

Hal Higdon's MARATHON TRAINING GUIDE



Advanced Programs

 *Hit the button for the full Advanced -I Training Schedule*

 *Hit the button for the full Advanced -I I Training Schedule*

The training programs for advanced marathoners follow a progressive buildup--similar to that for **Novice** and **Intermediate** runners, except you start at 10 miles and peak with three 20-milers. There is also more training at marathon pace (usually Saturdays, the day before Sunday long runs). Please note that we do *not* recommend doing your long runs at marathon pace. That adds too much stress, particularly when coupled with the speed sessions scheduled for Tuesdays and Thursdays. If you overtrain, your performance will suffer.

Speed sessions consist of hill repeats, interval training and tempo runs in various combinations. Explanations on how to perform each workout follow below and in the weekly screens. Admittedly, not everybody wants to do speedwork, or enjoys going to the track. If that is your philosophy, you are better off following one of my intermediate programs: **Intermediate-I** or **Intermediate-II**. The advanced schedules are designed only for the hard core, those willing to take it to the limit. Only a small percentage of today's runners classify themselves as Advanced or want to follow this demanding a schedule. We track how many runners sign up through **InterActive Training** for my various schedules, and fewer than 10 percent choose Advanced. If that is you, welcome aboard.

I might add that you can be male or female, a 2:30 marathoner or a 4:30 marathoner and still train as an Advanced runner. What decides whether or not you are an Advanced runner is your background and your familiarity with this type of training plus your attitude. If this is your first marathon, regardless of your talent, consider following the Novice program and simply set as your goal finishing, rather than finishing fast. See you a couple of marathons from now. If you haven't done the various types of speedwork included in this program, it's also Bye Bye. You do *not* want to begin speedwork in a marathon program if you have not done it before. For an introduction to speedwork, check the [Spring Training](#) section on this web site.

Here is an explanation of the type of training you will encounter in the Advanced programs:

Long Runs: The key to all my marathon programs are the **long run** on weekends, which builds from 10 miles in the first week (Week 18) to a maximum of 20 miles, done three times in Weeks 11, 13 and 15. Although some experienced runners do train longer, I see no advantage in doing 23, 26 or even 31 mile runs. (I've tried that myself in the past, and it just wore me out.) Save your energy and concentrate on quality runs the rest of the week.

Consistency is most important. You can skip an occasional workout, or juggle the schedule depending on other commitments, but do *not* cheat on the long runs. Notice that although the weekly long runs get progressively longer, every third week is a "stepback" week, where we reduce mileage to allow you to gather strength for the next push upward. Rest is an important component of any training program.

Run Slow: I know this is tough for you. You want to go out on those long runs and **BLAST!** Don't! Normally I recommend that runners do their long runs anywhere from 45 to 90 seconds per mile or more **slower** than their marathon pace. This is *very* important, particularly for Advanced runners who do speedwork during the week. **Listen to what the Coach is about to tell you!** The physiological benefits kick in around 90-120 minutes, no matter how fast you run. You'll burn a few calories and trigger glycogen regeneration, teaching your muscles to conserve fuel. Running too fast defeats this purpose and may unnecessarily tear down your muscles, compromising not only your midweek workouts, but the following week's long run. Save your fast running for the marathon itself. There are plenty of days during the rest of the week, when you can run fast. So simply do your long runs at a comfortable pace, one that allows you to converse with your training partners, at least during the beginning of the run. Which brings up my next point.

3/1 Training: Toward the end of the run, if you're still feeling fresh, you may want to pick up the pace and finish somewhat faster. This will convert your long run into what I call a **3/1 Run**. That means you run the first three-fourths of your long run (say the first 12 miles of a 16-miler) at an easy pace, then do the final one-fourth (4 miles of a 16-miler) at a somewhat faster pace--though still not race pace. This 3/1 strategy is advised for only the most experienced runners--viewers like you--and I don't recommend you do it more than once out of every three weekends. In other words: first weekend, easy run; second weekend, 3/1 Run; third weekend, step back to a shorter distance. My philosophy is that it's better to run too slow during long runs, than too fast. The important point is that you cover the prescribed distance; how fast you cover it doesn't matter. **Note:** You will only be able to accelerate into a 3/1 Run if you run in control during the "3" portion of the workout. In other words: slow.

Hill Training: Hill training in this program is scheduled for every third Tuesday for Advanced-II runners, once every fourth Thursday for Advanced-I runners. I alternate hill training with tempo runs and interval training mainly to provide you with some variety in your training. If you want to juggle the workouts for your convenience, feel free to do so. Even though your marathon of choice has a flat course (i.e., Chicago), hill repeats can be an important part of your training, because running hills will strengthen your quadriceps muscles. Also, there is less impact running up a hill than running fast on the flat. If your planned marathon is on a hilly course, you might want to run more than the half dozen hill workouts I've included in the Advanced schedule. Best choice would be to substitute hill repeats for some, if not all, of the interval workouts. And/or do your tempo runs over a hilly course--if one is available to you. The speed benefits of hill training are similar to those for interval training on the track (below). Olympic champion Frank Shorter refers to hill training "as interval training in disguise." Select a hill about a quarter-mile long, but don't worry about the pitch or the exact distance. Run up hard, as hard as you might during a 400 track repeat. Then turn and jog back down, repeating the uphill sprints until finished. If you plan to run a marathon with more downhill than uphill running (such as Boston), do some of your hill repeats down as well as up. This will condition your muscles to absorb the shock of downhill running. But don't overdo it, otherwise you'll increase your risk of injury. When

I do hill repeats to get ready for Boston, I generally do two up to one down (2/1), but you might want to begin with 3/1 as your ratio.

