



# Running Training Guide

## One size fits all?

Before we get started it's important to point out that there is no such thing as a training plan that is right for everybody. Your age, current fitness levels, performance aspirations and available time will all have an impact on when and how you should train – so the best approach is for us to give you some general guidelines and sample training plans and then let you adapt things to suit your own specific requirements.

We are going to start with some basic training concepts which all training plans should adhere to so that when you start modifying the example training plans you know what you are doing!

## Rule #1 – warm up, stretch, run, warm down, stretch

If you haven't already read the [doitforcharity.com](http://doitforcharity.com) stretching guide then please do so – it is reprinted at the end of this training guide for your convenience. It will tell you that before doing any exercise you should stretch – and that before doing any stretching you should do a light warm-up. You should NEVER stretch cold muscles and you should NEVER run without warming up and stretching. If you are short for time and eager to get out on the road just consider how much lost time an injury is going to cost you! Not only will you have to wait weeks to recover from the injury you will have gone backwards during this time due to not being able to train.

Additionally, after your run if you stop running abruptly waste products will build up in your muscles leading to stiffness and discomfort. So after your run you should warm down (with a light jog) and stretch once more. This simple 'boring' advice will keep you on the road and training towards your goals and reward you with a much more pleasant and injury-free training experience.

## Rule #2 – take rest days

*Question:* Which of the following achieves the most in terms of improving your performance levels: a 5 mile training run or the rest day after a 5 mile training run?

*Answer:* The rest day after a 5 mile training run

Simply put, you receive the benefit from any physical exercise in the recovery period after that exercise. As evolution has shown us, our bodies adapt to our environment and therefore when you place a strain on your body (lifting weights, going for a run etc) your body will adapt to that strain by becoming stronger in anticipation of being placed under the same strain again. But your body needs rest to repair tiny muscle tears and make the muscles stronger – and therefore one of the most important parts of your training plan is going to be regular rest days. On these days you should always take the opportunity to do a light warm up and stretch so that you stay supple in preparation for the next phase of your training plan.

## Rule #3 – hard then easy

This rule is related to the one above as it is derived from the idea of giving the body time to recover. Let's say you want to run a marathon and your training aim is to be able to run 26 miles in 6 months time. You could just run 1 mile per day this week, then 2 miles per day in the second week, all the way through until you are running 26 miles a day in week 26.

By now you should be able to guess that this is NOT an effective training plan as you are not giving your body sufficient time to recover. You therefore need to vary the distances you run and also the intensity of your runs – both on a daily and weekly basis. A sample training plan which followed this rule might look like this

Week	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	TOTAL
<b>1 (Hard)</b>	3 miles	Rest Day	3 miles	5 miles	3 miles	Rest Day	7 miles	21 miles
<b>2 (Easy)</b>	2 miles	Rest Day	2 miles	4 miles	2 miles	Rest Day	5 miles	15 miles
<b>3 (Hard)</b>	3 miles	Rest Day	4 miles	6 miles	4 miles	Rest Day	9 miles	26 miles
<b>4 (Easy)</b>	3 miles	Rest Day	3 miles	5 miles	2 miles	Rest Day	6 miles	19 miles

As you can see, both at daily and weekly level we are alternating between hard and easy days and also giving ourselves regular rest days – and in just 4 weeks we have grown to make our easy week almost as hard as our hard week in week 1! This programme is purposefully simplified to get the hard/easy point across – a realistic training plan would also consider the intensity of each run

#### **Rule #4 – keep it varied**

The other reason for alternating hard and easy days/weeks is to keep your training programme varied – boredom and/or burnout are often the cause of people stopping their training plans. By keeping your runs varied you will be able to use different routes, continually improve your times, often have runs which are enjoyable rather than hard work and generally keep your training plan fresh.

#### **Rule #5 – tapering down**

The majority of your training schedule will see you gradually increasing your mileage over time. However, when training for longer distances (eg: 1/2 marathon and Marathon) you will actually reduce your mileage in the last few weeks leading up to the event so that you are as fresh as possible for the event itself – this is yet another implementation of the principle of giving your body recovery time. This process is called 'tapering down' and is a feature of our sample training schedules in this training guide

## **Runs aren't all the same you know!**

Question: Which is more difficult – running 2 miles in 14 minutes (7 minute miles) or running 10 miles in 100 minutes (10 minute miles)

Answer: Well there isn't any one correct answer as it depends on your fitness levels, muscle composition, previous training and probably what you were doing the day before as well!

