



HOW TO
RUN A MARATHON:
THE ULTIMATE GUIDE

---- THE ----
RUN
EXPERIENCE




SO YOU WANT TO KNOW HOW TO RUN A MARATHON?

This is the **ULTIMATE** guide for beginners to veterans. We've gathered marathon running tips from every corner of the running globe (including our own insights), and put them all in one place. This is a huge article and we slaved away to bring you the best. Dig in... this is just the start of a fantastic journey and we are honored to be helpful to you.



AM I READY
TO RUN
A MARATHON?



You can go ahead and skip this if you're already signed up. For you thoughtful runners who are still considering it... here are some things to think about.

Almost anyone (fit or not fit) CAN finish a marathon.

"Finishing has more to do with being able to grit your teeth and keep moving. However... doing it in a healthy way, rather than just dragging your skin and bones through 26.2 miles, requires more consideration."

So the question is if you're going to run a half marathon, **what are you willing to risk in order to finish?** If you're willing to risk your health, very little will stop you from finishing. But if you want to become fitter and healthier, you need to consider many more things.

Thousands of people start and finish marathons each year, leaving them in so much pain that they never run again, or hurt themselves during the race or during training. We want you to be happy and healthy first!

To build up to running a marathon you need to build a body that is able to handle the miles, and that means becoming stronger and staying mobile, as well as learning to run with good form so you don't get repetitive stress injuries as you increase your training.

"If you're willing to risk your health, very little will stop you from finishing. But if you want this to be a pathway to a fitter, healthier you need to consider many more things."

Our friend Marathon Matt has a great article on Active.com on how to run a marathon with some general guidelines on if you are ready for marathon training...

- Have you been running for a year consistently? (A marathon should not be your first dip into the running world.)
- Have you run a half marathon or two and not been completely destroyed or injured?
 - If you've been running for over a year and aren't injured, and doing 20 or more miles a week, you're probably ready, even if you haven't done a half marathon. But we recommend doing one halfway through your training.
- Can your lifestyle support it? Long runs and increased training will demand more of your time and energy than you think!

Another **couple tips from Strength Running** on how to run a marathon that we agree with:


- **Weekly Mileage:** About 20 miles a week. If you are running about this much and can do it without wincing at the thought, you're probably ready for marathon training.
- **Long Run:** If you're not currently doing a longer run once a week... it's not a huge deal, but you should be able to run 6-8 miles (even if it includes walk breaks).
- **Strength / Mobility / Form:** We believe every runner should do some basic maintenance so your body is ready to run. This means simple strength workouts, mobility work to keep your body functioning smoothly, and constant attention to making your running technique better.

How can you get there? Funny you should ask. (Shameless plug incoming!) We have a **30 Day Challenge** that is meant to be a foundational running training plan that we put all our athletes through. It's a video based program with coaching support and completing it is a perfect pre-cursor to training for a marathon, and it will check off all the boxes above. It focuses on strength, mobility and form and you'll find out your weak spots (and how to fix them) before you start increasing the mileage. If you've never run before (!!) you'll probably need to complete it a few times before starting a marathon program.

Now, if you're crazy and don't do our 30 Day Challenge, you still need a baseline of training (which means more than just running!) to prepare your body. Some may advise you to talk to a trainer, but we recommend finding a running coach because very few trainers know how to run a marathon well enough to help you when you hit a rough spot. Or just do the obvious thing, **start the 30 Day Challenge and let us be your running coaches**. Okay, off the soap box... let's talk about how long it will take to train...



**HOW LONG
DOES TRAINING TO RUN
A MARATHON TAKE?**



This totally depends on your fitness level. But let's break it down. We're going to reference some of our own programs here, but the principles apply to any training program you use, and we've reviewed a bunch of them later in this article.

- **"I'M ON THE COUCH... I DON'T RUN AND/OR IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE I'VE RUN."**
(I.E. HOW TO RUN A MARATHON FROM SCRATCH)

- **Training Time: 15 months, plus or minus 3 months.**

- You need to start slowly, get your body used to running and probably fix a lot of the form and mechanic flaws that will crop up in the first 2-3 months. Our best advice is to **start with our 30 Day Challenge**, but then repeat it at least a few times and enter some shorter races at the end of each cycle. (5k or 10k).
- It'll take some time to build your body up so that it can handle regular running and increased mileage without breaking down. You'll likely run into a few road blocks, and the **strength and mobility work** is where you'll need to concentrate to keep injuries at bay.
- The plus or minus 3 months is depending on how fit you are and your athletic background. Even if you're on the couch, if you have a long athletic background, you will likely bounce back into shape faster (but you also run the risk of getting injured because of trying to bounce back too fast).

- **"I'VE BEEN RUNNING FOR OVER A YEAR, BUT I'VE NEVER DONE A RACE."**
(OR NEVER DONE ONE LONGER THAN 10K). (I.E. HOW TO RUN A MARATHON IF I'M A REGULAR RUNNER)

- **Training Time: 5-6 months**

- 1 month to build up to 20 miles a week, and start doing a long run, i.e. one run that pushes your distance beyond the others. By the end of the month you should be able to run 6-8 miles comfortably.