Interval Training: In training for a marathon, long repeats (800, 1600, or even longer) generally work better than short repeats (200, 400). I've prescribed 800 repeats for this program, done every third week on Tuesdays for Advanced-II runners, every fourth week on Thursdays for Advanced-I runners. Run an 800 at faster-than-marathon pace, rest by jogging and/or walking 400, then start again. Further instructions are included in the weekly screens, but you might want to consider running these like "Yasso Repeats." Regular readers of *Runner's World* are familiar with what I mean. Bart Yasso is Promotions Director for the magazine. Bart suggests that you run your 800 repeats using the same numbers as your marathon time. In other words, if you run a 3-hour marathon, you do the 800s in 3 minutes. A 3:10 marathoner does 3:10 repeats; 3:20 marathoner, 3:20 repeats, etc. It seems silly, but it works. Note: Just because you can run 10 x 800 in 3:10, there is no guarantee that you can run 3:10 in the marathon. It works the other way around: If you can run a 3:10 marathon, you probably can do that workout without straining too much.

Tempo Runs: A tempo run is a continuous run with a buildup in the middle to *near* 10-K race pace. Notice I said "near" 10-K race pace. Coach Jack Daniels defines the peak pace for tempo runs at the pace you might run if racing flat-out for about an hour. That's fairly fast, particularly if the tempo run is 45 minutes long, but you're only going to be near peak pace for 3-6 minutes in the middle of the run. In the Advanced programs, tempo runs are scheduled for Tuesdays or Thursdays. Here's how to do this workout. A tempo run of 30 to 40 minutes would begin with 10-15 minutes easy running, build to peak speed during the next 10-20 minutes, then finish with 5-10 minutes easy running. The pace buildup should be gradual, not sudden, with peak speed coming about two-thirds into the workout and only for those few minutes mentioned above. You can do tempo runs almost anywhere: on the road, on trails or even on a track. Tempo runs should *not* be punishing. You should finish refreshed, which will happen if you don't push the pace too hard or too long. It helps also to pick a scenic course for your tempo runs. You can do your tempo run with another runner, but usually it works better to run solo. There's less danger of going too slow or (more the problem) too fast if you choose his pace, not yours.

Cross-Training: There's no cross-training scheduled for advanced runners. Sorry, but we don't have a place for it. If you feel you need to (or like to) cross train as a means of avoiding injuries (or as a variation from running), you can substitute an aerobic workout (swimming, cycling, walking) for the running you might do on Mondays or Wednesdays. Go for about the same length of time it would take you to do the running workout scheduled for that day. For instance, if you would normally take a half hour to run an easy four-miler, cross-train for that length of time. Resist the temptation to turn this into a hard workout, which is easy to do because you'll be using muscles different from those you use running. Cross-train at about the same stress level as you would on a running day. Friday is *not* a good day to cross-train. I feel you need this day of rest to prepare yourself for the tough weekend workouts.

Race Pace: Most of the Saturday runs are done at Race Pace. What do I mean by "Race Pace?" It's a frequently asked question on my V-Boards, so let me explain. Race Pace is the pace you plan to run in the race you're training for. If you're training for a 4:00 marathon, your average pace per mile is 9:09. So you would run that same pace when asked to run Race Pace in this program (sometimes stated simply as "Pace").

Races: In most of my training programs, I do not prescribe races. I don't want runners feeling that they are obligated to race on a specific weekend, and at a specific distances, because that's what the schedule says. But a certain amount of racing is good, because it forces you to run at peak speed and provides feedback related to your fitness level. If you know your 10-K time, for instance, you can use one popular formula and multiply that time in minutes by 4.66 and get an estimate of your marathon potential. If you run other distances, you can use various prediction calculators to do the same. My favorite calculator is that offered on McMillanRunning.com.

Easy Runs: Training on Mondays and Wednesdays should be done mostly at a comparatively easy pace. These are days of semi-rest, nevertheless, as the weekend mileage builds, the weekday mileage also builds. Add up the numbers, and you'll see that you run only slightly more miles during the week as you do during long runs on the weekends. The program is built on the concept that you do more toward the end than at the start. That sounds logical, doesn't it? Believe me--as tens of thousands of marathoners using this schedule have proved--it works.