The purpose of the question however is to point out that running training is not as simple as just 'going for a run' – and that different types of run have different training benefits. This section will show you some of the different types of run available and will also point out how you might want to use them in your training

### **Run #1 - Steady state runs**

These will be the staple of your training plan. They will be run at a reasonably comfortable pace and over a reasonably comfortable distance – and since your fitness levels will rise during your training plan you can expect both of these factors to increase over time. You will find yourself doing these types of run 60% of the time as they have excellent physical and mental training benefits. Your breathing will become more efficient, your muscles will become stronger, your endurance will improve and mentally you will be training yourself to run 'at pace' for reasonably long periods of time. All-in-all steady state runs will become your number one training method to reach your running goals

### **Run #2 – The long run**

These runs are normally done once a week and usually on a Saturday or Sunday so that you don't miss them due to the pressures of work. Over time these runs will become longer and longer until a few weeks before race day you are running almost (but not quite) the distance you are intending to run on the day. This often surprises people that they will purposefully not be running a marathon in training before race day. But if you think about it you are training to run one marathon in 18 weeks not 2 marathons and hence the longest training run you will do in preparation for a marathon is between 20 and 22 miles.

### **Run #3 – The recovery run**

We've put this directly after the long run because, well, it's the run that should be done directly after the long run – in fact the day after! The recovery run is what it says – a chance to recover – and should be run over a short distance at a much slower pace than you are used to. You might also consider 'cross training' on this day which means doing a light exercise other than running such as swimming, cycling or walking. This will exercise the muscles lightly but in a different way than if you went for a run. Whatever you decide to do just make sure it is light exercise which will help you to recover – don't be tempted to push yourself on these days

### **Run #4 – The shorter faster run**

Let's start by saying that you should only perform this run once you have at least 4 weeks of steady state runs under your belt. The first time you do it you will feel physically drained and because it is done at a faster pace it is the run that is most likely to cause injuries. So please remember – do not start doing shorter faster runs until you have a solid base of steady state runs behind you. That said the shorter faster run is a great way to increase your running times. If you think back to the start of this document we said that the body adapts to the strains it is placed under. Therefore, when you run faster than normal, and allow your body to recover, it responds by adapting and building the types of muscle fibre which allow you to run faster. Your times will NOT improve much if you just run steady state and long runs all the time. But one fast run once every week or two will gradually teach your body to run much faster – incredible results can be achieved with the careful use of this run!

## Run #5 – Fartlek

Fartlek is Swedish for 'speed play' and it is the name given to a style of run that you simply make up as you go along! You can start at your 'steady state' pace and then pick a point a couple of hundred meters away and run to it at your shorter/faster pace. You'll then be a little out of breath so you can drop down to your recovery run pace before picking up again to your steady state pace. Basically a Fartlek can be whatever you want it to be but it will often be a combination of all types of run rolled into one! This type of run is excellent for building speed and keeping you interested in your training schedule – and you can guarantee that it will never be the same! Because steady state runs will make up the bulk of your running schedule and that you need to do one long run followed by one recovery run every week, you will find that you often only have time for a Fartlek run once every two weeks. However this should be just enough to keep things interesting and the varied pace that it requires brings about excellent training benefits too!

Whilst there are other types of run used by more advanced athletes if you are a reasonably novice runner the above five runs should easily keep you busy for an 18-week training plan and can be mixed together to form an excellent and comprehensive training plan.

### Summary

- Always do a light warm up before you stretch – and stretch before you run
- Always warm down and stretch after your run to prevent stiffness and muscle discomfort
- Take rest days to give your body time to adapt to the increased training load
- Alternate hard and easy training days and weeks to allow for recovery time
- Keep it varied to maintain your interest and to gain varied training benefits
- Use the steady-state run to build up mental and physical endurance
- Use the longer run followed by a recovery day once a week to build up to your target mileage
- Use the shorter faster run to build up speed
- Use the Fartlek to keep things interesting

The following pages mix all of the above together to produce training plans for beginners at the four main distances – 5k, 10k, ½ Marathon and Marathon. You are welcome to use them 'as is' but we strongly encourage you to use your new-found knowledge to tailor these sample training plans to suit your own needs and goals. Please note we have NOT included the more difficult shorter faster and fartlek runs as these should only be used if you are feeling strong and ready for some speed work

