

Hal Higdon's MARATHON TRAINING GUIDE



Intermediate Training Programs

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

 *Hit the button for the full Intermediate - II Training Schedule*

The **Novice** and **Advanced** training programs in my **Marathon Training Guide** represent the extremes. The former program is designed for runners running their first marathon, or experienced runners who are happy with that level of training and see no need to do more. The latter program is designed for those *very* experienced runners, who have done a number of marathons, perhaps have plateaued in their times, and want to maximize their ability by training hard and incorporating speedwork into their training.

In between, there's a broad area for runners just like you! If you previously have trained using the Novice program, you now can increase your mileage a bit, run some workouts at a faster pace, and seek improvement. That's why I designed two separate schedules for two levels of intermediate runners:

The **Intermediate-I** program offers a slight jump in difficulty from the Novice program. You Begin in Week 1 with a long run of 8 miles instead of 6 miles. You thus get to 20 miles for your long run by Week 13, which permits a second 20-miler in Week 15. Midweek mileage is slightly higher, but instead of cross-training on the weekends, you get more serious about your running and do a second run of 5-8 miles, often at marathon race pace. You now do your cross-training on Mondays, instead of taking the day off.

The **Intermediate-II** program offers another slight jump in difficulty. You begin in Week 1 with a 10-mile long run, which brings you to 20 miles by Week 11, permitting *three* runs at this distance. The midweek runs are somewhat longer; the pace runs on the weekend are somewhat longer. The pattern is about the same as Intermediate-I, but there is a subtle, though important, increase in distance and difficulty. If you chose Intermediate-I as the training schedule for your second marathon and have success, you might want to choose Intermediate-II for marathon number 3.

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

Long Runs: The key to the program is the **long run** on weekends, which builds from 8 or 10 miles in the first week to a maximum of 20 miles. 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: Normally I recommend that runners do their long runs anywhere from 45 to 90 seconds per mile **slower** than their marathon pace. This is *very* important. 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 race pace. 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, 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.

Walking Breaks: Walking is a perfectly acceptable strategy even for intermediate runners, and it works during training runs too. While some coaches recommend walking 1 minute out of every 10, or walking 1 minute every mile, in the CARA Marathon Training Class, we teach runners to walk when they come to an aid station. This serves a double function: 1) you can drink more easily while walking as opposed to running, and 2) since many other runners slow or walk through aid stations, you'll be less likely to block those behind. It's a good idea to follow this strategy in training as well. Our class that trains on the lakefront encounters water fountains (also known as "bubblers") every mile, or more often. We teach them to stop frequently to drink. Our classes that train elsewhere in the suburbs don't always have easy access to fluids, but we teach them to wear a water belt and also stop frequently to drink. You will lose less time walking than you think. I once ran a 2:29 marathon, walking through every aid station. My son Kevin ran 2:18 and qualified for the Olympic Trials employing a similar strategy. And Bill Rodgers took four brief breaks (tying a shoe on one of them) while running 2:09 and winning the 1975 Boston Marathon. Walking gives your body a chance to rest, and you'll be able to continue running more comfortably. It's best to walk when you want to, not when your (fatigued) body forces you too.

Race Pace: What do I mean by "Race Pace?" It's a frequently asked question on my V-Boards (see below), 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 (sometimes stated simply as "Pace" on the training charts) in this program. If you were training for a 5-K or 10-K, "race pace" would be the pace you planned to run in those races. Sometimes in prescribing speedwork, I define paces for different workouts as 5-K pace or 10-K pace, but you won't be asked to run this fast in the Intermediate program.

Cross-Training: Mondays in the intermediate programs are devoted to cross-training. What is cross-training? It is any other form of aerobic exercise that allows you to use slightly different muscles while resting (usually) the day after your long run. In this program, we run long on Sundays and cross-train on Mondays. The best cross-training exercises are swimming, cycling or even walking. What about sports such as tennis or basketball? Activities requiring sideways movements are not always a good choice. Particularly as the mileage builds up toward the end of the program, you raise your risk of injury if you choose to play a sport that requires sudden stopping and starting. **One tip:** You don't have to cross-train the same each week. And you could even combine two or more exercises: walking and easy jogging or swimming and riding an exercise bike in a health club. Cross-training for 30-60 minutes will help you recover after your Sunday long runs.

Midweek Training: Training during the week also should be done mostly at a comparatively easy pace. As the weekend mileage builds, the weekday mileage also builds. Add up the numbers, and you'll see that you run roughly the same mileage during the week as you do during long runs on the weekends. Midweek workouts on Wednesdays build from 5 to 8 miles for Intermediate-I runners and from 5 to 10 miles for Intermediate-II runners. There are similar slight advances on Tuesdays and Thursdays. 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 is hard running (such as the long runs) 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 for Intermediate 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 cross-training. 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.

