Free Beginner's Guide to Marathon

Brought to you by **MarathonTrainingSchedule.net**

The Beginner Marathon Runner's F.A.Q

How long do I have to train for a Marathon?

If you're currently able to comfortably run three miles or so, you should be able to work up to a marathon in approximately 26 weeks. You would be classed as a "Beginner" and should take all the precautions that are recommended for new runners.

If you are not already running and are not able to comfortably run three miles, you should allow for somewhere between six months and one year of gradual build up before starting a marathon training schedule.

> "allow for between six months and one year of gradual build up"

Although it may seem tempting to dive straight into a training schedule,

without sufficient base preparation you will likely suffer injury. Start with a 'walk/run/walk' approach to training until you are comfortable running distances non-stop.

What should I do during the last 2-3 weeks of training?

I recommend you gradually Taper (see below) during these weeks with your long runs shortening to around 10 easy miles the week before the race. By this point in your training you will have done all the hard work and you only need to maintain rather than try to improve. Try to keep yourself loose and flexible and concentrate on replenishing your energy.

What's a "Taper"?

A "Taper" is the period of time (usually 2-3 weeks) at the end of your training schedule leading up to the marathon, in which you start reducing your mileage and intensity. It's common for people to struggle with the concept of tapering because it is an emotionally trying time (although

physically much easier than the past few months). It may seem strange to stop training before the race, but it is a crucial step in your training plan and needs to be followed.

Remember, there is nothing you can do during the two weeks before the race to improve your performance, but plenty of things that can ruin your race.

> "there is nothing you can do during the two weeks before the race to improve your performance"

Why is the longest Training Run only 20 miles? Why not 26.2?

It's widely accepted that you don't have to run the full 26.2 miles before the actual race. For beginner marathoners in particular, there is too great a chance of injury in completing too many very long runs.

Running 20+ miles really takes a toll on your body and you'll need a long

recovery period to reduce the high risk of getting injured. From a physical and mental standpoint, running 18 to 20 miles as your longest training run is sufficient to prepare for the longer race distance.

The two weeks taper period before your marathon will allow your body to recover from all those months of training. You'll feel rested and ready to take on the full race distance, not to mention the fact that the adrenaline and crowd support you will have on race day will make a huge difference.

> "running 18 to 20 miles as your longest training run is sufficient to prepare for the longer race distance"

How to Survive a "Big" Marathon.

Any big marathon such as New York, Boston or London can be intimidating for first time runners or beginners, particularly at the crowded start line with jostling for position.

Don't expect to be on your projected pace for the first mile or so as there is usually too many people to allow you to run your own speed. You need to be aware of this, just accept it as a fact and factor this into your overall time goal.

Once you get through the first crowded couple of miles, you will be able to get back on pace and stick to your race strategy.

Survival Tip

The main survival tip would be just to go with the flow. There is no way to fight through the huge crowds and trying to will only stress you out and affect your performance. Instead, just enjoy the moment - you're doing a marathon!

What If I Miss a Workout?

Here's a fact.   We all miss training sessions. The key to successful marathon training is combining dedication with flexibility.

Provided you are generally following your marathon training plan and you

have only missed a couple of runs, it shouldn't be any problem just picking up the training again. Of course your actual training miles for that week will be lower than they should be but in the grand scheme of things, it won't matter.

One exception to this is the "Long Run". This weekly run is essential to your overall training plan and you should try your hardest not to skip it. If you do, you may not be sufficiently prepared mentally and physically come race day.

> "The key to successful marathon training is combining dedication with flexibility"

If, however you have missed a greater period of your training program (for example a full week due to illness or injury), it's best to take things slow upon your return, and resume where you left off rather than skipping ahead. As you get stronger, you can gradually increase the miles above the scheduled runs over a period of two to three weeks, until

you are strong enough to let you skip a week, to catch up.

How to Catch-Up

For example, you miss week 4. Instead of starting up on week 5 again, you should work through week 4, week 5 and week 6. By week 7 you may feel strong enough to go slightly above that week's scheduled distance and then at the end of week 7, instead of moving onto week 8 you would jump straight to week 9. This technique minimizes your risk of injury.

What Running Shoes should I use?

You will cover a lot miles during the training programs (anywhere between 550 and 800 miles) so you obviously need good quality, sturdy training shoes. There are three major considerations when selecting a shoe:

- ▶ foot type,

- ▶ foot strike, and

- ▶ stride pattern.

You (or a professional at your local shoe store) can get a very good idea of what your foot type, foot strike and stride pattern are just by examining your foot, your shoes and how your foot hits the ground when you walk.

