


Hal Higdon's MARATHON TRAINING GUIDE

Novice Program

 *Hit the button for the full Novice Training Schedule*



PEOPLE DIFFER GREATLY IN ABILITY, but ideally before starting a marathon program, you should have been running about a year. You should be able to comfortably run distances between 3 and 6 miles. You should be training 3-5 days a week, averaging 15-25 miles a week. You should have run an occasional 5-K or 10-K race. It is possible to run a marathon with less of a training base (particularly if you come from another sport), but the higher your fitness level, the easier this 18-week program will be.

This program consists of several different increments:

Long Runs: The key to the program is the **long run** on weekends, which builds from 6 miles in Week 1 to 20 miles in the climactic Week 15. (After that, you taper to get ready for the marathon.) 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. The problem with offering this advice to novice runners, however, is that you probably don't know what your marathon pace is, because you've never run a marathon before! Don't worry. 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. Toward the end, you may need to abandon conversation and concentrate on the act of putting one foot in front of the other to finish. However, if you find yourself finishing at a pace significantly slower than your pace in the first few miles, you probably need to start much slower, or include regular walking breaks. It's better to run too slow during these 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: That includes walking breaks. Walking is a perfectly acceptable strategy in trying to finish a marathon. 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 finds 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.

Cross-Training: Sundays in this training program 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) after your long run. In this program, we run long on Saturdays and cross-train on Sundays, although it certainly is possible to reverse that order. 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 weekend. 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 an hour on Sunday will help you recover after your Saturday long runs.

Midweek Training: Training during the week also should be done 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 3 to 10 miles. (I call these my Sorta-Long Runs.) 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 include two days of rest each week for novice runners. 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. 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*, 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 Novice training schedule. 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: Novice

Week	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun
1	rest	3 m run	3 m run	3 m run	rest	6	cross
2	rest	3 m run	3 m run	3 m run	rest	7	cross
3	rest	3 m run	4 m run	3 m run	rest	5	cross
4	rest	3 m run	4 m run	3 m run	rest	9	cross
5	rest	3 m run	5 m run	3 m run	rest	10	cross
6	rest	3 m run	5 m run	3 m run	rest	7	cross
7	rest	3 m run	6 m run	3 m run	rest	12	cross
8	rest	3 m run	6 m run	3 m run	rest	13	cross
9	rest	3 m run	7 m run	4 m run	rest	10	cross
10	rest	3 m run	7 m run	4 m run	rest	15	cross
11	rest	4 m run	8 m run	4 m run	rest	16	cross
12	rest	4 m run	8 m run	5 m run	rest	12	cross
13	rest	4 m run	9 m run	5 m run	rest	18	cross
14	rest	5 m run	9 m run	5 m run	rest	14	cross
15	rest	5 m run	10 m run	5 m run	rest	20	cross
16	rest	5 m run	8 m run	4 m run	rest	12	cross
17	rest	4 m run	6 m run	3 m run	rest	8	cross
18	rest	3 m run	4 m run	2 m run	rest	rest	race



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