Day 5 Rest	Day 6 2 Miles Easy	Day 7 6 Miles LSD
2	Day 8 Rest	Day 9 2 Miles Easy	Day 10 5 Miles Easy	Day 11 2 Miles Easy	Day 12 Rest	Day 13 2 Miles Easy	Day 14 8 Miles LSD
3	Day 15 Rest	Day 16 3 Miles Easy	Day 17 5 Miles Easy	Day 18 2 Miles Easy	Day 19 Rest	Day 20 3 Miles Easy	Day 21 6 Miles LSD
4	Day 22 Rest	Day 23 3 Miles Easy	Day 24 5 Miles Easy	Day 25 3 Miles Easy	Day 26 Rest	Day 27 3 Miles Easy	Day 28 10 Miles LSD
5	Day 29 Rest	Day 30 3 Miles Easy	Day 31 6 Miles Easy	Day 32 3 Miles Easy	Day 33 Rest	Day 34 3 Miles Easy	Day 35 8 Miles LSD
6	Day 36 Rest	Day 37 4 Miles Easy	Day 38 6 Miles Easy	Day 39 4 Miles Easy	Day 40 Rest	Day 41 3 Miles Easy	Day 42 12 Miles LSD

7	Day 43	Day 44	Day 45	Day 46	Day 47	Day 48	Day 49
	Rest	4 Miles Easy	6 Miles Easy	4 Miles Easy	Rest	3 Miles Easy	14 Miles LSD
8	Day 50	Day 51	Day 52	Day 53	Day 54	Day 55	Day 56
	Rest	4 Miles Easy	8 Miles Easy	4 Miles Easy	Rest	3 Miles Easy	10 Miles LSD
9	Day 57	Day 58	Day 59	Day 60	Day 61	Day 62	Day 63
	Rest	4 Miles Easy	8 Miles Easy	4 Miles Easy	Rest	3 Miles Easy	16 Miles LSD
10	Day 64	Day 65	Day 66	Day 67	Day 68	Day 69	Day 70
	Rest	4 Miles Easy	8 Miles Easy	4 Miles Easy	Rest	3 Miles Easy	12 Miles LSD
11	Day 71	Day 72	Day 73	Day 74	Day 75	Day 76	Day 77
	Rest	4 Miles Easy	8 Miles Easy	4 Miles Easy	Rest	3 Miles Easy	18 Miles LSD
12	Day 78	Day 79	Day 80	Day 81	Day 82	Day 83	Day 84
	Rest	4 Miles Easy	8 Miles Easy	4 Miles Easy	Rest	3 Miles Easy	15 Miles LSD
13	Day 85	Day 86	Day 87	Day 88	Day 89	Day 90	Day 91
	Rest	7 Miles Easy	10 Miles Easy	4 Miles Easy	Rest	3 Miles Easy	20 Miles LSD
14	Day 92	Day 93	Day 94	Day 95	Day 96	Day 97	Day 98
	Rest	4 Miles Easy	8 Miles Easy	4 Miles Easy	Rest	3 Miles Easy	12 Miles LSD
15	Day 99	Day 100	Day 101	Day 102	Day 103	Day 104	Day 105
	Rest	4 Miles Easy	6 Miles Easy	3 Miles Easy	Rest	3 Miles Easy	8 Miles LSD
16	Day 106	Day 107	Day 108	Day 109	Day 110	Day 111	Day 112
	Rest	3 Miles Easy	5 Miles Easy	3 Miles Easy	Rest	1–2 Miles Easy	Race Day

WEEK 1

Day 1, Monday · Rest

Welcome to week one of the Marathon Plan for Beginners.

If you're taking on 26.2 miles for the first time, this 16-week plan will help get you to the start and finish lines fit and injury-free. Each week throughout the program, you'll have four short runs, two rest days, and one long run.

As you train, tap into our online community, where you'll find tips on training, nutrition, and injury prevention, and you can connect with other marathoners.

Your training program kicks off with a rest day. Mondays are always reserved for rest so you can recover from the previous week and save your energy for the week ahead. Ideally, you won't exercise at all on these days. But it's okay to do a no-impact activity like yoga, stretching, or swimming. Whatever you do, just take it easy.

Your first long run, on Sunday, is six miles. Since you'll be running farther, you can go out slower than you usually do. On these days your goal is just to complete the distance. You'll gradually extend these runs by one to three miles each week.

Day 2, Tuesday · 2 Miles Easy

Keep a comfortable conversational pace. Or you can cross-train on a bike or an elliptical trainer. Don't worry so much about your pace during these runs. Just try to focus on covering the distance feeling good.

Here's a guide to this plan's workouts:

REST DAYS: 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.