# 5k training plan

## Beginners

Week	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
1	Rest / Stretch	1.5 miles	Rest or run/walk	1.5 miles	Rest / Stretch	1.5 miles	Recovery walk
2	Rest / Stretch	1.75 miles	Rest or run/walk	1.5 miles	Rest / Stretch	1.75 miles	Recovery walk
3	Rest / Stretch	2 miles	Rest or run/walk	1.5 miles	Rest / Stretch	2.25 miles	Recovery walk
4	Rest / Stretch	2 miles	Rest or run/walk	1.5 miles	Rest / Stretch	2 miles	Recovery walk
5	Rest / Stretch	2.25 miles	Rest or run/walk	2 miles	Rest / Stretch	2.5 miles	Recovery walk
6	Rest / Stretch	2.75 miles	Rest or run/walk	2 miles	Rest / Stretch	3 miles	Recovery walk
7	Rest / Stretch	2 miles	Rest or run/walk	2 miles	Rest / Stretch	2.5 miles	Recovery walk
8	Rest / Stretch	2 miles	Rest or run/walk	1.5 miles	Rest / Stretch	Rest / Stretch	5K Run

### Notes:

- Shorter faster and/or fartlek sessions are not recommended for those who are just starting out and doing their first 5K
- If you are feeling tired or injured you should NOT push ahead with the training programme regardless. Remember that rest is the most important 'training' you can do and overtraining can lead to serious injuries. If you only miss a few days training you should be able to pick up the training plan with no negative benefits. If you miss 2 weeks or more you will have to revise your training programme and probably revise your goal in terms of how fast you are expecting to run your race

# 10k training plan

## Beginners

Week	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
1	Rest / Stretch	2.5 miles	30 min cross train	2 miles	Rest / Stretch	3 miles	Recovery run
2	Rest / Stretch	2.5 miles	30 min cross train	2 miles	Rest / Stretch	3.5 miles	Recovery run
3	Rest / Stretch	2.5 miles	35 min cross train	2 miles	Rest / Stretch	4 miles	Recovery run
4	Rest / Stretch	2.5 miles	35 min cross train	2 miles	Rest / Stretch	3.5 miles	Recovery run
5	Rest / Stretch	3 miles	40 min cross train	2 miles	Rest / Stretch	4.5 miles	Recovery run
6	Rest / Stretch	3 miles	40 min cross train	2 miles	Rest / Stretch	5 miles	Recovery run
7	Rest / Stretch	2.5 miles	40 min cross train	2 miles	Rest / Stretch	4 miles	Recovery run
8	Rest / Stretch	2 miles	30 min cross train	2 miles	Rest / Stretch	Rest / Stretch	10K Run

### Notes:

- Shorter faster and/or fartlek sessions can be introduced as long as you are feeling strong and comfortable with your progress
- If you are feeling tired or injured you should NOT push ahead with the training programme regardless. Remember that rest is the most important 'training' you can do and overtraining can lead to serious injuries. If you only miss a few days training you should be able to pick up the training plan with no negative benefits. If you miss 2 weeks or more you will have to revise your training programme and probably revise your goal in terms of how fast you are expecting to run your race

# 1/2 Marathon training plan

## Beginners

Week	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
1	Rest / Stretch	3 miles	2 miles or cross train	3 miles	Rest / Stretch	4 miles	Recovery run
2	Rest / Stretch	3.5 miles	2 miles or cross train	3 miles	Rest / Stretch	5 miles	Recovery run
3	Rest / Stretch	3 miles	2 miles or cross train	3 miles	Rest / Stretch	4 miles	Recovery run
4	Rest / Stretch	3.5 miles	2 miles or cross train	4 miles	Rest / Stretch	6 miles	Recovery run
5	Rest / Stretch	4 miles	2 m run or cross train	4 miles	Rest / Stretch	5 miles	Recovery run
6	Rest / Stretch	4 miles	2 miles or cross train	5 miles	Rest / Stretch	8 miles	Recovery run
7	Rest / Stretch	4.5 miles	2 miles or cross train	4.5 miles	Rest / Stretch	6 miles	Recovery run
8	Rest / Stretch	5 miles	3 miles or cross train	5 miles	Rest / Stretch	8 miles	Recovery run
9	Rest / Stretch	5 miles	3 miles or cross train	4 miles	Rest / Stretch	7 miles	Recovery run
10	Rest / Stretch	5 miles	3 miles or cross train	5 miles	Rest / Stretch	10 miles	Recovery run
11	Rest / Stretch	5 miles	3 miles or cross train	4 miles	Rest / Stretch	7 miles	Recovery run
12	Rest / Stretch	3.5 miles	3 miles or cross train	2 miles	Rest / Stretch	Rest / Stretch	Half Marathon

### Notes:

- Shorter faster and/or fartlek sessions can be introduced as long as you are feeling strong and comfortable with your progress
- If you are feeling tired or injured you should NOT push ahead with the training programme regardless. Remember that rest is the most important 'training' you can do and overtraining can lead to serious injuries. If you only miss a few days training you should be able to pick up the training plan with no negative benefits. If you miss 2 weeks or more you will have to revise your training programme and probably revise your goal in terms of how fast you are expecting to run your race

