

How to Properly Train for a Marathon

Most people balk at the idea of running a marathon, usually because they think it is torture and that training will kill them long before it makes them stronger, as the old adage says. However, if you properly train for a marathon, running one can be fun and rewarding for you.

Running a marathon is an increasingly popular trend and many people add it to their "list of things to do", especially as a New Year's resolution. The fact is most people know how to maximize the performance of their bodies with proper training. The first marathon was in Massachusetts in 1897 and had 18 men participating. Since then, marathons have expanded to 150 organized yearly marathons around the world. Both men and women participate in marathons, running 26.2 miles.

Running a marathon, for most people, symbolizes strength and motivation, but little do many people realize that running a marathon takes work - lots of training and the more proper, and better the training, the more likely running a marathon will be a fun experience instead of dreadful torture.

For first time marathoners, it's important, if you are training by yourself, to find a running group or someone else to train with you. It can be both fun and rewarding to run with a running group; learning from experiences had by other runners and marathoners and having someone there to motivate you to keep going.

The key to running a marathon is the training, and there's no specific guide to marathon training, but you should follow a basic recipe for training to ensure that you are doing it correctly and to help maximize your results. Below is an example of an 18 week program for new marathoners, perfect for people who are running their first marathon and have never trained for one before. Of course, any marathoner can use this recipe for marathon training, and adapt it to fit their strengths and needs.

The 18-weeks before a marathon:

Mondays - Rest Day, each week.

Tuesdays - Easy running day

Weeks 1-10: three miles

Weeks 11-13: four miles

Weeks 14 -16: five miles

Week 17: four miles

Week 18: three miles

Wednesdays - Medium difficulty running day

Weeks 1-2: three miles

Weeks 3-4: four miles

Weeks 5-6: five miles

Weeks 7-8: six miles

Weeks 9-10: seven miles

Weeks 11-12: eight miles

Weeks 13-14: nine miles

Week 15: 10 miles

Week 16: eight miles

Week 17: six miles

Week 18: three miles

Thursdays - Easy running day

Weeks 1-7: three miles

Weeks 8-11: four miles

Weeks 12 -16: five miles

Week 17: four miles

Week 18: REST

Fridays - Rest Day, each week.

Saturdays - Cross Training Day, each week.

Sundays - Long runs and race days, each week.

Week number - type and length of run

1 -six miles

2 -seven miles

3- five miles

4- nine miles

5 - 10 miles

6- RACE six to 10 miles

7- 12 miles

8 - 13 miles

9 - 10 miles

10 - 15 miles

11 - 16 miles

12 - RACE 10 to 15 miles

13- 18 miles

14 - 14 miles

15 - 20 miles

16 - RACE six miles

17 - eight miles

18 - Marathon day!

By sticking to a schedule such as the one above, you are conditioning your body for race day as well as training yourself for an increase in activity. The most important days of the schedule are not the hard days, where you have to run further, but rather the "easy days," the rest days, where you have to submit to allowing yourself NOT to train that day. Your body needs this time to recover and adapt to all of the difficult training you've done throughout the week. If you don't rest on the rest days, your training will be much harder and you could do some serious damage, rather than making yourself and building yourself up to be stronger.

For the cross training days, you can do a variety of exercises that will help you in your marathon training. When you choose your activity for the day, however, you shouldn't over do yourself. You can participate until you can "feel it," until you feel a little fatigued, but don't push yourself beyond your limits. As your training continues on through the 18 weeks, you will find that you can spend more time cross training because it takes longer to fatigue. Activities that will help your marathon training include:

Bike riding

Swimming

Weight training

Brisk walking

The next most important days of your training are the long run days, each Sunday. These long runs help your body adapt to the physical exertion and stress of a long distance run, similar to what you will experience on marathon day.

Don't forget to listen to your own body - if you have pain other than just "sore muscles, you should cease your training and seek a doctor's advice.

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