EASY DAYS: Keep a comfortable conversational pace, about one to two minutes slower than your 5K pace. Or you can cross-train on a bike or an elliptical trainer.

CROSS-TRAINING: Easy-day cross-training should involve sustained aerobic activity, like cycling or using an elliptical trainer, for the same amount of time you'd spend on the day's mileage. Rest-day cross-training should be a no-impact activity like stretching, yoga, or swimming.

LONG RUN (LSD): This is a long, slow distance run to build endurance. These should be done at an easy conversational pace, even slower than the shorter runs you do during the week. Throughout the program, your long, slow distance runs will help you get comfortable spending more time on your feet and running for longer distances than you have in the past.

Day 3, Wednesday · 4 Miles Easy

It's okay to cross-train on easy days instead of hitting the road. Just swim, bike, or use the elliptical machine for the same period of time you'd spend running. Try to use the same level of effort that you'd hit on the run.

Day 4, Thursday · 2 Miles Easy

Now is the time to invest in high-quality running gear. These items may seem like extravagant expenses, but the investment you make now will pay off for hundreds of miles. Shirts, shorts, and pants that wick-away moisture will help protect you from chafing, and keep you comfortable no matter what the weather conditions are. Be sure to get new shoes. Worn out or ill-fitting shoes are a leading cause of injury. Be sure to go to a specialty running shop where you can get help finding the pair that offer the fit and support that your feet need.

Day 5, Friday · Rest

Take it easy today to recover and stay fresh for the miles ahead.

Day 6, Saturday · 2 Miles Easy

Low-carb diets have become popular in recent years, but for runners, they're not the best approach. Carbs are the muscles' primary source of fuel, and if you cut back too much, you won't have the energy to get through workouts. That doesn't mean you have to eat pasta by the pound. About 60 percent of your daily calories should come from carbohydrates, and ideally, most of them should come from unprocessed sources, such as apples, oranges, berries, and carrots.

Day 7, Sunday · 6 Miles LSD

This is a long, slow distance run to build endurance. These should be done at an easy pace, slower than you usually go on shorter runs during the week.

WEEK 2

Day 8, Monday · Rest

This is week two of training. After this week, race day will be 14 weeks away. You'll follow the same pattern as last week, with four short runs and two days of rest. Your long run will remain at eight 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 · 2 Miles Easy

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 10, Wednesday · 5 Miles Easy

If you have to change your running time from morning to afternoon, or vice versa, give yourself a few weeks to adjust. At first, you may not feel energized to run, and your legs might feel heavy.

Day 11, Thursday · 2 Miles Easy

Be sure to stay hydrated throughout the day, not just while you're out on the run. A good rule of thumb is to drink half your body weight in ounces. So if you weigh 150 pounds, aim for 75 ounces of water or sports drink per day. If you weigh 100 pounds, aim for 50 ounces.

Day 12, Friday · Rest

If you're new to running in the morning, a few steps can make getting out of bed easier. The night before, eat slow-digesting carbs like broccoli, beans, and lentils. Set your automatic coffeemaker to brew before you wake. Shut-eye is important, too. If you're constantly waking up feeling exhausted, it's a sign you aren't getting enough z's. Turn off the computer and TV at least 30 minutes before you hit the sack. Lay out your clothes for your run, and if you use a music player and GPS, make sure that they're all charged up the day before. As soon as you get up, go into a lit room. The bright light on your eyes signals the body to stop making melatonin, the hormone that makes you sleepy.

Day 13, Saturday · 2 Miles Easy

Start your runs early in the morning to beat the summer heat, and stay well fueled with sports drinks and water. In the winter, move your run to midday, when the sun is the strongest and the air is the warmest.

Day 14, Sunday · 8 Miles LSD

Hook up with a buddy or a running club for long runs—you'll be surprised how easily the miles roll by when you're in good company. Don't know other runners? Contact a running shop in your area. Many shops organize group long runs in the spring and fall.

Day 15, Monday · Rest

This is week three of training. You'll have four short runs during the week and two days of rest. Your long run will drop back to six miles.

Take your long run slow and easy—walk if you have to—especially if you're covering the distance for the first time. Make sure you've set aside enough time in your schedule so you don't feel rushed to finish the run and you have time to rest afterward. You want to feel revived for the week ahead.

Get your fueling strategy set for this weekend's long run. On any run longer than 75 minutes, energy gel or sports drinks will help you maintain a steady level of energy. Try out different types of fuel during your training to determine what will work best for the race.

Day 16, Tuesday · 3 Miles Easy

Don't wait until you have achy joints or feet to replace your shoes. Shoes should be changed every 300 to 500 miles. Since it's easy to lose track of how long you've had a particular pair, write down the date that you started wearing them in your log, or even write it directly on the shoe.