Speedwork? There is no speedwork involved in the Intermediate program. If you feel you need speedwork to improve, check out the [Advanced](#) training schedules, which offer hill training, interval training and tempo runs on different days of the week. Normally, however, I recommend that marathoners save their speedwork for times of the year when they are not doing a marathon mileage buildup. Check the [Spring Training](#) programs elsewhere on this web site for more on that.

Modifying the program: My training programs are not carved in concrete, and you can make appropriate changes based on your experience, or to suit your convenience. One frequent request made by V-Teamers is to modify the order of the weekend runs, particularly those who want to run long on Saturdays instead of Sundays, because that's when their friends do their long runs. Running with friends is certainly more fun than running alone, but the pace runs are placed on Saturdays ahead of the long runs on Sundays for a purpose. The main reason is to tire you out a bit in the first workout Saturday so you are not tempted to do the second workout Sunday too fast. It is also difficult to hit race pace on Sunday the day after a draining long run. Some runners ask if they can split these two workouts, for example, running pace on Friday and long on Sunday. They can, but it defeats somewhat the purpose of two "hard" workouts back to back on Saturdays and Sundays. Most runners have both more time for their training and to rest after that training on the weekends. So modify the program if you want, but if you make too many modifications, you're not following the program.

InterActive Training: If you would like more help with your marathon training, sign up for my InterActive Training, and I will send you emails daily telling you how to train. The daily emails include even more tips than are available here on my website plus you can log your training and use other features. To learn more about your [InterActive Training](#) options, [click here](#).

Here is your Intermediate - I and Intermediate - II training schedules. The below chart tells 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: <i>Intermediate-I</i>								Marathon Training Schedule: <i>Intermediate-II</i>							
Week	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun	Week	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun
1	cross	3 m run	5 m run	3 m run	rest	5 m pace	8	1	cross	3 m run	5 m run	3 m run	rest	5 m pace	10
2	cross	3 m run	5 m run	3 m run	rest	3 m run	9	2	cross	3 m run	5 m run	3 m run	rest	5 m run	11
3	cross	3 m run	5 m run	3 m run	rest	5 m pace	6	3	cross	3 m run	6 m run	3 m run	rest	6 m pace	8
4	cross	3 m run	6 m run	3 m run	rest	6 m pace	11	4	cross	3 m run	6 m run	3 m run	rest	6 m pace	13
5	cross	3 m run	6 m run	3 m run	rest	6 m run	12	5	cross	3 m run	7 m run	3 m run	rest	7 m run	14
6	cross	3 m run	5 m run	3 m run	rest	6 m pace	9	6	cross	3 m run	7 m run	3 m run	rest	7 m pace	10
7	cross	4 m	7 m	4 m	rest	7 m	14	7	cross	4 m run	8 m run	4 m run	rest	8 m pace	16
										4 m	8 m	4 m		8 m	

		run	run	run		pace	
8	cross	4 m run	7 m run	4 m run	rest	7 m run	15
9	cross	4 m run	5 m run	4 m run	rest	7 m pace	11
10	cross	4 m run	8 m run	4 m run	rest	8 m pace	17
11	cross	5 m run	8 m run	5 m run	rest	8 m run	18
12	cross	5 m run	5 m run	5 m run	rest	8 m pace	13
13	cross	5 m run	8 m run	5 m run	rest	5 m pace	20
14	cross	5 m run	5 m run	5 m run	rest	8 m run	12
15	cross	5 m run	8 m run	5 m run	rest	5 m pace	20
16	cross	5 m run	6 m run	5 m run	rest	4 m pace	12
17	cross	4 m run	5 m run	4 m run	rest	3 m run	8
18	cross	3 m run	4 m run	rest	rest	2 m run	race

8	cross	run	run	run	rest	run	17
9	cross	4 m run	9 m run	4 m run	rest	9 m pace	12
10	cross	4 m run	9 m run	4 m run	rest	9 m pace	19
11	cross	5 m run	10 m run	5 m run	rest	10 m run	20
12	cross	5 m run	6 m run	5 m run	rest	6 m pace	12
13	cross	5 m run	10 m run	5 m run	rest	10 m pace	20
14	cross	5 m run	6 m run	5 m run	rest	6 m run	12
15	cross	5 m run	8 m run	5 m run	rest	10 m pace	20
16	cross	5 m run	5 m run	5 m run	rest	4 m pace	12
17	cross	4 m run	6 m run	4 m run	rest	4 m run	8
18	cross	3 m run	4 m run	rest	rest	2 m run	race



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