- The **30 Day Challenge** is the perfect pre-marathon training program! With a strong focus on building your athletic and running foundation, you'll come out feeling fit, strong, and ready to tackle the challenges half marathon training brings.
 - 4 months of dedicated marathon training (16 weeks). This is a typical amount of time to build to a distance of 18-20+ miles for your long run (depending on your long run philosophy) and then taper before your race. Our **Building Distance Program** will get you 1/2 marathon ready in 8 weeks (especially after the 30 Day Challenge) and more than marathon ready in 16 weeks!
- Where is that mystery 6th month coming from?
 - Are you expecting 5 months of pushing your body to go unexpectedly smooth? There will be roadblocks! Little aches and pains that you need to take into account. We recommend active recovery, but not necessarily increasing your mileage during these times. Bake in extra time into your training schedule and you'll be happier and healthier for it.
- **"I ALREADY RUN 1/2 HALF MARATHONS OR HAVE ALREADY DONE A MARATHON BEFORE."** (I.E. HOW TO RUN A MARATHON IF I'M ALREADY PRETTY EXPERIENCED, BUT WANT TO GO FASTER AND BE HEALTHIER)
 - **Training time: 2-4 months**
 - We recommend at least 2 months of building back up to a marathon if you've already been racing 1/2 marathons. (we rarely recommend people jump in the middle of one of our programs, but if you've done a program with us before and just want to do the last two months... we do offer Building Distance months 3 and 4. The workouts will be pretty difficult (not just the running mileage) if you haven't followed our training methodology before.)
 - To build to a marathon for most runners, 16 weeks (4 months) gives you enough time to address issues, build up your strength and endurance, as well as work on your running form. (Again, shameless plug: Building Distance is a 4 month program, specifically designed for you to kick butt come race day!)

A high-angle, dark-toned photograph of a runner in motion on a paved road. The runner is wearing a light-colored tank top and dark leggings. The road surface shows a cobblestone-like pattern in the distance. At the top of the image, there is a decorative border with a repeating pattern of black, white, and red geometric shapes.

HOW TO RUN A MARATHON WITHOUT TRAINING

I.E. WHAT IF I DON'T HAVE THAT MUCH TIME / I HAVEN'T TRAINED ENOUGH / THE MARATHON IS ONE MONTH AWAY!

Let's not pretend we're all perfect. We have all found ourselves weeks/months away from a race and we're not in the shape we wished we were in. Here are a few things to know:

Yes. *You can likely finish the race. BUT... it might cost you your health.*

The real risk here is that you don't know how that cost will hit you. Knee pain? Sciatica? Plantar Fasciitis for the next 6 months? Maybe nothing? It's a roll of the dice. I'm not going to recommend that you drop out of the race (most of you wouldn't listen anyway)...but instead understand the risk factors, and then **follow these tips to decrease your risk.**

Don't jump into week 7 of a 16 week program because you only have 9 weeks before the race.

- Instead... start with where you are. If you're comfortable running 20 miles a week, then start at the beginning of the program, or at whatever mileage you can handle *easily*. "Easily" is the key here... it's easier to add on mileage and harder workouts after a few weeks back on the road than to just jump in from zero to hero. Start with where you are, and if you only get one long run of 15+ miles... you'll be better off than trying to squeeze in 3 weeks of 20 mile long runs when you don't have the training base for it. Start with where you are. Don't ignore this advice!!

Focus on strength work, form and mobility.

- We can't stress this enough. If you build your body up, you'll be able to handle the mileage without breaking. If instead you just test your body out in its current state... it's likely you'll hurt something.
- Focus on the key runs of a training plan (tempo and hill workout, form focused workouts, and long runs) and then make sure you are getting enough rest and doing strength and mobility.
- CrossFit classes are another great option here as they tend to tackle multiple birds with one giant stone! Strength sessions in the gym, classes, and boot camp classes are all good...provided you have a good instructor who helps you with your technique. That's a big caveat though... doing hard workouts with multiple new movements is a surefire way to get injured if you don't have good instruction!

Worried about not running enough? Train like a triathlete!


- If you're running 3 days or less include another 1-2 days of other movement such as bike sessions, pool sessions, and rowing. These sessions will continue to build your fitness, and aerobic foundation, without adding more abusive running miles. In essence, train like a triathlete and you'll be marathon ready with less weekly mileage and less abuse!



Adding cycling, swimming, and strength training can get you half marathon if you're not ready for more miles! In essence, train like a triathlete!

A man in a dark hoodie and pants is running on a paved path. The background is a blurred park with trees and a fence. The text is overlaid in the center.

**HOW MUCH WILL IT
COST TO RUN
A MARATHON?**



The cost doesn't stop at the Race Entry Fee. There is new equipment (you'll be surprised how much "stuff" you'll want outside of just a pair of shoes.) And if you're investing this much time and energy into something, it's probably worth it to make sure you have everything you need to make it through the training and the race.

We also highly encourage you to get coaching and instruction if you're going to put your body through the stresses of training for and running a marathon. A not-so-shameless plug: This is what we do at The Run Experience. **Check out our Building Distance program** for example. Making sure you're going to show up to the the race healthy and prepared is worth the investment in yourself. Especially when you consider that it's only a fraction of what you'll spend for the race. Here are some rough estimates.


- Race Entry Fee (\$150)
- New pair of running shoes (\$130) Race Food (Gu / Gel / Protein, Etc) for training and the race (\$50)
- Running clothes for training / race. (Shorts / Socks / Tanktop) (\$150)
 - If there's a running expo the day before the race... most people end up buying something!
- Hotel and/or traveling to the race (if it's not local): \$400-800
- Coaching – \$200-300
 - Of course, We recommend our **Building Distance** program, which includes coaching support, an online community and personal attention from our coaches, as well as a full training program, but regardless, you should get some type of help in this arena!
 - You can also find training programs online either for free or for \$20-\$50. If you're going this route, the free one's like Hal Higdons are pretty much the same as the paid ones. These types of plans are great for the self-starter but remember they usually don't provide much guidance beyond your daily mileage and weekly progressions in distance and intensity. It's beyond their scope to answer your specific questions, trouble shoot your aches and pains, and tell you when to NOT follow the plan if and when sickness, fatigue, burnout, or injury pops up.