Day 17, Wednesday · 5 Miles Easy

The next time you're at the grocery store, be sure to add some cherry juice to your shopping cart. Research has shown that the antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties of cherry juice reduce muscle soreness after a hard workout.

Day 18, Thursday · 2 Miles Easy

Keep a comfortable conversational pace. Or you can cross-train on a bike or an elliptical trainer.

Be sure to sandwich each run with a warmup and cooldown of five to 10 minutes of walking and easy jogging, even on days that call for short, easy runs. Warming up helps you feel more comfortable on the run and prevents injuries like muscle pulls. Cooling down helps prevent muscle cramps.

Day 19, Friday · Rest

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.

Day 20, Saturday · 3 Miles Easy

Cross-training can keep your routine from getting stale and offer your body a break from the pounding of running. But it can also lead to injury if you take on too much too soon. Even though you probably have endurance and power from running, you may also have poor flexibility and weak hamstrings and upper-body muscles, which can be a liability in activities that use muscles and joints in different ways. Be sure to add time and intensity gradually, just as you do with your runs.

Day 21, Sunday · 6 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.

Day 22, Monday · Rest

This is week four of training. At the end of this week, you will have already knocked out one month of marathon training.

This week you'll do four shorter runs, and your long run will increase to 10 miles. The first 10-miler is a huge step. Even though you'll eventually go 26.2 miles, doing double-digit mileage for the first time may be a run you'll always remember, like completing your first mile and finishing your first marathon. Be sure to rest afterward and celebrate, too.

Day 23, Tuesday · 3 Miles Easy

Science has proven it: Listening to music while you run can reduce your perception of effort and elevate your mood. 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 at runnersworld.com/music.

Day 24, Wednesday · 5 Miles Easy

Everyone dreads steep ascents, but if you've flown downhill enjoying gravity's pull, you know that descents can zap the power you need to take on flat stretches and uphill climbs, and can leave your quads feeling trashed. To relieve the pounding from downhills, shorten your stride, focus on quicker foot turnover, and keep your shoulders, hips, and feet aligned. It should almost feel like controlled falling.

Day 25, Thursday · 3 Miles Easy

Once you get into the rhythm of training, "rest" might seem like a four-letter word; you might be tempted to stress about sitting still for just one day. But detraining—a significant falloff in fitness and performance—doesn't occur until you stop working out for at least two weeks. One day of rest helps your body adapt to training stress, get stronger, and avoid overuse injuries like IT-band syndrome, which can sideline you for weeks.

Day 26, Friday · Rest

On your rest day, consider working your core. The muscles in the abs, lower back, and glutes help runners power up hills and maintain good form. For a 15-minute core workout designed just for runners, go to runnersworld.com/fastabs.

Day 27, Saturday · 3 Miles Easy

Most runners hate hitting the gym, but some quality time in the weight room can lead to fast times on the road. Just a few days of strength training each week can help you burn more calories, run more efficiently, and ward off injuries.

Day 28, Sunday · 10 Miles LSD

A glass of chocolate milk makes for the perfect postrun 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.

WEEK 5

Day 29, Monday · Rest

This is week five of training. After this week, race day will be 11 weeks away. In addition to your four short runs and two days of rest, your long run will return to eight miles this week.

Integrate hills into your training as much as possible. Hills boost leg and lung power. You won't feel fast going up hills, but you'll feel strong. Try to maintain an even effort going up and down hills, even if that means backing off your pace.

Day 30, Tuesday · 3 Miles Easy

Keep your head up while you run. How you hold your head sets up your overall posture and determines how efficiently you run. Let your gaze guide you. Look ahead naturally, not down at your feet, and scan the horizon. This will straighten your neck and back and bring them into alignment.

Day 31, Wednesday · 6 Miles Easy

Having trouble staying motivated? Overwhelmed by the long road of marathon training? Consider becoming a mentor. Getting your neighbor, coworker, or friend hooked on your favorite sport will stoke your fire for training. And they'll be counting on your continued support and company, so you'll be forced to get out the door.

Day 32, Thursday · 3 Miles Easy

Lots of runners find that yoga is the perfect companion to running because it's a great way to develop balance, strength, and mind-body awareness that you need in training and racing. Check out the library of yoga videos designed just for runners at runnersworld.com/video.

Day 33, Friday · Rest

Runners tend to love routine, but doing the same routes every day can leave you bored and stranded on a fitness plateau. Explore new routes whenever you can. It will help keep your training feeling fresh.

