

Be Great

"The miles can build you up or the miles can wear you down, it's all about how you approach it." - Josh Cox, Elite Marathoner

Marathon Training

The marathon demands respect, and that's part of the attraction: You set a lofty goal that requires hard work to achieve. If you don't train properly, or if you race foolishly, it will humble you whether you're a back-of-the-packer or an Olympian.

TRAINING STRATEGIES

Mileage: The schedules contain detailed mileage recommendations. They begin with a base that should be maintained for at least one to two months prior to following the sample build-up programs. The base should be about 50 to 75 percent of your peak mileage goal and include long runs at least twice a month that are at least one-third to one-half your goal long run distance for the training program. Reaching a solid base prior to the beginning of May or June -- or even going a bit beyond these recommendations -- will make you that much stronger and better prepared for the rigorous build-up training period. But 18 weeks of serious training is a long time, so be careful not to burn out before marathon day.

During the training program, first-time and casual marathoners should gradually build to a peak of 30 to 40 miles per week, hold it for at least 6 to 8 weeks, then taper down over the last two to three weeks prior to race day. Veteran competitive marathoners should gradually build to 40 to 70+ miles per week (depending on their experience and goals), which they hold for at least six to eight weeks, then taper down over the last two to three weeks prior to race day. Cut back on mileage when ill, injured, over trained, or when going into or out of key races. Do not attempt to make up lost mileage.

Long Runs: The most important ingredient to marathon success is the long run; it mirrors the marathon itself. "Going long" is a hallowed weekend tradition that is despised and loved, feared and revered, bragged and complained about. First-time and casual marathoners should gradually increase the length of long runs and complete at least three runs of 18 to 20 miles prior to the marathon.

Do not attempt to run long every weekend. Plan your long runs well in advance so you can get them in every other weekend. Veteran marathoners should run long every other weekend or two of every three over the last three months prior to the race. They should attempt to get in at least five or six runs of 20 to 23 miles. No marathon runner should attempt a long run that will take longer than four hours; the result would be severe fatigue and vulnerability to injury. The last long run should be two to three weeks prior to the marathon. Do not attempt to combine long runs and races on the same weekend.

Speed Work: First-timers benefit from some speed work because it helps them improve running form and mental discipline. Ease into these workouts and complete only one a week unless you are monitored by a qualified coach. Sample workouts include: 4-6 repeats up a 200-400 yard hill at 5K-10K race pace; 6 repeats of a half-mile at 5K-10K race pace with a 3-minute recovery; 3-4 repeats of one mile at 5K-10K race pace with a 4-minute recovery.

Experienced marathoners need to improve their speed in order to be able to zip through a marathon at a pace that is faster than their normal daily training pace. They should start with one speed workout per week and, perhaps, later build to two. Sample workouts include: 6-10 repeats up a 200-400 yard

hill at 5K-10K race pace or faster; 6-8 repeats of a half-mile at 5K race pace or faster with a 3-minute recovery; 4-5 repeats of one mile at 5K-10K race pace with a 4-minute recovery; a 20-30 minute tempo run at 10-mile to half-marathon race pace.

Races: Many first-time and casual marathoners race only the marathon distance. However, build-up events are recommended to learn how to handle pacing, fluid replacement, shoe and clothing choices, etc. Veteran marathoners benefit from build-up races to gain strength, speed, and racing experience. Races also help break up the monotony of training by providing intermediate goals, and are a great place to meet other marathoners, share experiences, and even find a training partner.

Races can be used to:

- Get in long training runs with split times and plenty of fluids, fuel, and company along the way. You can create a beneficial long run by running a few training miles prior to a race and then running the race at training pace. Do not attempt to combine long runs and races on the same weekend unless you run the race at training pace as part of your long run.
- Work on your pace; running a few races from 5-18 miles at marathon pace will help you become familiar with that effort. A controlled run at marathon pace or slightly faster will help prepare you for your race-day pace.
- Measure progress and better select your marathon time goal. Hard race efforts (5Ks to half-marathons) can be used to compare your times to previous races of the same distance or to the same races from last year. A rough rule of thumb: Multiply your half-marathon time by two and add 10-15 minutes to approximate your marathon fitness. (Adjust times for hot weather and tough courses.)

Ideally, you should race at least once a month, but no more than twice a month. If you race more you can't properly recover. Do not race or do hard speed training for approximately two weeks after races of 10 miles and longer, or for approximately a week after shorter races. Your last hard, long race should be no later than three weeks prior to the marathon, and your last hard, short race no later than two weeks prior to the marathon.

Six sample schedules are presented. Select the one that best fits your needs, but remember these are sample schedules. Make personal adaptations following common sense. The road to the glorious finish line starts with making the commitment to prepare properly. Enjoy your training, and good luck!

- First Time Marathoner
- Casual
- Basic Marathoner
- Competitive
- Advanced A
- Advanced B