

MARATHON HANDBOOK COUCH TO 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 is all about getting you from the couch to the finish line of a marathon, in 24 weeks.

For a full breakdown of the strategy I recommend, check out this article:

[Couch To Marathon: The Complete Guide](#)

In the article, I lay out the phases of this plan: there are 4 phases (5k, 10k, Half Marathon, Marathon) and I encourage you to take breaks of 2-4 weeks between each phase depending on how you are feeling. Check out the article for more guidance on this.

The first 4 weeks of this plan are essentially my popular [4-week Couch To 5k Training Plan](#) (click [here](#) for the full guide to this goal).

These first 4 weeks feature scheduled run/walk workouts. It is totally fine for you to continue using the run/walk method throughout your training:

[The Run / Walk Marathon Training Guide](#)

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

What Does RPE Stand For? Rate of Perceived Exertion Explained.

You'll see the letters RPE under each run workout in the plan: this stands for Rate of Perceived Exertion. Since this isn't a time / speed based plan, I specify each workout intensity based on EFFORT. The RPE Scale is a scale from 1-10 of your own estimate of how hard you're pushing, 1 being minimal effort and 10 being the fastest sprint you can muster. More on RPE here: [Rate of Perceived Exertion Explained](#).

Here's a brief rundown of the types of workout in the plan, and how to do them:

Training Runs

These are the foundation of your training: they build up your weekly mileage and get your body accustomed to running. I've specified that these should be performed at 3-4 out of 10 RPE: A comfortable pace at which you could hold a conversation of a few sentences.

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 two Half Marathons: you can either run a real half marathon race, or just do it in training. Either way, take them slow! The longest long run is a 21 miler 3 weeks out, this workout is a great chance to do a 'dress rehearsal' or [tune-up race](#) to test your gear and strategies.

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 Couch To Marathon Training Plan (App)

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 Couch To 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!

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