Day 34, Saturday · 3 Miles Easy

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 35, Sunday · 8 Miles LSD

Having the right nutrition plan can make the difference between finishing strong or falling short of your goal. Any time you're running for more than 75 minutes, you need to eat on the run. Aim for 30 to 60 grams of carbohydrates each hour that you're on the road. Refuel at regular intervals. Do not wait until you feel tired or fatigued. It will be too late to catch up to your flagging energy stores. Experiment with different brands of sports drinks, energy chews, and gels to find flavors and brands that give you a boost without leaving you with an upset stomach. Be sure to chase energy gels with water, not sports drink.

Day 36, Monday · Rest

This is week six of training. After this week, race day will be 10 weeks away. This week calls for four easy runs and two days of rest. The long run inches up to 12 miles.

Here's a guide to this week's other workouts:

REST DAYS: 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.

EASY DAYS: Keep a comfortable conversational pace, about one to two minutes slower than your 5K pace. Or you can cross-train on a bike or an elliptical trainer.

CROSS-TRAINING: On easy days, cross-training should involve 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. On rest days, cross-training should involve a no-impact activity like stretching, yoga, or swimming.

Day 37, Tuesday · 4 Miles Easy

Need a quick energy boost before your run? Aim for 150 calories. Try hummus and carrots, a packet of instant oatmeal, dried dates, an orange, applesauce, pudding, or cereals with less than two grams of fiber per serving. If you can't stomach anything, have eight to 16 ounces of sports drink.

Day 38, Wednesday · 6 Miles Easy

If you have chronically sore, tight hamstrings, sitting for long periods of time can make it worse. When you're at the office, stand as much as possible to keep your muscles loose.

Day 39, Thursday · 4 Miles Easy

Blisters aren't just painful and ugly. They may cause you to adjust your gait to avoid putting pressure on the sore spots, which can lead to injury. They can also get infected. Ignore blisters smaller than the size of a pencil eraser. But if they're bigger, prick the side with a sterile needle and drain it. Don't remove the blister roof—cover it with an antibiotic ointment and a bandage. If you feel a hot spot midrun, address possible causes: Are your socks bunching up? Is your heel slipping? Are your laces too tight? If the blister hurts so badly that you're forced to change your gait, you're better off walking versus risking injury.

Day 40, Friday · Rest

Athlete's foot, a fungal infection that causes dry, scaly, red skin between the toes that can itch or burn, is common among runners. To prevent it, wear light, moisture-wicking, synthetic (not cotton) socks. After you run, change out of your soggy socks and shoes and slip into dry after-sport shoes before you go for coffee or run errands. Don't stash your sweaty pair inside a dark gym bag or your trunk where they can't air out. You can also sprinkle antifungal powder on your feet before running.

Day 41, Saturday · 3 Miles Easy

Maintaining good form can help you run more comfortably. Lots of new runners tend to lean too far forward and take long strides that cause each footfall to act like a brake against the body's momentum. Run tall, look up, shorten your stride, and your feet will land beneath your center of gravity. This will save energy and reduce the impact forces on your knees and ankles.

Day 42, Sunday · 12 Miles LSD

Try a variety of energy gels and drinks to find out what works for you. If you don't find a brand or a flavor that you like, natural foods will work, too. Try a packet of honey, which has about 17 grams of carbs. Or try pretzels. You can also make your own sports drink, with 1/8 teaspoon of salt, two cups of water, and two tablespoons of honey.

WEEK 7

Day 43, Monday · Rest

This is week seven of training. After this week, race day will be nine weeks away. The training this week will follow a similar pattern to last week. You will have 4 easy runs, plus two days of rest. This weekend, you have an option: You can do a 14-mile long run or a half marathon. It's a great opportunity to get experience racing a longer distance. You can test out the gear and fueling strategies you might try in the marathon. You can also get some practice running in a pack, going through aid stations, and executing your own race strategy.

Day 44, Tuesday · 4 Miles Easy

When you notice yourself slowing down, shorten your stride and quicken your leg turnover. That will help you regroup and regain your strength so you can resume a quicker pace.

Day 45, Wednesday · 6 Miles Easy

Looking for a little motivation? Try connecting with other runners online. Sharing information can keep you psyched up and boost your confidence. You can post the mileage and paces you log, and get instant feedback. You can also get reassurance from runners who are going through similar experiences.

Day 46, Thursday · 4 Miles Easy

Swimming is a great form of active recovery because it builds strength in often-neglected muscles. It also enhances functional strength in the upper body and core, which will help you maintain an upright running form at the end of races and hard workouts.

Day 47, Friday · Rest

Make sure to stay well fueled throughout the day so that you're not tempted to overdo it at dinnertime or on dessert. Be sure to eat every three to four hours.