- You can also hire a personal trainer for strength work at a gym! This costs anywhere from \$50 an hour to \$150 plus. Your best bet is to ask around your running friends as not all strength trainers are familiar with runners and especially with half marathon runners.
- Another tip is to get a few friends together to split the cost of a strength session. You get a cheaper rate, motivation from your friends, and your trainer usually gets a little more than his 1v1 rate...a win-win all around. You definitely want someone who speaks your language.
- Boot camps and CrossFit classes can run from \$20-\$30 drop ins. Often you can purchase 10 classes passes and save a little bit per class. Again, before you commit make sure the time and location is convenient, you connect with your instructors, and they focus on you and your technique!





HOW TO PICK THE RIGHT RACE



Racing's not just for the warm summer months! Regardless of what you decide, make sure you give some consideration to the time of year, location, and weather challenges!

Runner's world has a good article on picking the right race.

There are many factors involved in selecting the right race for your first marathon. And choosing the wrong race could end up making your day of glory not so glorious.

THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN PICKING A RACE INCLUDE:

- **Budget** – See the costs in the section above.
- **Time of year** – Choose a time of year where training is easy on you. This is why fall marathons are popular... because the bulk of your training will be during the summer months. That said, if you're living somewhere where summers are over 100 degrees regularly a winter or early spring half marathon might be just the ticket!
- **Race registration** – Some races are hard to get into (NYC marathon is a lottery system, for example). If it's your first marathon... make sure you have a back up plan if you can't get in.
- **Establish your goals for the race** – See the section below.
- **Check out the race course** – If this is your first time, maybe don't pick the hilliest course imaginable, especially if you live and train in a hill free area.
- Also.. check out the **weather** for that time of year in the city of your race. Weather can be a huge factor in your performance. In general, it's always a little easier if it's 10 degrees colder than you like (and are used to) than if it's 10 degrees warmer than you like.



HOW TO PICK A MARATHON RUNNING PLAN

How you choose a training program depends on your current fitness, your goals, your past running experience, and of course the time you have to train!

This might be the most important element of how to run a marathon. Most people assume that they just need to "run more"... and the slight upgrade to that thinking that you just need to include "long runs" once a week. Both of these are true, but incomplete.

We are going to go out and say right now that we are completely biased on this subject. We have worked tirelessly over the last year to create the 30 Day Challenge (a precursor to running a marathon) and Building Distance (1/2 marathon and marathon training program) **and we believe it's the best online running program out there.** We'll go into it in more detail below, but let me just get that out of the way.

That said, there are many programs out there and they all have their benefits and are appropriate for different types of runners. Let's go through the popular ones and we'll give you our honest opinion on each.

HAL HIGDON'S HALF MARATHON TRAINING PROGRAM



This is probably the most popular. It gives a basic template for how to run a marathon that will give a sense of what mileage to run on what days, and helps organize your training.

PROS:

- There are many different schedules for different types of runners. From Novice Supreme (new runners) to Intermediate, to Advanced.
- It's FREE!
- Gives you a good idea at a glance of what type of mileage and training to expect from a marathon program, depending on your fitness level.
- If you are a very seasoned runner, with knowledge of how to treat and train yourself, how to incorporate strength and mobility work... this might be all you need.
- Did we mention it's FREE?

CONS:

- We like to call these programs: **marathon survival spreadsheets**. They give you a good idea of what it takes to survive the race, and if you can survive the mileage in the training (without injury), then you'll likely survive the race. But what if something goes wrong? There's no backup plan for that. But your plans always go without a hitch, right?
- No community or coaching support option.
- No specific guidance on strength work, or mobility work or on running form.
- Doesn't necessarily make you a better runner.
 - This is important. Becoming a better runner requires that you actually look/feel/and move like a better athlete. Without guidance on form, these types of training programs test out if you can run a marathon as the runner you are TODAY.

JEFF GALLOWAY'S HALF MARATHON TRAINING



PROGRAM

Jeff Galloway has been a running sage for 30+ years. He definitely knows a lot about running and his programs are followed almost as much as Hal Higdon. He's put out multiple books on marathons and training and a lot of it was cutting edge thinking when it was published. Even though a lot of that thinking has evolved, the basis of his training still stands.

PROS AND CONS:

- Almost the same pros and cons as Hal Higdon's... but Jeff Galloway doesn't have as many options for different levels of runners.

- Jeff has pioneered the run/walk method of running which has made marathon training safe and accessible to thousands of runners across the country and the world!
- Jeff has created the “magic mile” to help establish your marathon pace and build confidence for that pace.

HANSON BROTHERS RENEGADE HALF MARATHON



The Hanson Brothers recently put out a book, and they've been around for years and years. They have a (refreshingly) different take on how to run a marathon, and we think a lot of runners are turned on by that idea.

PROS:

- They encourage strength, speed and tempo work.
- They have a max of 16 miles for your long run, and distribute your mileage throughout the week.
- There is focus on pacing your runs and finding your marathon pace.
- There is a strong emphasis on training in a way that you actually enjoy the marathon and want to do it again!

