

Marathon Training Plans

Beginner, Intermediate, and Advanced | 16-Week Programs

These 16-week training plans are designed for runners at different experience levels. Each plan builds gradually to race day, incorporating easy runs, long runs, speed work, cross-training, and strategic rest days. Always listen to your body and adjust as needed.

Beginner Marathon Plan

Goal: Finish your first marathon comfortably. **Target time:** 4:30 - 5:30 | **Weekly mileage peak:** ~40 miles |

Prerequisite: Able to run 3-5 miles comfortably

Weeks 1-4: Base Building

| Day | Workout | Distance |
|-----|---------------------------------------|-----------|
| Mon | Rest | |
| Tue | Easy run | 3-4 mi |
| Wed | Cross-train (cycling, swimming, yoga) | 30-40 min |
| Thu | Easy run | 3-4 mi |
| Fri | Rest | |
| Sat | Long run (conversational pace) | 6-10 mi |
| Sun | Easy walk or light jog | 20-30 min |

Weeks 5-8: Building Volume

| Day | Workout | Distance |
|-----|---------------------------------|-----------|
| Mon | Rest | |
| Tue | Easy run | 4-5 mi |
| Wed | Cross-train or easy run | 30-45 min |
| Thu | Easy run with 4x strides at end | 4-5 mi |
| Fri | Rest | |
| Sat | Long run (add 1-2 mi/week) | 10-14 mi |
| Sun | Recovery jog or walk | 20-30 min |

Weeks 9-12: Peak Training

| Day | Workout | Distance |
|-----|---|------------|
| Mon | Rest | |
| Tue | Easy run | 5-6 mi |
| Wed | Tempo run (comfortably hard pace, 20 min) | 5 mi total |
| Thu | Easy run | 4-5 mi |
| Fri | Rest | |
| Sat | Long run (peak: 20 mi in Week 11) | 16-20 mi |
| Sun | Recovery jog | 2-3 mi |

Weeks 13-16: Taper & Race

| Day | Workout | Distance |
|-----|--|----------|
| Mon | Rest | |
| Tue | Easy run | 4-5 mi |
| Wed | Short tempo or easy run | 3-4 mi |
| Thu | Easy run with strides | 3-4 mi |
| Fri | Rest | |
| Sat | Long run (decreasing: 14, 10, 6, RACE) | Varies |
| Sun | Rest or easy walk | |

Intermediate Marathon Plan

For Experienced Runners | 16-Week Program

Goal: PR or break a time barrier (sub-4:00, sub-3:45). **Weekly mileage peak:** ~50 miles | **Prerequisite:** At least one marathon completed, comfortable running 25+ miles/week

Weeks 1-4: Rebuilding Base

| Day | Workout | Distance |
|-----|---|--------------|
| Mon | Rest or easy cross-train | |
| Tue | Easy run + 6x strides | 5-6 mi |
| Wed | Tempo run (25 min at marathon pace + 15 sec/mi) | 6-7 mi total |
| Thu | Easy run | 5-6 mi |
| Fri | Rest or yoga | |
| Sat | Long run at easy pace | 10-14 mi |
| Sun | Recovery run | 3-4 mi |

Weeks 5-10: Speed & Endurance

| Day | Workout | Distance |
|-----|---|--------------|
| Mon | Rest | |
| Tue | Intervals: 6-8x 800m at 5K pace (400m jog recovery) | 7-8 mi total |
| Wed | Easy run | 5-6 mi |
| Thu | Tempo run (30-40 min at marathon pace) | 7-9 mi total |
| Fri | Rest or easy cross-train | |
| Sat | Long run (some at marathon pace in later weeks) | 14-20 mi |
| Sun | Recovery run | 4-5 mi |

Weeks 11-13: Peak & Sharpening

| Day | Workout | Distance |
|-----|---------------------------------------|------------|
| Mon | Rest | |
| Tue | VO2max intervals: 5x 1000m at 5K pace | 8 mi total |
| Wed | Easy run | 6 mi |

| | | |
|-----|--|---------------|
| Thu | Marathon-pace run (6-10 mi at goal pace) | 8-12 mi total |
| Fri | Rest | |
| Sat | Long run (peak: 22 mi in Week 11) | 18-22 mi |
| Sun | Recovery run | 4-5 mi |

Weeks 14-16: Taper & Race

| Day | Workout | Distance |
|-----|------------------------------|----------|
| Mon | Rest | |
| Tue | Easy run with strides | 4-5 mi |
| Wed | Short tempo at marathon pace | 4-5 mi |
| Thu | Easy run | 3-4 mi |
| Fri | Rest | |
| Sat | Long run (12, 8, RACE) | Varies |
| Sun | Rest or easy shake-out | |

Advanced Marathon Plan

High-Mileage Performance Plan | 16-Week Program

Goal: Competitive racing (sub-3:15, sub-3:00, or beyond). **Weekly mileage peak:** ~60-70 miles | **Prerequisite:** Multiple marathons, 40+ miles/week base, no current injuries

Weeks 1-4: Aerobic Foundation

| Day | Workout | Distance |
|-----|--|--------------|
| Mon | Easy run + strength training | 6-7 mi |
| Tue | Fartlek: 8-10x 2 min hard / 1 min easy | 8-9 mi total |
| Wed | Easy run (doubles optional: AM 5 mi + PM 3 mi) | 6-8 mi |
| Thu | Tempo: 4-5 mi at half marathon pace | 8-9 mi total |
| Fri | Easy run or rest | 4-5 mi |
| Sat | Long run at easy pace | 14-16 mi |
| Sun | Recovery run | 5-6 mi |

Weeks 5-10: Race-Specific Training

| Day | Workout | Distance |
|-----|---|----------------|
| Mon | Easy run + strength | 6-7 mi |
| Tue | Intervals: 5-6x 1200m at 5K pace (600m jog) | 9-10 mi total |
| Wed | Mid-week medium-long run | 8-10 mi |
| Thu | Marathon-pace tempo: 8-12 mi at goal pace | 10-14 mi total |
| Fri | Easy run | 5-6 mi |
| Sat | Long run (last 6-8 mi at marathon pace) | 18-22 mi |
| Sun | Recovery run | 5-6 mi |

Weeks 11-13: Sharpening Phase

| Day | Workout | Distance |
|-----|--|------------|
| Mon | Easy run | 6 mi |
| Tue | Tune-up race or VO2max session (4x mile at 10K pace) | 9 mi total |
| Wed | Easy run | 7-8 mi |

| | | |
|-----|--|----------------|
| Thu | Marathon-pace run with negative split (10-12 mi) | 12-14 mi total |
| Fri | Easy run or rest | 4-5 mi |
| Sat | Long run (peak: 23 mi in Week 11, then cut back) | 16-23 mi |
| Sun | Recovery run | 5-6 mi |

Weeks 14-16: Taper & Race

| Day | Workout | Distance |
|-----|-----------------------------------|--------------|
| Mon | Easy run | 5 mi |
| Tue | Short speed: 4-6x 400m at 5K pace | 5-6 mi total |
| Wed | Easy run | 4-5 mi |
| Thu | 20 min at marathon pace | 5 mi total |
| Fri | Rest or 2 mi shakeout | |
| Sat | Long run (10, 6, RACE) | Varies |
| Sun | Rest | |

Key principles for all plans: Never increase weekly mileage by more than 10% per week. Take a cutback week (reduce by 20-25%) every 3-4 weeks. Easy runs should be truly easy - you should be able to hold a full conversation. Hydrate and fuel properly on long runs over 90 minutes.