Day 48, Saturday · 3 Miles Easy

If you're running in a race tomorrow, even though it's just "practice," you want to make sure that you don't show up to the starting line without a plan. Otherwise, it's way too easy to get caught up with the competitive vibe of the pack, go out too hard, and get injured or run out of gas before the finish. You can take the race at your usual long run pace, or use it as an opportunity to practice your marathon goal pace. You might also try using the race to practice running even splits, that is, running each mile at roughly the same pace, or within 10 to 20 seconds of the previous mile.

Day 49, Sunday · 14 Miles LSD

During runs or races of 75 minutes or longer, consume carbs 30 to 60 minutes into the run. Continue fueling in small doses, aiming for 100 to 250 calories (or 25 to 60 grams of carbs) per hour—equal to one to 2 1/2 sports gels or 16 to 40 ounces of sports drink. Try different brands and flavors of sports drinks, energy gels, and chews to find out which ones sit well in your stomach. Find out what will be served at the aid stations on the course so that you can test it out during training and figure out whether it works for you.

WEEK 8

Day 50, Monday · Rest

After this week's long run, you'll be halfway through training. Race day will be eight weeks away! This week you'll have four easy runs and two rest days. Your long run relaxes to 10 miles this week.

Be sure to run relaxed. Focus your gaze on the horizon. Keep your hands at waist level, not pumping around your chest. Bend your arms at a 90-degree angle. Swing them straight forward and backward. Keep your hands loose, not in fists.

Day 51, Tuesday · 4 Miles Easy

Early in the week, make sure you have the gels and sports drinks you'll need for your long run. Check the weather forecast; if it's looking like a scorcher on the day you usually run long, do it early in the morning or on another day. Plan to hook up with other runners for part of the run. Or download an audio book to your music player—you'll get two things done at once!

Day 52, Wednesday · 8 Miles Easy

It's important to protect yourself from the sun's rays, whenever you go out. Wear technical apparel that comes with a UPF rating (ultraviolet protection fabric), which means it shields skin from UVA and UVB rays. Choose clothing in darker colors, which block more ultraviolet rays than lighter colors. And wear sunscreen year-round. Use a product that provides broad spectrum protection. Be sure to apply the sunscreen 20 minutes before you head out. Use enough sunscreen to fit in a shot glass.

Day 53, Thursday · 4 Miles Easy

Watches, GPS devices, heart-rate monitors, and MP3 players can be great tools for helping you track your progress. But every so often, it's a good idea to leave the gadgets at home. It will help you tune into your body's cues of how hard you're working, and into the pure joy of running. Focus on your form, your breathing, and how your legs feel instead of how fast a timepiece says you're going.

Day 54, Friday · Rest

As you get deeper into training and need more recovery, it's more important than ever to eat the foods that will help you be your best and heal fast afterward. Be sure to toss these foods into your cart: almonds, eggs, sweet potatoes, whole-grain bread, oranges, black beans, mixed greens, frozen mixed berries, and dark chocolate. They're among the best foods for runners.

Day 55, Saturday · 3 Miles Easy

In training and in racing, Ryan Hall, two-time Olympic marathoner, follows this rule: Run the mile you're in. "I avoid thinking about how far I have to go early in the race, because that can be overwhelming," he says. "Late in the race, I try to forget about how far I have gone, because that would give me an excuse to give in to fatigue."

Day 56, Sunday · 10 Miles LSD

In order to stave off burnout and stay mentally fresh, it's a good idea to mix up your usual long-run route. Set out on a destination run—maybe to and from a friend's house, or to a bridge you usually drive over or have always wanted to see up close. You can also run your regular route but without a watch.

WEEK 9

Day 57, Monday · Rest

This is week nine of training. After this week, race day will be seven weeks away. This week you'll have four easy runs, two days of rest, and a 16-mile long run on Sunday.

Day 58, Tuesday · 4 Miles Easy

Make sure that you're taking your easy days easy enough. Use a heart-rate monitor to make sure you're running slowly enough, run with a slower friend, or head out for a mellow trail run.

Day 59, Wednesday · 8 Miles Easy

Just as with training, when it comes to your diet, quality counts. For fruits and vegetables, the most nutrient-packed are usually the most brightly colored. Think dark greens and bright oranges, yellows, and reds. For grains, the less processed, the better. Choose low-fat dairy products. For meats, go with leaner-cuts and smaller servings. And be sure to stock your kitchen with high-quality, nutrient-packed beans, nuts, and soy products.

Day 60, Thursday · 4 Miles Easy

A good warmup and cooldown are especially important before and after a hard workout such as speedwork, a long run, or a race, in which you push your muscles to the limits. The extra time you spend warming up your muscles before a training run or race and cooling down afterward is worth the effort in improved efficiency and decreased likelihood of getting injured.