CONS:

- They are a high mileage program that still requires a lot of time and commitment to run from 50 miles up to 70+ miles per week (*The authors make NO APOLOGY about this by the way).
- Other than a focus on keeping easy miles easy (when they're supposed to be) there's little discussion or training offered in the way of pro-active injury prevention.

- Like most run programs, there IS a strength chapter but like most run programs available it doesn't go much beyond a few basic, low intensity, low skill, body weight exercises.

COMPETITOR.COM MARATHON TRAINING PROGRAM

competitor.com

PROS:

- They encourage strength, speed and tempo work.
- They have pace specific program options depending on your targeted pace.
- They are integrated with Training Peaks which connects your GPS device, heart rate monitor, and training journal with the program itself.

CONS:

- Similar cons to the above Hanson's plan
- They include all none-running activities into one cross-training bucket, but don't specifically go beyond this, i.e. does TRX, barbell work, and swimming all have the same benefits? (probably not!)
- No live coaching or coaching support option.
- No community support.

RUNNER'S WORLD HALF MARATHON PROGRAMS

RUNNER'S WORLD

PROS:

- They have programs for different experience levels
- They offer time-specific half marathon plans
- They specify 4-6 days of running with rest on the other days.
- They include tempo, speed, and long days with pacing guidance
- Options to purchase a training APP, a downloadable PDF, or Training Peaks integrated plan

CONS:

- Little guidance or substance on strength training and cross training
- Little guidance on injury prevention
- No live coaching option.

TEAM IN TRAINING



PROS:

- Amazing community support and group runs
- Some coaching, but not specialized
- Supporting a great cause

CONS:

- Have to raise lots of money (\$1500+)
- No mobility and strength work or coaching
- Some people pressure to keep up with the group / finish long runs that might over extend them

BUILDING DISTANCE – THE RUN EXPERIENCE*

THE RUN EXPERIENCE

*Did you think we were going to write this section and not plug our amazing program? We'll try to be fair here... there are pro's and con's to every program

PROS:

- A scaleable running approach with live coaching support.
- 4 run days per week (pace and tempo specific) with 2 cross training days and 1 mobility/recovery day.
- Huge focus on building and maintaining your athletic base through an almost daily focus on your movement, strength, and mobility.
- In depth video resources on strength training, injury prevention exercises (runners' favorite!), run technique and even breathing.

CONS:

- **Cost** – Building Distance is a full and complete program and so it costs money, and it's not the cheapest thing in the world either. But we can't provide this level of coaching and support and training without charging, so you get what you pay for.
- **Self Motivated** – We love when our runners also join a running community in their city, and we welcome athletes to come train with us. But because our community is online, we can't actually run with you.
- **Lower mileage.** We don't consider this a CON but many runners who want to keep grinding do! We never stand in the way of runners who can safely and sustainably handle higher mileage, and after spending time with us on building strength, mobility, and technique adding mileage becomes quite easy!

Marathon training is tough! Balancing your time, your schedule, mounting fatigue, all while getting yourself fed!

A high-angle, black and white photograph of a group of runners training on a road. The runners are moving away from the camera towards the right. On the left side of the road is a dark, textured wall, likely the side of a tunnel. The road surface has a white line and a textured drainage strip. The text 'WHAT TO EXPECT DURING MARATHON TRAINING' is overlaid in the center in a light blue, bold, sans-serif font. Two horizontal white lines are positioned above and below the text.

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING MARATHON TRAINING

"Don't be fooled by thinking "lots of people do it... I'll be just fine." That is hopefully true, but regardless, the marathon should be approached with a lot of respect..."

This might be the most important element of your marathon experience.

Most people assume that they just need to "run more"... and the slight upgrade to that thinking that you just need to include "long runs" once a week. Both of these are true, but incomplete.

Training will be hard! It will take time. You'll have to do it at times when you're tired, in the dark, and even in bad weather. Bad things will inevitably come up and the half marathon runner will have to problem solve intelligently and battle through to the starting line, and then of course to the finish.

What you are doing is an extreme activity for a human. **Don't be fooled by thinking "lots of people do it... I'll be just fine."** That is hopefully true, but regardless, the half marathon should be approached with a lot of respect. Many people do it, but many people also get injured in the process. Let's make sure that isn't you.

In general, marathon training will focus heavily on gradually increasing your mileage week to week, which you'll see in your daily runs, but especially in your weekly long run. Every 3-4 weeks, your training will probably back down a bit, to give your body a break.

Long runs are the focus of most training plans, but we believe an equal amount of importance should be given to treating your body and preparing it for the mileage. This means strength work, and also mobility work so that all the stiffness that comes from working out hard doesn't start to affect your running because your joints aren't moving properly.

Active.com has a list of **marathon mistakes to avoid** that we like. Here are some things to think about

- You need to have some training at your goal marathon speed, and you also need to have runs that are faster and slower than your marathon speed.
 - If you only train in "one-gear" that gear is going to feel mighty tired during your race. Running workouts at different speeds is an important part of any program. And that means SLOWER in addition to faster.
- You're going to get sore / have some nagging sore spots

- These are signals your body is giving you. Just keep blasting through your workouts and mileage without listening is a sure path to injury. You NEED to have a plan on how to deal with your muscles/tissues/tendons as you put stress on them through your training. **Our Injury Prevention Package** is specifically designed for this, and you can get it separately or as part of **Building Distance**. Regardless, some sort of soft tissue self massage and mobility work is essential.
- Train like you plan to race
 - That means, try out gels, food, drinks etc on your long runs the same way you want to use them during the race. This will help you mentally as much as it will teach you about how your body responds to food and hydration during a long run.
- Sleep
 - You're going to need more of it as your training increases. Remember, that working out is a process of stress and recovery. The stress is your workouts, and the recovery is the time between workouts, especially sleep time. If you skip that part, you're not getting the benefit of your workouts. Try to sleep at least 30 minutes more than usual during the second half of your training. The difference will be huge.



