

Hal Higdon's MARATHON TRAINING GUIDE

Alternate Marathon Program



 *Hit the button to access full marathon programs*

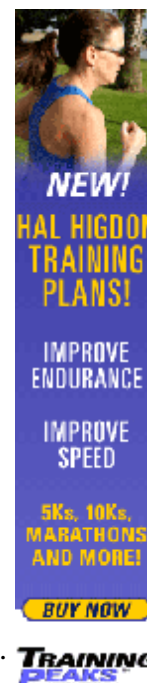
WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN YOUR MARATHON GETS CANCELED? Within a few hours after President Bush launched an attack on Iraq, the organizers of the DC Marathon announced that its race had been canceled because of security concerns. And looking back two years, several marathons were canceled in the wake of the World Trade Center attack on September 11. Also, runners sometimes have to cancel marathons for other reasons, everything from illness to family or business situations. Often, the logical thing to do is shrug and rationalize: "There are more important things to life than racing 26 miles 385 yards."

That's true, but that doesn't make the decision to postpone your marathon any easier. What do you do? First, you cry. Then you begin to consider your options. I'm going to suggest several options and also provide some training programs if you have to postpone your marathon one or two or three weeks or more. Here are the options:

1. Don't panic: Don't make a sudden and rash decision that may not be the wisest approach to the problem. Take time before committing yourself to a new course of action. When it comes to an injury, the best approach is often rest, ice and anti-inflammatories. You can skip the ice and anti-inflammatories, but maybe you need to at least rest your mind. Take anywhere from 24 to 72 hours or more to plot your next strategy.

2. Run anyway: The official marathon may be canceled, but run 26 miles 385 yards anyway. Given security restrictions in the District of Columbia, running the planned course of the DC Marathon may not be possible. If so, find another route of the exact marathon length. You will not get a T-shirt, and you will not get a medal, but at least you will have completed your marathon. I concede that this may not be the most satisfactory strategy for those doing their first marathon, but it may work for those of us with previous finishes.

3. Run anyway elsewhere: Well, maybe you should have panicked and immediately lined up a different marathon scheduled for the same day. To locate a marathon, check the calendars available on the [Runner's World](http://www.runnersworld.com) website. On the same weekend as the DC Marathon, *Runner's World* lists six other marathons from Rome, Italy to Hilo, Hawaii. Unfortunately, none are close to the District of Columbia, so some scrambling may be necessary. That brings us to the next



option.

4. Postpone your marathon a week or more: This seems most sensible. Runners who follow my 18-week training programs taper for three weeks following their climactic 20-mile long run in Week 4. Extending your taper an extra week is not much of a problem. I'll tell you how to do so below. Stretching into a fifth or sixth taper week is somewhat problematical, but I'll help you there too.

5. Postpone your marathon a month or more: This gives you an opportunity to pause, move back in time, and begin retraining. Again, this is less feasible for those planning a first marathon, who may be drained of psychic energy by their 18-week commitment. ("You mean I have to run another 20-miler?") Experienced runners may be able to regroup more easily. My recommendation would be to plan some "race" the weekend scheduled for your marathon, then hit the training again. You may find that you will actually achieve more success this way, if your motivation is high. A half-marathon might be the best alternative race, although I concede finding one in the exact time slot may not be easy.

6. Cancel your marathon entirely: This is the toughest option, but it's one often forced on us for various reasons, beginning with injury. The base of fitness built over the previous 18 weeks will not be lost. And if you do decide to do your next marathon six months or a year later, you probably will be even better prepared. Depending on when that "next marathon" is, you might want to follow a different training program before it comes time to begin marathon training again. There are numerous programs offered on [my website](#). Pick one. You can also access my marathon training programs on my website, by clicking on the green button near the top of this screen, or the Marathon Training Guide link below.

Assuming that you choose options 3, 4 or 5 above, here's what to do.

Alternate Marathon Training Schedules

Let's begin with the last three weeks of my training program, the taper following the final 20-miler in Week 4. If you have been using one of my training programs, you already know what these three weeks look like. If you are using another training program, I'm going to suggest that the numbers may be different and in different boxes, but that pattern of gradually decreasing effort will be about the same. This is the Novice schedule, so runners using my Intermediate or Advanced schedules may need to compare and interpolate the numbers with their last three weeks.

