MARATHON Handbook 4 HOUR MARATHON TRAINING PLAN GUIDANCE NOTES

INTRO

Hey there - Thomas from Marathon Handbook here. Thanks for taking the time to grab a copy of this plan!
As the name suggests, this plan has been backwards-engineered around the goal of running a sub 4 hour marathon.

For a full breakdown of the strategy I recommend, check out this article or my Youtube vid covering the sub 4-hr marathon approach:
How To Train For And Run a Sub 4-Hour Marathon (article)
How To Run a Sub 4 Hour Marathon : Training Plan + Strategies (Youtube)

CUSTOMIZING THE PLAN

No two runners are the same, and there's no such thing as a one-size-fits-all plan. That's why I make all my plans easy to customize:
use the Google Sheets or Excel version of this plan to move things around to suit your weekly schedule, shorten or extend the plan, and mix
up the workouts to suit your ability level.
In order to edit the file, please download it or make a copy (File>Make a Copy)

MEDICAL DISCLAIMER

This plan is for informational purposes only: it is not a certified exercise / health / wellness regime. Partake in run training at your own
risk, always consult a doctor before starting a new exercise regime, and don't do anything stupid. Now let's get on with the details...

BREAKDOWN OF TRAINING WORKOUTS

Training Runs

These are the foundation of your training: they build up your weekly mileage and get your body accustomed to running.
For this plan, I've specified that these runs be performed at the target race pace. Why? To get your body accustomed to that pace,
which you should be able to sustain at a 4 out of 10 Rate of Perceived Exertion.
If you do the first couple of weeks and find you can't maintain the pace, I would recommend a less aggressive marathon goal and following one of
my less intense marathon training plans.
It is fine to occasionally do these runs at a slower pace (i.e. 2-3 out of 10 RPE) if you feel fatigued or that you've been pushing too hard.

Intervals

Speed work is a core part of a training plan with a time-based goal, and intervals are a nice, structured way to do this speed work.
My recommended intervals workout:
Include a 1.5 mile / 2.5 k warm-up and cool-down either side of the speedwork (note these distances are included in the weekly mileage calculation).
Run a fast hard 800m interval (2 laps of a track) at 8-9 out of 10 RPE - not quite full-sprint, but as hard as you can maintain for the 800m.
Cool down with 400m of light jogging or walking.
Repeat as per the plan.
Want to try different speedwork sessions?: Here's info on hill running, fartleks, hill sprints, and Yassos.

Strength Training

Many runners simply neglect cross-training - but the benefits have such a huge impact on your running game, it's hard to ignore.
Strength training has a massive impact on your running economy (essentially your miles per gallon as a runner), your speed, and
- perhaps most importantly - injury prevention.   While "cross-training" can mean almost any form of activity which complements your running,
I highly recommend strength training - and specifically weightlifting if you can, it's simply where you get the most bang-for-your-buck as a runner.
Here's our complete guide to weightlifting for runners.
Can't stand the gym? Then at-home bodyweight workouts, yoga, or pilates are good alternatives.

Long Runs

The key to long run success is to go at a slow, easy pace.   Don't worry about speed at all - long runs are all about building endurance and
getting time on your feet - NOT about speed.
Having said that, it is certainly beneficial to perform the occasional long run at a faster pace.   Check out my long run video for more:
LONG RUNS: Training Tips, Pace, Distance, How To Fuel + More!
The plan includes one Half Marathon at race pace on week 15: you can either run a real half marathon race, or just do it in training.
Either way, this workout is a great chance to do a 'dress rehearsal' or tune-up race to test your gear and strategies prior to your big race day.

Rest Days

Rest means no strenuous activity! Focus on restful and pleasurable activities: walks in nature, time with family, enjoying good food, watching movies.
This may seem indulgent, but these activities send your body into 'rest and recover' mode (vs fight or flight mode) and your body will focus on healing.

TrainingPeaks 4 Hour Marathon Training Plan

Want to get an interactive version of this plan on the TrainingPeaks app, which allows you to track your own runs against the plan and provdies further guidance?
Here is the Sub 4 Hour Marathon Training Plan on TrainingPeaks!

THE MARATHON TRAINING MASTERCLASS

Take your training further with my Marathon Training Masterclass.   With over 6 hours of exclusive video tutorials and loads of bonus
downloads, I've poured everything I've learned about marathon training over the years into this course.   Whether it's injury-prevention,
nutrition, or some race day strategies and road-tested tips, I've squeezed everything in here.
Check Out The Marathon Training Masterclass!

Questions?

Check out our Marathon Handbook Facebook Group, it's an awesome community of runners sharing their knowledge, frustrations, and wins!
Unfortunately I can't respond to individual queries these days, but the FB group is probably an even better source of running wisdom!