> "you obviously need good quality, sturdy training shoes"

Foot type

Are you flat-footed or do you have a high arch? If you notice that your arch is much higher or flatter than other people's feet then you will need to get shoes specifically for your foot type (or use orthotic insoles).

Foot strike

When you walk or run does your foot hit the ground at the heel, ball or middle of your foot? This point of impact determines where you need the most cushion. You can get a friend to take a look at your stride pattern or ask a professional in your local shoe store.

Stride pattern

This is also called the "wear pattern" because you can determine your stride pattern simply by examining the sole of your current shoes to see which area is most worn. Are you landing on the right, left or center of your foot when you step.

Once you've determined these factors, find a running shoe store. There are several shoe stores that carry running shoes, but not all have the specialized knowledge in running you need to get the right shoe.

Best Shoe Brands

The most widely used running shoes are made by New Balance, Saucony, Asics, Mizuno and Nike. Bring a pair of running socks with you when you go to try on new shoes. If you wear thinner or thicker socks than you'll be wearing to train, you won't get the right fit.

When Should I Replace My Running Shoes?

Running in old or worn-out shoes is one of the most common causes of running injuries. Your running shoes lose their shock absorption, cushioning and stability over time and continuing to wear old shoes increases the stress and impact on your legs and joints, which can lead to overuse injuries.

> "Running in old or worn-out shoes is one of the most common causes of running injuries"

You will need at least two pairs of shoes from the time you begin training until you reach the finish line.

Although your shoes might not show that much wear and tear, their ability to absorb shock diminishes after 350 miles.

Don't use the treads of your running shoes to determine whether you need to replace your shoes: the mid-sole, which provides the cushioning and stability, usually breaks down before the bottom shows major signs of wear.

Rules for Replacing Shoes

A good rule of thumb is to replace your running shoes every 300 to 400 miles, depending on your running style, body weight, and the surface on which you run. Smaller, lighter runners tend to need to replace their running shoes less often than heavier athletes. If you run on rough roads, you'll need to replace your running shoes sooner than if you primarily run on a treadmill.

The trick to knowing when to replace your shoes is to keep a note in your training schedule of when you purchased your shoes and which pair you wore on each run. That way, each pair of shoes has their own 'mileage log'.

Finally, don't wear new shoes for running the actual marathon. During the race is not the time to try anything new and that includes new equipment.

> "don't wear new shoes for running the actual marathon"

Can I Train on a Treadmill?

You can certainly do the first few weeks of your training indoors. However runners who plan on competing in a marathon must do some running on the roads in addition to mileage logged on the treadmill.

The fact is that because virtually all marathon routes are on man-made terrain (e.g., asphalt, concrete), it's essential that runners become familiar with running on these surfaces, particularly during the all-important long runs.

In addition, treadmill running feels easier physically because the ground is being pulled underneath your feet and there's no wind resistance.

Running outdoor demands more from your body because you're propelling your body forward stride for stride while running on a treadmill also doesn't prepare you very well for dealing with the weather, which is always a big factor in the marathon event.

Finally, lets not overlook the fact that long runs on a treadmill are just plain boring!

Useful for Beginners

Having said that, because most treadmills are padded, they are a good option for beginner athletes if you're overweight or are injury-prone (especially with knee issues) and want to decrease the impact.

You can better simulate outdoor running by setting your treadmill at 1% incline. If you start your training on treadmills, just be sure to get outside into the fresh air sooner rather than later.

Can I Walk?

Walking part (or all) of a marathon is completely acceptable. One technique that many older or new runners have had great success with, is to find a set run/walk ratio that works for you during training and stick to it during the marathon.

Walk/Run Ratio

This can be as easy as run 1/walk 1, run 20 minutes/walk 10 minutes or much more difficult like a 10:1 ration. The trick is to find what works for you and stick with it.

Even the most experienced of marathon runners often stop to walk through aid stations to help them get fluids on board and give their legs a brief recovery time.

> "Even the most experienced of marathon runners often stop to walk"

Brief walking breaks will give your legs a change from the constant running stride. This will help the muscles avoid tightening up too much in the later stages.   You'd be surprised how little time short walking breaks will add to your overall finish time.

Should I Eat Before I Run?

They key to running nutrition is to begin a run feeling neither starved nor stuffed. You don't want to eat immediately before a run because it may lead to cramping, while on the

other hand, running on an empty stomach may cause you to run out of energy.

The best option for most people is to eat a light snack or meal about 1.5 to 2 hours before you start running. Play around with this though to find what works best for you. We are all different and you may find that you perform better by giving yourself longer to digest food or even that you find that extra energy by eating less than an hour before you run.

