

## Beginning to Run: Training for Your First 5K



The benefits of running are well-documented. Running reduces the risk of heart disease, burns body fat, provides relief from stress, and builds self-confidence. Despite these facts, only about 15% of Americans make running a regular part of their weekly routines. Millions of others start a running program every year, only to become discouraged and return to their sedentary ways. This article provides you, the new runner, with the information necessary to avoid the common pitfalls and make running a healthy and enjoyable part of your life.

Running is an uncomplicated activity. You can run anywhere, anytime. No club memberships are required. No machines will fill up your basement. You don't need to burn gas to get to the gym. Strollers designed for running can even save you babysitting expenses! This is not to say that running is equipment-free. You will need proper shoes, some basic apparel, and a sports watch. Starting with these necessities in hand (or on foot) will make your workouts fun and beneficial.

**Shoes** - A typical 150 pound athlete who runs 10 miles per week will hit the ground with about *10 million* pounds of impact load each week! Running shoes are designed to absorb much of that load, greatly reducing the pounding that must be absorbed by your body and reducing the risk of developing an injury. Your running shoes should be matched with the specific needs of your foot shape, running style, weight, etc. Quality running shoes will carry you at least 300 miles down the road. They are a must!

**Apparel** - A simple rule of thumb applies to running apparel: "*Cotton is rotten.*" Cotton absorbs sweat and holds it directly against the skin. Moist skin is prone to friction blisters. In the dry winter months, surface sweat chills the body as it evaporates. In the humid summer months, surface sweat evaporates slowly, trapping the heat against the body. Therefore, with cotton up against your skin, you will be either cold and miserable or hot and sticky. The answer is to wear garments made of synthetic fabrics that do not absorb moisture (i.e., they "wick" the sweat away from the skin, keeping it dry and comfortable). Synthetic socks and running shorts or winter tights are running requirements. Women should also wear a non-cotton sports support bra.

**Sports Watch** - Runners measure their progress in exercise time and/or distance. Having a digital watch that has a stopwatch feature will make it easier to stick to your training program and to monitor fitness level. There are a multitude of such watches available.

Having the aforementioned equipment will get you started off on the right foot. Without taking a step, you've attacked problems that cause many well-intentioned new runners to give up. Good-fitting, well-cushioned shoes will reduce muscle and joint soreness. Synthetic apparel will keep you dry and blister-free. Your sports watch will allow you to measure your progress.

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Now it's time to take that first step toward the new, cardiovascularly-fit you. **Your first goal is to run non-stop for 30 minutes, three times per week – and to complete your first 5K race.** The following schedule will make it easy.

Week 1	Walk for 30:00
Week 2	Walk 9 min./Run 1 min. - Walk 9 min./Run 1 min. - Walk 9 min./Run 1 min.
Week 3	Walk 8 min./Run 2 min. - Walk 8 min./Run 2 min. - Walk 8 min./Run 2 min.
Week 4	Walk 7 min./Run 3 min. - Walk 7 min./Run 3 min. - Walk 7 min./Run 3 min.
Week 5	Walk 6 min./Run 4 min. - Walk 6 min./Run 4 min. - Walk 6 min./Run 4 min.
Week 6	Walk 5 min./Run 5 min. - Walk 5 min./Run 5 min. - Walk 5 min./Run 5 min.
Week 7	Walk 4 min./Run 6 min. - Walk 4 min./Run 6 min. - Walk 4 min./Run 6 min.
Week 8	Walk 3 min./Run 7 min. - Walk 3 min./Run 7 min. - Walk 3 min./Run 7 min.
Week 9	Walk 2 min./Run 8 min. - Walk 2 min./Run 8 min. - Walk 2 min./Run 8 min.
Week 10	Walk 1 min./Run 9 min. - Walk 1 min./Run 9 min. - Walk 1 min./Run 9 min.
Week 11	Run for 30:00
Week 12	Complete your first 5K race!

- Complete three of the specified workouts per week.
- Work out on non-consecutive days (i.e., rest at least 1 day between workouts).
- If you don't complete a week (for any reason), repeat it entirely.
- Do not skip weeks, no matter how strong you feel.

Note that each workout is 30 minutes in length. In week 1, you will walk for 30 minutes, three times, on non-consecutive days. In the next nine weeks, you will break the workouts into ten-minute segments. During each segment, you will first walk, and then run. As you progress, you will spend more time running and less walking. On the 11th week, you will be running non-stop for 30 minutes – and you will be ready to complete your first 5K race.

The benefits of this program are three-fold:

- It follows "the 10% rule," which states that you should never increase your overall mileage by more than 10% each week. Beginners who increase their mileage more than 10% during any given week get injured at a rate much higher than those who follow a slow, steady growth pattern. By trading 10% of the workout time from running to walking each week, this program ensures that your mileage increase will remain below 10% (even if you walk very, very slow).
- Most people who quit a fitness program do so in the first three months. Complete this program and you will be on your way to a lifetime of fitness.
- "Lack of time" is often cited as the number one reason why individuals do not maintain a fitness program. At just 30 minutes a day, three times per week, even the busiest of people should be able to make time for this training schedule.

Ninety minutes of running per week is an accessible goal for almost everyone. The average runner will cover approximately nine or ten miles each week after completing this program. If you are happy with the results, continue to run three, 30 minute workouts per week. If you would like to increase your mileage, remember the 10% rule and continue to build slowly. You may want to add a fourth, or even a fifth, training day. (Six or seven training days are not necessary unless your goal is to race competitively.) Don't fall into the trap of thinking that you must continually increase your mileage. Progress to a level that produces the results you desire and maintain that level.

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