Day 61, Friday · Rest

You don't necessarily have to cut out that cup of coffee during marathon training. Recent studies have shown that caffeine helps athletes push farther and think faster, and it may also enhance recovery and help rebuild glycogen stores post-run.

Day 62, Saturday · 3 Miles Easy

Vitamin A helps repair microtears in your muscles and helps make white blood cells that fight infection. So as you start getting into these tougher workouts, it's especially important to eat plenty of carrots, sweet potatoes, and dried apricots. They're loaded with vitamin A.

Day 63, Sunday · 16 Miles LSD

Long runs help you develop the physical endurance you need for the race, but they also help prepare you psychologically for spending hours at a time on your feet. Use these workouts to figure out what strategies help you stay mentally strong. Good music may help you stay psyched up, running with others may make the miles roll by faster. Mantras that are short, inspirational, and meaningful, can help you stay positive, even as your body fatigues.

WEEK 10

Day 64, Monday · Rest

This is week 10 of training. After this week, race day will be six weeks away. You'll have four easy runs, and two rest days. Your long run will be 12 miles.

It's best to join a group for these long runs. The company of others makes the miles pass faster, and often the groups organize water stops and refreshments afterward. If you can't make a group run, recruit a friend to join you for a few miles toward the end. Knowing that you have someone to meet will keep you going if you get the urge to stop. And remember, the goal is just to cover the distance. You don't have to worry about pace or speed. And if you need to walk, that's fine.

Day 65, Tuesday · 4 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 hard or uneven road surfaces, or wearing worn-out shoes, can also contribute to shin splints. If you feel them coming on, take it easy and check your log. You may need to back off a bit.

Day 66, Wednesday · 8 Miles Easy

You teach your body to pull you to a PR on race day, but you have to train your brain to get you there, too. As your workouts get tougher, test out different mantras and mental strategies to find the ones that work best for you so you'll have them at the marathon.

Day 67, Thursday · 4 Miles Easy

Treadmills allow you to keep up your mileage when it's cold or dark outside. But too much time on the belt could lead to injury when you hit the road. Because treadmills absorb shock and lighten the load on your legs, if you stay inside for weeks on end then log a 10-miler outside, your body may struggle to support the force of your footfalls. The best solution is to mix your training up as much as possible between the indoors and the outdoors. Stay inside for quality workouts like speedwork, to hit your target pace. Go outside for easy recovery runs, when slowing down is good for you.

Day 68, Friday · Rest

Rest today to prepare for this weekend's mileage.

Day 69, Saturday · 3 Miles Easy

Make sure to run easy today and save your energy for tomorrow's long run.

Day 70, Sunday · 12 Miles LSD

Ice baths can reduce soreness and inflammation after a long run. Cold therapy constricts blood vessels, reducing swelling and inflammation so you feel better faster.

Here's how to take an ice bath: Fill a tub with two to three bags of crushed ice. Add enough water so that you will be covered nearly to the waist when you sit in the tub. To reduce your discomfort, before getting in the tub, put on a warm hat and jacket. You might even use neoprene booties, or drink some hot tea while you're in there. It's a good idea to have some entertaining reading materials, too. You should stay in the bath for 10 to 20 minutes.

WEEK 11

Day 71, Monday · Rest

This is week 11 in training. After this week, race day will be five weeks away. You'll have four easy runs and two days of rest. The big event this week is your long run: It will be 18 miles.

Ease your pre-long run stress by taking care of the logistics early in the week. Firm up your plans with running partners, and make sure you're well stocked with all the fuel, gear, and fluids you'll need. Plan to eat and get to bed early the evening before, and make sure you've cleared your schedule on the day of the run, so you can rest afterward. Long runs are dress rehearsals for race day, and taking care of these issues ahead of time can go a long way toward helping you feel and run your best when it matters most.

Day 72, Tuesday · 4 Miles Easy

When motivation is waning, try freshening up your routine. Sometimes all it takes is a new playlist, an inspiring audiobook, or a new piece of gear to get you excited about getting out the door.

Day 73, Wednesday · 8 Miles Easy

Whole grains, especially breads, are a good source of the antioxidant vitamin E, which helps stave off muscle soreness after a tough workout and offers protection against heart disease. Pairing healthy fats, like peanut butter or olive oil, with your whole grains helps the body access vitamin E.

Day 74, Thursday · 4 Miles Easy

Take it is easy today after yesterday's mid-distance run.

Day 75, Friday · Rest

Try not to stress too much about any miles you've missed during training. A few missed miles or runs won't make or break your race. But trying to cram in extra miles to make up for them can lead to injury. If you complete 80 percent of the training plan, you should be 100 percent prepared for the race.