Rest: Despite my listing it at the end, rest is an important component of this or any training program. Scientists will tell you that it is during the rest period (the 24 to 72 hours between hard bouts of exercise) that the muscles actually regenerate and get stronger. Coaches also will tell you that you can't run hard unless you are well rested. And it's the hard running that allows you to improve. If you're constantly fatigued, you will fail to reach your potential. This is why I designate Friday as a day of rest even for Advanced runners. It allows you to gather forces for hard running on Saturdays and Sundays. If you need to take more rest days--because of a cold or a late night at the office or a sick child--do so. And if you're tired from the weekend, take Monday off as well--or cut the length of your Wednesday run. The secret to success in any training program is consistency, so as long as you are consistent with your training during the full 18 weeks of the program, you can afford--and may benefit from--extra rest.

InterActive Training: If you would like more help with your marathon training, sign up for my InterActive Training Forum. The Forums are available for free through [The LaSalle Bank Chicago Marathon Website](http://TheLaSalleBankChicagoMarathonWebsite.com). Look for the icon marked "Training" and surf your way into that valuable resource area. Ask me a training question or read my responses to questions from other runners. If you would like me to send you daily email messages as you train for either the Chicago Marathon or other marathons or other race distances, click here: [InterActive Training](http://InterActiveTraining.com). Whichever route you take, I'll be there to help you with even more training advice.

And now, lace up your running shoes. It is time to begin!

Here are your Advanced training schedules. The below charts tell you what to do for each day for the 18 weeks leading to the marathon. Click on the week numbers on the left side of the chart to be taken to the weekly schedules with detailed instructions.

Marathon Training Schedule: *Advanced-I*

Week	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun
1	3 m run	5 m run	3 m run	3 x hill	rest	5 m pace	10
2	3 m run	5 m run	3 m run	30 Tem	rest	5 m run	11
3	3 m run	6 m run	3 m run	4 x 800	rest	6 m pace	8
4	3 m run	6 m run	3 m run	4 x hill	rest	6 m pace	13
5	3 m run	7 m run	3 m run	35 Tem	rest	7 m run	14
6	3 m run	7 m run	3 m run	5 x 800	rest	7 m pace	10
7	3 m run	8 m run	4 m run	5 x hill	rest	8 m pace	16
8	3 m run	8 m run	4 m run	40 Tem	rest	8 m run	17
9	3 m run	9 m run	4 m run	6 x 800	rest	9 m pace	12
10	3 m run	9 m run	4 m run	6 x hill	rest	9 m pace	19
11	4 m run	10 m run	5 m run	45 Tem	rest	10 m run	20
12	4 m run	6 m run	5 m run	7 x 800	rest	6 m pace	12
13	4 m run	10 m run	5 m run	7 x hill	rest	10 m pace	20
14	5 m run	6 m run	5 m run	45 tem	rest	6 m run	12
15	5 m run	10 m run	5 m run	8 x 800	rest	10 m pace	20
16	5 m run	8 m run	5 m run	6 x hill	rest	4 m pace	12
17	4 m run	6 m run	4 m run	30 Tem	rest	4 m run	8
18	3 m run	2 m run	3 m run	4 x 400	rest	2 m run	race

Marathon Training Schedule: *Advanced-II*

Week	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun
1	3 m run	3 x hill	3 m run	30 Tem	rest	5 m pace	10
2	3 m run	30 Tem	3 m run	3 m pace	rest	5 m run	11
3	3 m run	4 x 800	3 m run	30 Tem	rest	6 m pace	8
4	3 m run	4 x hill	3 m run	35 Tem	rest	6 m pace	13
5	3 m run	35 Tem	3 m run	3 m pace	rest	7 m run	14
6	3 m run	5 x 800	3 m run	35 Tem	rest	7 m pace	10
7	3 m run	5 x hill	4 m run	40 Tem	rest	8 m pace	16
8	3 m run	40 Tem	4 m run	3 m pace	rest	8 m run	17
9	3 m run	6 x 800	4 m run	40 Tem	rest	9 m pace	12
10	3 m run	6 x hill	4 m run	45 Tem	rest	9 m pace	19
11	4 m run	45 Tem	5 m run	4 m pace	rest	10 m run	20
12	4 m run	7 x 800	5 m run	45 Tem	rest	6 m pace	12
13	4 m run	7 x hill	5 m run	50 Tem	rest	10 m pace	20
14	5 m run	45 tem	5 m run	5 m pace	rest	6 m run	12
15	5 m run	8 x 800	5 m run	40 Tem	rest	10 m pace	20
16	5 m run	6 x hill	5 m run	30 Tem	rest	4 m pace	12
17	4 m run	30 Tem	4 m run	4 m pace	rest	4 m run	8

18	3 m run	4 x 400	3 m run	rest	rest	2 m run	race
--------------------	---------	---------	---------	------	------	---------	------



[Click Here To Order a Print Version of the
Marathon Training Guide and Other Books by Hal Higdon](#)

[Hal Higdon's Marathon Training Guide](#)

[Higdon's Home Page](#)