NUTRITION DURING MARATHON TRAINING BY ELIZABETH INPYN



You are what you eat! So what's the best food to eat for training and racing success?


*“The journey begins at the kitchen table with how you feed your body. Training for a marathon will not only take a toll on your legs (and social life), it will also place greater nutritional demands on your diet. **Everything we eat and drink, or leave out, has a direct impact on our performance.**”*

How you eat during your marathon build up, i.e. your daily nutrition, is different from the fueling you will do for your race day and your workouts. Sure the gel or sports drink can get you through that long run but those are items you probably don't want to eat 24/7 For this section, we're bringing in TRE Sports Nutritionist Elizabeth Inpyn of [Inpyn.com](https://www.inpyn.com).

MILES AND MILES OF MEALS...

Follow the five tips below to make sure your body gets everything it needs for better running and better health!

- **Eat Real Food** – While most runners understand that food is fuel they've come to rely on bars, gels, sports drinks and super supplements to get them across that finish line. Convenience foods do have their place but they cannot make up the bulk of your meals or be the insurance policy you rely on to keep you from getting sick.
- **Macro and Micro Nutrients** – “Carbs-Carbs-Carbs” its long been the national chant of runners. Its common to associate macronutrients (fats, carbs and protein) with



energy production. But micronutrients, vitamins and minerals, carry out the metabolic processes that actually produce energy, boost immunity and speed up muscle adaptations. And since a runner can have a greater rate of micronutrient losses and generally higher energy needs, it's even more important to consume them frequently in a diet. Some key vitamins and minerals for runners are Vit D3, Vit E, Vit C, Calcium, Magnesium, Iron, Potassium, Zinc and Copper.

- **Hydrate** – All day, every day! Proper hydration is a vital part of every half marathon runner's diet plan. Our bodies are more than 60% water and we use it for pretty much every bodily function- from regulating body temperature, to removing waste, to lubricating joints and carrying oxygen to the cells. While a glass (or seven) of water is best; tea, nut milks, coconut water and homemade juices also help ensure you're properly hydrated. There are fluid filled foods you can eat as well such as watermelon, celery, cucumbers, strawberries and greens.
- **Post Run Refuel** – While there are a number of opinions about "what" you should eat after a run, everyone agrees that it's crucial to eat and begin the recovery process. By consuming nutrient rich foods you are decreasing inflammation, rebuilding damaged muscle tissue and increasing muscle glycogen stores. If you don't already have a meal or snack planned, use the last few minutes of your cool down to mentally set-up what you'll eat. Runners have a bad habit of spending all their time focused on mileage, splits and Instagram pictures, when recovering from these workouts is more important than the training itself. Running on muscles that are depleted, dehydrated and fatigued is a recipe for injury and overtraining.
- **Cut out the Crap (mostly)** – As the half marathon approaches it's a good idea to cut back on some of your favorite sugary, processed treats. To reference an old analogy, don't put poor fuel in your race car. The occasional bowl of coconut ice cream or a homemade batch of cookies is fine but don't sabotage your half marathon goal by drinking too much (soda or alcohol), eating fast food and relying on frozen dinners.

Running requires a mindful approach to food. Change your food mindset and you'll achieve your goals!



HOW TO RUN A MARATHON BY MASTERING RACE DAY NUTRITION



“A key point to remember however, solid nutrition doesn’t make you go faster; it simply allows the body to maintain the highest output for the longest period of time.”

This includes everything from your pre-race meal, the timing of those foods, and what you will eat, and drink, and when during the race! We hand it back to Elizabeth Inpyn to give us her latest fueling tips for race day success!

THE WELL EXECUTED RACE DAY PLAN

Planning what you’ll eat and drink on race day is just as important as any workout or pacing strategy. Body size, pacing, length of the race and environmental conditions are all contributing factors that help determine an athlete’s nutritional needs and selection of specific hydration and fuel. Below are four key points to help you develop an effective nutritional plan for your next race. A key point to remember however, solid nutrition doesn’t make you go faster; it simply allows the body to maintain the highest output for the longest period of time.

- **Don’t be last minute** – The ideal time to begin thinking about your race day nutrition is weeks if not months before the big day. When I work with clients on race specific nutrition I ask them for a 3 month commitment. This gives us time to assess previous races failures and successes, test fueling and hydration needs, sample various products to see what works best and then experiment on longer runs or warm up races. If you’re interested in working with me for an upcoming race you can check out my RDNP (Race Day Nutrition Planning) here <http://www.inpyn.com/plansservices/>