Day 76, Saturday · 3 Miles Easy

Cramps in the calf are common as you ramp up the mileage, and during a race the pain can stop you dead in your tracks. Here's how to release it when you're on the run. Step to the side of the road and raise the ball of the cramped leg's foot up while keeping the heel on the ground. For a deeper stretch, lean forward, keeping the knee of the leg being stretched straight, the opposite knee bent, and both feet flat on the ground. Hold for two seconds; repeat 10 times or more, as necessary.

Day 77, Sunday · 18 Miles LSD

Take it easy on this run—just focus on finishing. It's okay to stop to walk, refuel, get water, and regroup. As long as you cover the distance for the day, you can consider your mission accomplished. Be sure to rest afterward.

WEEK 12

Day 78, Monday · Rest

This is week 12 of training. After this week, race day will be one month away. This is a cutback week so you can recover from those long runs. You have four easy runs and two days of rest, and your long run drops back to 15 miles.

Day 79, Tuesday · 4 Miles Easy

Now's 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. You might also want to check your shoes. They should be replaced every 300 to 500 miles.

Day 80, Wednesday · 8 Miles Easy

Feeling stressed out about the race? Take time to think about all the rewards that training has already provided: your health, a sense of accomplishment, and a connection to a community of runners.

Day 81, Thursday · 4 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 as many different partners as you can throughout the week. Meet a slower friend on an easy run one day, a faster friend for a speed workout another, and recruit your dog to accompany you for some short accelerations on a third workout.

Day 82, Friday · Rest

Sometimes, when the weather turns ugly, your best bet is to head indoors. We have lots of boredom-busting strategies for hitting the 'mill, plus fun workouts, in our video library at runnersworld.com/video.

Day 83, Saturday · 3 Miles Easy

Take walk breaks whenever you need to, even on short runs. If you're coming off a break, or just having an off day, walk breaks can help you more comfortably complete the distance for the day. Limit your breaks to 30 to 60 seconds and take them less frequently as you feel better.

Day 84, Sunday · 15 Miles LSD

Though you'll probably feel strong enough to add more miles, it's important to stop at 15. Save your energy for next week's long run, your last one before heading into the race taper.

WEEK 13

Day 85, Monday · Rest

This is week 13 of training. After this week, race day will be three weeks away. You'll have two rest days, four easy runs, and your last super-long run this week: a 20-miler. From here, you'll start cutting back your mileage and easing into race day. Use this run as a dress rehearsal for marathon day. Use the same prerun nutrition, and wear the same shoes, socks and clothes (weather permitting) that you plan to on race day.

Day 86, Tuesday · 7 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-of-all-possible-worlds finishing time that may be a stretch. This will ensure that you walk away from the finish line with a sense of accomplishment.

Day 87, Wednesday · 10 Miles Easy

Run with music? Use it strategically. If you listen to music all the time, you can become desensitized to its motivating effects. Save it for tough runs, like long runs, and race-pace practice, or go music-free on two runs per week. Most important, make sure you are aware of your surroundings. Don't get caught off guard.

Day 88, Thursday · 4 Miles Easy

Once the hills on your route don't seem hard anymore, tackle a course with more hills, or one where the ascents are steeper or longer. Or you could include some faster segments on the climbs on your current route.

Day 89, Friday · Rest

When you're hungry, don't hesitate to reach for a snack. The right snack—between 150 and 300 calories, depending on how long you have before your next run—will help prevent premature fatigue on a run, keep your blood sugar levels steady, and thwart a cranky mood.

Day 90, Saturday · 3 Miles Easy

Your last super-long run is tomorrow, so you may want to make it happen around the same time your race is scheduled to start. Most runners get their long runs done early, but many races don't start until midmorning or even later. The timing will affect your fueling, hydration, and bathroom strategies, all of which could have a big impact on your finishing time.

Day 91, Sunday · 20 Miles LSD

Just focus on finishing. Remember, this is your last long run. When you're done with this run, it's tapering time.

WEEK 14

Day 92, Monday · Rest

This is week 14 of training. After this week, race day will be two weeks away. This week you have four easy short runs, two days of rest, and a long run of just 12 miles.

You may feel the temptation to do more, but don't. You've done all the hard work of training to get fit. Now's the time to let your body adapt to the training stresses so that you can show up to the starting line strong, energized, and ready to run your best.

Day 93, Tuesday · 4 Miles Easy

You don't have to go crazy on the carbs—or any other kind of food—in the last few weeks before the race. You can keep your total daily calorie intake steady, and make sure 60 percent of the calories come from carbs.

Day 94, Wednesday · 8 Miles Easy

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 shaky nerves. A massage can help relieve any prerace discomfort while helping you relax.

