

MARATHON HANDBOOK 50k IMPROVER ULTRA 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 is for those of you looking to run a 50k and improve - either improve on your previous 50k time, or simply improve your running performance.

50k is a little farther than a marathon (around 5 miles / 8k farther), and while the plan loosely follows that of a typical marathon training plan, it's been adjusted for ultra-running. When you go beyond marathon distance, you typically have to dial down your race-day exertion a notch or two in order to make sure you make the distance. This is especially the case if you're going from city-style flat marathons to trail-based 50ks.

You can get more info on general 50k training here:

[How To Train For And Run a 50k \(article\)](#)

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...

EASY TO START WITH?

Many runners grabbing a copy of this plan will find the starting weekly mileage LESS than what they're currently booking - if you're in this camp, my advice is to stick to your current weekly mileage until the plan catches up with you. Remember that the plan is designed to get runners ready to run 50k over 26 weeks; it's not necessary that they're doing 40-mile weeks on week 1. It's a gradual build-up. You can always scan the plan and figure out where it would suit you best to jump in.

BREAKDOWN OF TRAINING WORKOUTS

Training Runs

These are foundational of your training: they build up your weekly mileage, and can help you recover after the harder days.

I recommend running the easy runs at an comfortable, conversational pace - think around 3-4 / 10 [Rate of Perceived Exertion](#).

Pace Run

These are medium-distance runs designed to be run at your target race pace, if you have one - if not, just aim to push 10% harder than your regular runs, think about 5 out of 10 RPE. Slower than a tempo run, faster than easy runs!

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.

I recommend doing a LEG STRENGTH WORKOUT the same day as, but AFTER, your speed workout for maximal leg training!

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.

[Here's our complete guide to weightlifting for runners.](#)

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 50k Improver 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 provides further guidance?

[Here is the 50k Improver Training Plan on TrainingPeaks!](#)

Ultra Runner's Playbook

Take your training further with my Ultra Runner's Playbook. With over 6 hours of exclusive video tutorials and loads of bonus downloads, I've poured everything I've learned about ultrarunning 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 Ultra Runner's Playbook!](#)

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!

[Share your training and wins with us over on Instagram!](#)