- **One size does NOT fit all** – How many times have you looked at a celebrity or pro athlete and thought whatever he/she is eating or drinking or using as a night cream must be the secret to their success? If the winner of the Boston Half marathon endorses a particular gel or hydration beverage do you immediately pull up Amazon Prime and place an order? Nutrition is 100% individual and you need to find the products that work best for you. A good starting point is to talk to coaches and nutritionists to get opinions of what they have seen work with their clients. Ask around the track or run group and begin testing. Don't get stuck using something that give you GI issues or tastes horrible just because you've seen a faster runner chug it at aide station.
- **Craft a Plan A and Plan B** – In all my years of racing (swimming, running and triathlon) I've never had a race go entirely as planned. And the longer the event distance the greater the likelihood of something going wrong. 13.1 miles presents 13.1 unique opportunities for fueling and hydration mishaps so I always go in with a Plan A and B. Plan A is your ideal scenario where you know when, what and how much you'll eat or drink. You have everything organized and color coded and you've tested it out on multiple occasions. Plan B is the backup, the plan you make for when the run isn't going as well as you wanted, the temperatures rise, you drop a bag of food or all of a sudden you're stopping the bathroom instead of waving at cheering family. **Knowing what to do when things go bad will not only calm your worried pre-race mind, but it will also prevent any bad decisions on course.**
- **Focus on hydration first, nutrition second** – While both are important, I've seen more races end in misery from improper hydration than a lack of fuel. The irony here is that 90% of runner will simply use "whatever is on course" for hydration and spend hours filling up pockets, sports bras and fuel belts with all crazy sorts of speed enhancing gels and magic race potions. Be mindful about every aspect of your race and know exactly what you'll be drinking, when and how much. Try out the on-course beverage so you know how your body responds but don't feel obligated to drink it. In terms of nutrition, don't overeat early on and end up running with stomach issues. Let your body (and gut) settle into the race before you start asking it to digest food. Most likely you've had a great pre-race breakfast and your body is ready to run for awhile before needing additional calories.

"While both are important, I've seen more races end in misery from improper hydration than a lack of fuel."

A person is shown from the waist down, holding their right knee with their left hand, suggesting pain or injury. They are wearing a grey running shoe with a white sole. The background is a blurred outdoor setting. The text "DEALING WITH RUNNING INJURIES" is overlaid in large, bold, light blue letters. Two horizontal white lines are positioned above and below the text.

DEALING WITH RUNNING INJURIES

Marathon performance and sticking to your training schedule are of course connected. Until the one day that throbbing-pain-that-turns-into-a-limp-that-prevents-you-from-starting-your-marathon tells you otherwise.

When it comes to dealing with running injuries it is first helpful to accept that fact that 8 out of 10 runners will pull up because of injury sometime this year. Of course the longer distances you race and the more mileage you run the more this injury risk compounds. Put another way, running injuries are akin to riding a bike...it's not IF you fall but WHEN....

Of course the best way to get over an injury is to NOT get injured in the first place (yeah I know...not very helpful if you are injured). Staying healthy involves paying attention to other topics in this post, including finding a smart training plan with an appropriate build up in mileage, running in correct footwear, and establishing a daily/weekly practice around movement and strength that checks your other athletic boxes (strength, range of motion, coordination, breathing, technique, warmups etc.).

BUT IF YOU ARE INJURED, CONSIDER THESE TIPS TO GET YOU BACK ON THE ROAD:

- **R.I.C.E (Rest, Ice, Compression, Elevation)** – is wrong?: R.I.C.E is a method that has been recommended by doctors and Physical Therapists for decades. And some parts (like compression) are used in modern training practices. But the **creator of the R.I.C.E method has even come out and said that he was wrong**, and that icing does not help in tissue recovery.
 - **If you do need to ice** (more for pain management, not for healing... think of it like aspirin), do it in the beginning but then quickly move on to other recovery strategies listed below.
- **Mobility: the short term solution!**
 - First it's helpful to accept this truth: the lion's share of overuse related running injuries are not a matter of bad luck, bad shoes, or training too much. They almost always have their run-stopping roots in your mechanics, i.e. how aligned, efficient, and powerfully you move your body.
 - If your mechanics are "off" and your body is moving out of alignment, it's up to YOU to fix it (PSST: It is your body after all.) In the short term, this means specifically addressing your soft-tissue health and your mobility (range of motion in your joints). We'll get to the longer term fix a little further down.
 - Our favorite resource for simple powerful methods to torture yourself and reinvigorate your body is hands down **Dr. Kelly Starrett of MobilityWod**.

A person is running on a paved road that curves along a cliffside. The sky is overcast and grey, suggesting dusk or dawn. The road has a white dashed line on the right side. A guardrail is visible on the right side of the road. The overall mood is serene and focused.

HOW TO DO YOUR LONG RUNS

The highlight of the marathoner's week...the long run!

Here are a few tips to nail the specifics of your long run to maximize performance and minimize injury for your marathon!

- **Preparation:**

- **Route:** Whether you're doing a time-focused run or a distance-focused run it's best to have some kind of route in mind, preferably that avoids excessively busy roads and stop lights. The closer you get to your marathon, the closer your training course should mimic your race course, i.e. is it flat, rolling, or hilly? Pavement, fire road, or trail?
- **Fuel and hydration:** especially when runs shoot north of 90 minutes to 2 hours it's important to supplement with fueling and hydration. Will you carry everything? Or will you plan a convenience store stop? Or will you do loops and hide a water bottle somewhere?

- **Training Partners**

- Long runs with training partners is often the training and social highlight of the week! Running with others is fun and helps pass the time. Plus you can support each other as the runs get longer and tougher
- But therein lies the problem. One of the bigger mistakes ambitious marathoners make is running their long runs too fast, either alone or in chasing their friends at a pace that's closer to projected race pace.
- While it's good to spend some time at race pace, spending too much time or ALL of your time there will only beat your body up and break you down prematurely. So choose partners that you know you can run with comfortably, are a little slower than you, or that don't mind if you split up.