# Marathon training plan

## Beginners

Week	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
1	Rest / Stretch	3 miles	3 miles	3 miles	Rest / Stretch	6 miles	Recovery run
2	Rest / Stretch	3 miles	3 miles	3 miles	Rest / Stretch	7 miles	Recovery run
3	Rest / Stretch	3 miles	4 miles	3 miles	Rest / Stretch	5 miles	Recovery run
4	Rest / Stretch	3 miles	4 miles	3 miles	Rest / Stretch	9 miles	Recovery run
5	Rest / Stretch	3 miles	5 miles	3 miles	Rest / Stretch	10 miles	Recovery run
6	Rest / Stretch	3 miles	5 miles	3 miles	Rest / Stretch	7 miles	Recovery run
7	Rest / Stretch	3 miles	6 miles	3 miles	Rest / Stretch	12 miles	Recovery run
8	Rest / Stretch	3 miles	6 miles	3 miles	Rest / Stretch	13 miles	Recovery run
9	Rest / Stretch	3 miles	7 miles	4 miles	Rest / Stretch	10 miles	Recovery run
10	Rest / Stretch	3 miles	7 miles	4 miles	Rest / Stretch	15 miles	Recovery run
11	Rest / Stretch	4 miles	8 miles	4 miles	Rest / Stretch	16 miles	Recovery run
12	Rest / Stretch	4 miles	8 miles	5 miles	Rest / Stretch	12 miles	Recovery run
13	Rest / Stretch	4 miles	9 miles	5 miles	Rest / Stretch	18 miles	Recovery run
14	Rest / Stretch	5 miles	9 miles	5 miles	Rest / Stretch	14 miles	Recovery run
15	Rest / Stretch	5 miles	10 miles	5 miles	Rest / Stretch	20 miles	Recovery run
16	Rest / Stretch	5 miles	8 miles	4 miles	Rest / Stretch	12 miles	Recovery run
17	Rest / Stretch	4 miles	6 miles	3 miles	Rest / Stretch	8 miles	Recovery run
18	Rest / Stretch	3 miles	4 miles	2 miles	Rest / Stretch	Rest / Stretch	<b>Marathon</b>

### Notes:

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# Basic Stretch Programme

Before you start doing anything please observe this cardinal rule: **You should only stretch warmed up muscles** - so before you do any of these stretches please do a light warm-up first. Don't stretch too far, all you should feel is a slow pull, never any pain. Never bounce, always stretch slowly. People with old injuries or bad backs should be especially careful whilst exercising and stretching.

## **1 – Calves:**

Stand approximately 1 metre away from wall with legs straight and heels on floor. Step and lean forward and slowly push hips towards wall. Should feel a slow pull in the calf muscle behind. Hold for 10 secs, swap legs, repeat 3 times. Should feel pull but no pain.

## **2 – Hamstrings:**

Stand with feet 1 metre apart. With legs straight and hands behind back slowly bend forward at the hips keeping back straight and head up. Should feel a slow pull in muscles at the back of legs. Hold for 10 secs, stand up and lean slightly backwards, repeat 3 times. Should feel pull but no pain.

## **3 – Quads:**

Standing with feet together, bring left foot up and put left hand on lower shin by ankle and pull behind bottom. Keep back straight and head up. May need to balance with right hand on wall. Should feel slow pull down front of leg. Hold for 10 secs, swap legs, repeat 3 times. Should feel pull but no pain.

## **4 – Groin:**

Stand with feet 1 metre apart and both feet pointing forward. Keeping back straight and head up slowly lunge down to right side feeling pull on inside of left leg. Hold for 10 secs, swap legs, repeat 3 times. Should feel pull but no pain.

## **5 – Hips:**

Stand with feet shoulder width apart and hands on hips. Keeping head still rotate hips round clockwise 10 times and anti clockwise 10 times. Repeat three times.

## **6 – Torso:**

Stand with feet shoulder width apart and hands on head. Keep feet pointing forward but twist body as far as is comfortable, hold for 1 second, face forward, twist body in other direction, hold for 1 second, face forward. Repeat 10 times.

## **7 – Shoulder:**

Stand with feet shoulder width apart. Start with hands by hips and keeping arms straight slowly swing arms round backwards 10 times, change direction swinging arms forwards 10 times. Repeat 3 times.

## **8 – Standing stretch:**

Stand with feet together. Place hands together and reach as high as you can, hold for 10 secs, relax. Repeat 3 times.