How Much Should I Drink During Runs?

Proper hydration is essential to safety and performance during marathon training and the race itself. The basic rule of thumb for hydrating during runs is 6 to 8 ounces of fluids every 20 minutes. Think 'less and often'. It is crucial that you don't wait until you feel 'thirsty' before you take fluid on board. By the time that your body's thirst mechanism kicks in, you are already dehydrated and by that stage you won't be able to catch up.

What Should I Drink During Runs?

The big question that new runners have is when to drink water and when to drink sports drinks.

For runs under 60-90 minutes, you are fine drinking plain water.

When you're running, your body loses electrolytes through sweat. Since electrolytes help your body retain fluids and may prevent muscle cramps, you need to replace them when running more than 90 minutes.

Hydration Risks

Runners who don't sufficiently replace electrolytes during long runs or races risk over-hydration. Hyponatremia, which is low blood sodium concentration, can occur when athletes drink excessive amounts of water and don't replace salt lost through sweat.

"During runs of more than 90 minutes, you can switch between sports drinks and water"

Sports drinks, such as Gatorade or PowerAde, contain electrolytes such as sodium and potassium. During runs of more than 90 minutes, you can switch between sports drinks and water. So, every other hydration break, you should be drinking a sports drink.

What Should I Eat During Runs?

When you run for less than 90 minutes, most of your energy comes from stored muscle glycogen. If you're running for longer than 90 minutes, the sugar in your blood and liver glycogen become more important because your stored muscle glycogen gets depleted.

Fueling with carbohydrates during your longer runs will prevent you from running out of energy and help boost your performance.

Although solid foods can be consumed, these need to be small and easy to digest. There are numerous products on the market, such as energy gels, bars, and even sports jelly beans designed for long-distance runners to eat on the run.

Experiment with Food

Start experimenting with different foods, gels, and bars on your long runs to see what you prefer. An alternative way to get the required carbohydrates during your runs is through sports drinks.

So how much do you need to eat on the run? A basic rule of thumb is that you should be taking in about 100 calories after the first hour of running and then another 100 calories every 40-45 minutes after that. You may need more depending on your size and speed, so make sure you carry an extra one or two gels (or other food).

Practice eating on your runs so you are used to it on marathon day. Don't try anything new on race day.

Should I Run Everyday?

The short answer is "No". Most runners need at least one, even two,

days off from running per week. Research has shown that taking at least one day off a week reduces the frequency of overuse injuries.

If you take at least one day off, your body will have a chance to recover and repair itself. You'll find that you'll actually feel better during your runs.

The amount and scheduling of recovery days depends on what type of runner you are how far along your training program you are.

If you tend to run a lot of miles on the weekends, then Monday might be a good rest day for you. In addition, in preparation for the long weekend run, you may want to rest on Friday so you can tackle the long run with fresh legs.

Beginner runners may want to start out running every other day to give themselves sufficient recovery time while still building a running habit. If you're a more experienced runner, one or two rest days should be sufficient for injury prevention and recovery.

The Next Steps

Congratulations on making it this far on your marathon journey.

I realize I've given you a lot to think about, but hopefully I've answered some of the questions you had.

Information Overload

I realize there are a number of significant barriers in the your way to marathon success and one of them is a genuine risk of information overload. It's easy to be overwhelmed by all the information available about marathon training.

To help you get started, here are the essential next steps that you must take.

Make a Plan and Stick to It

Being successful in your marathon training requires dedication and following a structured training schedule. You must either buy or make a training plan suited to your ability and goals. Obviously I'd prefer if you bought one of mine but I won't be offended if you don't. The main thing is that you get one before you start your training.

Start Slowly

This is such an important point that maybe I should have listed it first. I can't stress enough how important it is that you don't rush into endurance training. Start slowly and aim to increase your workload by no more than 10% each week. This is vital and you have to track your weekly training load. (See, I wasn't lying when I said a training schedule was essential!)

Respect Your Body (a.k.a Stay Injury Free)

You can't train if you're injured, it's as simple as that. And if you don't give your body enough rest or listen to it if you feel like an injury is creeping up on you, you'll spend more time in the doctor's waiting room than on the streets running.

What Are You Waiting For?

Enough talking. Go buy those new shoes, get your training plan and start your first workout.

Thanks for Reading!

I hope you've enjoyed this quick run through Beginner Marathon Training. I appreciate you for taking the time to read this and I would love to hear what you think about it. Please feel free to shoot me an email at **support@marathontrainingschedule.net**.

Finally, follow me on Twitter (**@MarathonNut**) and keep yourself up to date by subscribing to my **RSS Feed**.

Best of luck with your training.

Rick