- **Pacing**

- As a general rule, long runs should be run at a pace that is 1-2 minutes SLOWER than your projected marathon pace. Another approximate way to find this sweet spot is to take the "talk test." Basically, you should be running at a pace where you can string full sentences together. If you....cannot... get more....than a few...words in, you might be working too hard!

- Even splits (running a steady pace from start to finish) is a great way to first practice your long runs. New runners tend to run too fast and then slow down at the end. The long run teaches patience here and the wisdom of a slow start! Trust me in that you will get all the necessary physiological benefits running slow and steady chatting away with your friends. Plus, the more you practice this in training, the less likely you will go out too fast and risk making a big mistake on race day.
- Negative splits (running the 2nd half faster than the first half) is a great way to incorporate time running at race pace without overly beating up and abusing your body. The faster finish trains your body to work harder through fatigue for when it counts...those last few miles of the marathon! How dramatically you negative split your run, and when you choose to add miles at race pace is subject to your experience and marathon goals. But if you're trying this for the first time plan on negative splitting no more than the last 25% of your run and only by a small amount, i.e. a 3-5 seconds per mile.

- **Running Form**

- Running form is super hard to keep together, especially as fatigue sets in. But the more you can practice running longer with better mechanics, not only will you feel less beat up and less likely to get injured, you'll be running more mechanically and physiologically efficient!
- Walk breaks: take them! They don't have to be long and are super helpful for "re-setting" your posture and your run position. Smart placement of occasional walk breaks can help you run further without being beat up!
- Focus: on one or two key words that will help you re-focus when you need it. It could be "breathe" "cadence" or "shoulders" but some word to remind you to work on relaxing, breathing, and keeping your cadence high goes a long way! Plus you'll be building your mental ability to do the same thing on race day itself

- But start simply by working “above” and “below” your injured area with simple self treatment exercises such as foam rolling the surrounding tissue.
 - Let’s say you experience knee pain. You’ll want to work “above” the joint in your quads, your hamstrings, your groin, and yes your IT band. In Dr. Starrett’s parlance, just by “feeding slack” to the joint you give it a lot more room to breathe and to move in a smoother more aligned manner.
 - But remember we still need to look “below” too, so that means spending equal time addressing your calves and your shins.
 - Tinker, experiment, and figure out what combination of soft tissue work, self massage, and stretching works best for your body!

WE HAVE AN INJURY PREVENTION SERIES THAT WALKS YOU THROUGH THESE TYPES OF MOVEMENTS AND SOFT TISSUE WORK FROM HEAD TO TOE.

- **Keep Training: Your body responds to movement. So find out what CAN you do?**
 - First evaluate the severity of your injury. A broken leg or cracked rib will most likely keep you on the side lines for weeks and help your body to heal itself. So be sure to follow guidelines given by your health care providers...as well as common sense (i.e. what does and does not feel good?)
 - Fortunately most common runner injuries: Runner’s Knee, IT Band Syndrome, Plantar Fasciitis, Shin Splints, and Achilles tendonitis respond well to a temporary reprieve from what first caused the aggravation (i.e. a reduction in running) and a temporary shift towards other forms of movement.
 - This pro-active movement approach works especially well when you catch the potential injury EARLY in the process...so it needs only a few days to bounce back...rather than weeks or months of no running.
 - So replace your run workout with something comparable:
 - Let’s say you have a race coming up and you feel you cannot afford to lose fitness.
 - Can you swap the next few days’ run workouts with time instead on a bike, on a rower, or in a pool?

- For example, let's say you're dealing with an achilles issue that's really bothered by the impact and push off in running, but riding the bike, rower, or swimming does NOT bother the achilles.
- Keep training and following your schedule albeit on this other apparatus
- If you have intervals to run, do comparable intervals biking, swimming, or rowing.
- Replacing a longer run? Saddle up and strap in for a longer, easier session.
- While this specific tip doesn't "fix" your issue, it does keep you happy, healthy, and sane as you continue to train! Additionally, once you're cleared to run, you'll do so without having lost as much fitness as simply waiting on the sidelines!

- **Strength & Technique: the long-term solution**

- In the mobility section I addressed the short term perspective of fixing your mechanics, which involves addressing your joints' range of motion and your general tissue health. Cleaning this up is akin to freshly lubing your bike chain and pumping the tires! Still we need to continue practice riding the bike so we don't crash as often (or at all) in the future. That's where strength and running technique come in!
- How strong do you need to be to run? Simply put you need to be strong enough to maintain good running mechanics without breaking down. Remember it's the break down that usually causes the injuries.
- Improving running strength includes everything from weekly strength training, to focus on your day to day lifestyle and body positions, to cementing that work in the form of run technique drills for running itself.
- So IF you're breaking down in a specific area, it's important to strengthen and stabilize that area and focus on your mechanics.
 - Use your injury to evaluate what you can more specifically improve to prevent that breakdown happening again.

- For example, let's say your dealing with IT Band Syndrome. You're working on rolling your quads, hamstrings, and glutes. But now you need to work on hip stability and hip position while running. Perhaps by adding single leg balance exercises, lunges, step ups, and deadlifts you'll strengthen your hips. Then work on running drills that also improve your hip stability, specifically the stable arm drill, posture checklist, and pulling drills can make a difference keeping those hips stable for longer periods of time.
 - Adding this approach regularly while you're healing will help you return running not only stronger and more efficient, it'll help make sure that injury does not happen again.
- The final points:
 - Resting IS super important for reducing inflammation and yes your body has a strong ability to heal itself. There is one major caveat to this: your body cannot "rest" it's way out of poor movement related injuries. If you don't address your mechanics you'll go right back to where you started (injured!) once you resume training.