Day 95, Thursday · 4 Miles Easy

Do today's mileage at an easy, conversational pace.

Day 96, Friday · Rest

You'll have some extra time on your hands from now until race day, especially on the weekends. Go volunteer for a local 5K. The event will get you excited about your own big day, and you'll be glad you took the time to give back.

Day 97, Saturday · 3 Miles Easy

As you're tapering, make sure to keep up your core work. If your upper-leg and core muscles are underconditioned, your pelvis will wobble as you run, which can stress the knees and lead to pain beneath the kneecap known as runner's knee.

Day 98, Sunday · 12 Miles LSD

You may feel like you can run longer. But remember, you're supposed to be tapering. Any miles or intensity that you add in can only do more harm than good.

WEEK 15

Day 99, Monday · Rest

This is week 15 of training. After this week, race day will be one week away. The taper continues this week. You'll have four easy runs, and your long run will be just eight miles.

Day 100, Tuesday · 4 Miles Easy

Feeling antsy? Distract yourself. Catch up with friends, catch up on movies, or finally get to that project around the house. But whatever you do, don't do any new activities. Even if it seems like a harmless activity, like Pilates or yoga, now's the time when you're most vulnerable to injury. Just stay healthy and safe and watch your step!

Day 101, Wednesday · 6 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? Do you know 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.

Day 102, Thursday · 3 Miles Easy

After the marathon, plan to take one to two weeks off from running to allow your body to recuperate from the 26.2 miles. But you don't want to cross the finish line wondering, "Now what?" So make some postrace plans, running-related or not. You may want to take a vacation, sign up for your local 5K, or finally give cycling a try. Just put something on the calendar so you can stay focused on what's ahead.

Day 103, Friday · Rest

Now is a good time to review your training log. Add up your mileage; look at all the times that you overcame logistical and motivational roadblocks to get your runs done. Be proud of all that you accomplished on the way to the starting line. Let race day be a celebration of that.

Day 104, Saturday · 3 Miles Easy

The same rule that applies to exercise applies to nutrition, too, at this point: Don't try anything new. From now until the race, stick to the foods that you digest well, and that keep you energized for your runs.

Day 105, Sunday · 8 Miles LSD

This is your final long run before the race. Try to make it a dress rehearsal for the race. Use the gear and fuel you plan to use for the marathon. Start slowly with the goal of ramping up to your race pace, and finishing feeling strong. Appreciate the fact that eight miles, which once felt like a stretch, now feels like an easy run.

Day 106, Monday · Rest

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. Take the two days of rest on the schedule, and do four short, easy runs. Be sure to eat right, and iron out all your race-day logistics as soon as possible, so you can enjoy your big weekend.

Day 107, Tuesday · 3 Miles Easy

As the excitement builds heading into race day, it can be easy to end up spending too much time on your feet. You may feel like spending lots of time checking out the expo, or if you're out of town, go sightseeing. But try to relax instead.

Day 108, Wednesday · 5 Miles Easy

You're close enough to race day to start checking the weather forecast and thinking about what to wear. No matter what the forecast says, it's a good idea to bring gear for all sorts of conditions. You never know when a freak heat wave or snowstorm can hit. It's best to be prepared for anything.

Day 109, Thursday · 3 Miles Easy

Plan to pick up your race bib as early as possible on race weekend. It's best to get all logistics taken care of as soon as possible. You don't want to be stressed in the final hours leading up to the race!

Day 110, Friday · Rest

There's no need to overdo the carb loading in the final days before the race. Lots of people end up just eating more of everything and end up with an upset stomach. Just make sure that carbs make up 65 to 70 percent of each meal. Eat small meals throughout the day. Be sure to drink plenty of fluids so that you're well hydrated.

Day 111, Saturday · 1–2 Miles Easy

This run is more for your mind than your body. You may be nervous that you've rested too much, and not run enough, but relax—you've done enough. Just shake out the muscles for tomorrow's race. Eat light meals throughout the day, and finish your dinner and get to bed early.

Day 112, 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 miles. Stay completely comfortable, and just get into rhythm. Stop at aid stations as you need to. Slow down to a walk, drink, stretch if you like, and know that the adrenaline and energy of being in the field will ultimately help power you through to the finish.

After you cross the finish line, be sure to walk and stretch immediately to reduce soreness and stiffness in the days ahead. As soon as you can, have a snack with a carbs-to-protein ratio of 4:1. This will help jumpstart your recovery.

And congratulations! The marathon lasts just hours, but the pride of knowing you've completed 26.2 miles lasts a lifetime.

After you've recovered, think about training with Runner's World again. Check out our other marathon-training programs and the plans we've designed for 5Ks, 10Ks, and half marathons.