Week	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun
3	rest	5 m run	8 m run	4 m run	rest	12	cross
2	rest	4 m run	6 m run	3 m run	rest	8	cross
1	rest	3 m run	4 m run	2 m run	rest	rest	marathon

Postpone your marathon one week

This is both easy and difficult to do. Easy, because all you need do is add another easy week by repeating one done before. Hard, because if you are into the final week, it may be too late to make significant changes. (Those running the canceled DC Marathon learned only Thursday morning.) For the sake of the chart below, let's assume you have one week notice on your canceled race, two weeks notice on your substitute marathon. If so, repeat Week 2 of your taper, then do Week 1. But in all honesty, following a schedule of 3- to 4-mile workouts every other day will allow you to maintain both your fitness and sanity. Intermediate or Advanced runners can follow my usual advice to maintain the quality of your workouts (same pace) but hold or lower the quantity (number of miles).

Week	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun
<u>3</u>	rest	5 m run	8 m run	4 m run	rest	12	cross
<u>2</u>	rest	4 m run	6 m run	3 m run	rest	8	cross
1	rest	4 m run	6 m run	3 m run	rest	8	cross
-1	rest	3 m run	4 m run	2 m run	rest	rest	marathon

Postpone your marathon two weeks

This is a tougher stretch, since you now will have five weeks of what people on my V-Team refer to as "Taper Madness." That recognizes the fact that when I ask them to cut their mileage and rest, they begin to suffer withdrawal symptoms. They miss that daily run, and they're unhappy when I tell them to cut that 6-miler back to 3 miles--or even to take a full day of rest. So the problem is psychological more than physical. Nevertheless, my approach would be the same as above. Simply back up in your program two weeks. This means doing a second 12-miler for a long run and a second 8-miler as well. You should have no difficulty maintaining your fitness using this approach. If you feel a bit "overtrained" because of being forced to extend your marathon program from 18 to 20 weeks, cut back even further on the miles. But to try to maintain quality.

Week	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun
<u>3</u>	rest	5 m run	8 m run	4 m run	rest	12	cross
<u>2</u>	rest	4 m run	6 m run	3 m run	rest	8	cross
1	rest	5 m run	8 m run	4 m run	rest	12	cross
-1	rest	4 m run	6 m run	3 m run	rest	8	cross
-2	rest	3 m run	4 m run	2 m run	rest	rest	marathon

Postpone your marathon three weeks

In adding three weeks to your marathon program, it becomes more than a 6-week taper.

You have time now to include some quality training. I'm not going to send you out for an added 20-miler on the day you had planned to run your marathon, but probably you should go at least 16. And if you have an opportunity to do a shorter-distance race, take it. A half marathon would be the best choice, but if it is more convenient to run a 5-K or 10-K, that's fine too. You can race the shorter distances full speed if you want, but I'm inclined to run anything longer as a pace run, possibly picking up the pace in the last 3 miles if you feel invigorated.

Week	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun
3	rest	5 m run	8 m run	4 m run	rest	12	cross
2	rest	4 m run	6 m run	3 m run	rest	8	cross
1	rest	5 m run	8 m run	4 m run	rest	16	cross
-1	rest	5 m run	6 m run	4 m run	rest	12	cross
-2	rest	4 m run	6 m run	3 m run	rest	8	cross
-3	rest	3 m run	4 m run	2 m run	rest	rest	marathon

Postpone your marathon a month or more

I'm not going to provide a specific training schedule, because "a month or more" could mean anything from four weeks to eighteen weeks. In this case, simply count the appropriate number of weeks back from your substitute marathon and begin again at that week. If this means doing a second 20-miler or more, accept that burden. As with the 3-week schedule above, doing a race at sub-marathon distance might add to your preparation. If you have more specific questions, I'll be glad to answer them on one of my **InterActiveTraining** forums. If you are not signed up and want to, click on the link below. It was a drag to have had to postpone your marathon and extend your preparations, but these are tough times. Good luck with whatever you do.



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