HOW TO CHOOSE THE “RIGHT” SHOE



Keep those hooves happy with the right running shoes. It's tough to run when your feet aren't along for the ride!

Every foot is a special snowflake, but there are general things everyone should consider when getting their running shoes (besides the coolest or most expensive). And hey, did you know that the most expensive shoe **often times isn't the best shoe?**

Recommended tips:

- Get a gait analysis from a fitting professional.
- Choose a 1/2 size larger than your normal size.
- Take em for a test ride before you buy!
- Replace your shoes every 300ish miles. Or just run in multiple shoes!



HOW TO PRACTICE INJURY PREVENTION





Running is one of the most injury ridden sports out there. Don't join the club.

It takes a very level headed and dedicated athlete to spend equal time on non-running related exercises as they do pumping out miles on the trails/road. But taking steps to develop as an ATHLETE rather than only as a runner is a vital component of getting to the start line of your first half marathon.

To be a healthy runner, always take measures to:

- Attack "hot spots" like the problems they are. Not sure where to start? Start with your calf and achilles (check our Pinch Test), quads, and IT Band.
- ACTUALLY cool down after your bada** workout. This can include some easy walking followed by light mobility work. What's even better? Throw your legs up the wall for 10 minutes!
- Research exercises that will help your painful (insert body part) and don't leave them out!

You know what's much cheaper and far less debilitating than surgery
Taking care of YOURSELF.



HOW TO
REGULARLY
STRENGTH TRAIN



Strength training can start with simple things like planks and pushups but go far beyond that!

We here at The Run Experience value strength training very much. Runners who use strength training are typically the ones making the most progress and are getting injured the least. The stronger you are, the more resilient you will be to the harsh (yes, harsh) demands of running.

Why you shouldn't forget about strength training:

- Building a stronger body that has greater alignment, greater coordination and range of motion really helps prevent injuries!
- Re-enforce sound movement patterns that will help you run stronger.
- Get more power out of your stride.
- Develop a stronger core, which we've heard is pretty important
- Get that butt you've always wanted. Just kidding, but not really.



HOW TO PRACTICE YOUR MARATHON RACE PLAN



Training is only 1/2 the half marathon battle! Your ability to execute a sound race strategy is the other!

It's a pretty big no-brainer that you shouldn't try anything new or dramatically different on your actual race day. Especially in your first half marathon!

Today is not the day for you to run in new shoes, eat some miracle pre-race meal, try different flavors of gels/hydration mixes, etc.

You've logged many hours getting yourself used to a "normal" routine so trust that routine will get you to the finish line!

Long runs in training act as opportunities to:

- Practice pre-run meals. What are you eating? How long do you wait to run?
- Dial in your mid-run nutrition. Gels? Food? Drink mixes? Also, when are you taking them in?
- Run in your race day outfit. Especially the socks!
- Flavors matter. Some flavors sit well in your stomach and some don't. Experiment.



HOW TO
RECOVER AFTER
YOUR MARATHON



You too can experience the arctic, and the incredible recovery benefits with an ice bath in your own tub!

The better you are at recovering, the more time you will be able to invest in your training, and the better runner/athlete you will be.

So how should you cool down? **Hint:** rushing through your workout and straight into your commute and work is not always the best thing for down regulating your nervous system and restoring mobility and range of motion. Try to give yourself 5 minutes of easy walking, light stretching, and a few deep breaths before you move on.

- Get both your heart rate and breathing rate down by walking around. A good rule of thumb is that you should walk until you've stopped actively sweating (temperature aside).
- Hydrate and refuel. And don't wait! Get some food and water down the hatch within 30 minutes of exercising.
- Foam roll or get on a lacrosse ball to help encourage blood flow to those hard working muscles.

FUN STUFF — EARN STYLE POINTS

Be proud of you and your running! Follow these tips to show off those legs of yours.

There are many aspects of how to run a marathon that aren't required, but everyone enjoys regardless. Prove you're a true marathoner by doing the following:

- Put a 26.2 sticker on your car. Let em know.
- Not training? Whatever. Wear your running tights and your visor around town.
- Go to as many social events as you can just so you can tell people you're not drinking because you've got a long run in the morning.
- Shave minutes* off your time by shaving your legs
- Talk about specific professional runners and scoff when people don't know who you're talking about.
- Always include the word "easy" before whatever amount of miles you ran. Example: "Yeah last Sunday I banged out an easy 14 miler before eating 3 burritos."
- After your first marathon is complete, be sure to set it in stone by getting a "26.2" tattoo.
- No matter how in shape you are, always tell your non-running friends, "I'm so out of shape."
- Chug kale, but top-off runs with 4 beers at a local brewery and a pint of ice cream when you get home.
- Alienate your non-running friends by inviting them on all your runs, knowing fully that they won't come.

HAPPY TRAINING! **BE SURE TO CHECK OUT OUR TRAINING PLANS** IF YOU'RE LOOKING TO ABSOLUTELY CRUSH THAT FIRST RACE STRENGTH TRAINING, MOBILITY EXERCISES, RUNNING TECHNIQUE AND MUCH, MUCH MORE.



We have videos and programs for everything a runner needs to show up strong, healthy, and fit. Join us and get supported through your event!