



## **Generic Marathon Training Program**

The marathon is the most respected and most analyzed race in endurance athletics. The physiology of the marathon is straightforward - it is a test of stamina. The keys to a successful marathon are (1) to begin with a well-structured training plan that properly incorporates your capabilities and goals and (2) to follow that plan with unwavering consistency. The FLEET FEET program has been used since 1996 by the Joints in Motion and Strides for Hope charity marathon programs and numerous individual athletes. The program has a 100% success rate because it provides each athlete with an appropriate, time-tested training plan and makes use of organized group workouts where mutual support replaces the boredom associated with solo marathon training.

Successful marathon training programs are at least 18 weeks long, which has proven to be long enough (to provide a strong stimulus) for veteran marathoners to improve their marathon performance or for novice endurance athletes to prepare their minds and bodies to complete a marathon. Remember, marathoners aren't made overnight. People become marathoners with intelligent and consistent training over at least 18 weeks.

Before you look at the training schedule, consider that not all of the participants who will use this program are created equal. Marathons include both novice athletes and grizzled veterans, and everyone in between. Some participants will walk the marathon in just under 8 hours and some will post sub-3 hour performance. Since the marathon is 26.2 miles long for everyone, it makes sense that the training distances will be somewhat similar for everyone. However, there will be drastic differences in training methods and paces from one athlete to the next.

There are two basic programs included in this package. One is for novice marathoners, whether they plan to run, walk, or a little of both. The second plan is for the runner attempting to complete the marathon in the quickest possible time. *Don't be worried if you are initially confused about certain portions of the training plans. Like all things, marathon training is a learning experience.*

Good luck! Feel free to email me with any questions.

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## Training Programs

The training programs borrow theories found in How to Train by Hal Higdon (1997, Rodale Press) and The Non-Runner's Marathon Trainer by David Whitsett, Forrest Dolgener, and Tanjala Kole (1998, Masters Press). The Intermediate and Advanced programs also make use of training methods discussed in Road Racing for Serious Runners by Pete Pfitzinger and Scott Douglas (1999, Human Kinetics).

The beginner's program is appropriate for anyone whose goal is to finish the marathon, with no time constraints. With this program, regular runners can become respectable marathoners and couch potatoes can become marathoners in just 4-1/2 months! It requires the trainee to commit to four days of training per week. This program has been successfully used by runners, walkers, and those who will run/walk the marathon.

The advanced program is for those who have been consistently running at least 25 miles per week for at least a year and want to train to run the marathon for time. It requires additional speedwork and weekly training runs on both Saturday *and* Sunday. An intermediate program is appropriate for regular runners who want to run for time, but don't have either the time or constitution to accommodate the high miles. An intermediate program is fashioned by adding either pace runs *or* speedwork to the beginner program, *not both*. (See the notes at the bottom of the advanced program for more explanation.)

"Big Picture" descriptions of the training programs are included on the following page. Basically, each week's training contains one or more of the following types of workouts:

**Easy Days** Easy workouts should be just that – easy. You should run/walk at a pace that allows you to hold a conversation with your training partner.

**Rest Days** Rest is a very important part of the training program. You will *not* improve faster by substituting additional runs in place of rest days.

**Long Days** A long workout is scheduled once each week. *Novice* marathoners should run/walk at the pace at which you hope to complete the marathon. Just cover the distance. Don't worry about the time. Like the easy workouts, stay conversational. Intermediate and advanced marathoners will run these long runs 45 to 90 seconds per mile slower than marathon goal pace.

**Pace Runs** (Intermediate/Advanced Only) The "magic" of the intermediate training plan is the pace runs conducted either the day before or the day after the long run – turning each weekend into a high-mileage "couplet" where a portion of the miles are done easily and some are done at pace.

**Speedwork** (Intermediate/Advanced only) Yasso's 800s are legspeed improvement workouts that are done once each week on a track. Two loops around a high school track equals 800 meters (approximately 1/2 mile). A Yasso's 800 workout involves running two loops around the track in a specific time, which is based on your goal marathon time as follows: marathon goal: X hours, YY minutes → Yasso 800 time: X minutes; YY seconds. At first, you run just a few Yasso 800s, with a one lap jog between them. Every other week, you add one 800, until a total of 10 are completed. As with all speedwork sessions, always jog at least one mile before and after the workout.

**X-Training** (Intermediate/Advanced only) Aerobic cross-training should be thought of as "active rest." Intermediate and advanced athletes may substitute cross-training for rest days by spending 30-60 minutes walking, cycling or swimming (but no running). Don't overdo it. ☺

## Beginner Program

Week #	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
1	Rest	2 easy	3 easy	2 easy	Rest	8 long	Rest
2	Rest	2 easy	3 easy	2 easy	Rest	9 long	Rest
3	Rest	2 easy	3 easy	2 easy	Rest	6 long	Rest
4	Rest	3 easy	3 easy	3 easy	Rest	11 long	Rest
5	Rest	3 easy	4 easy	3 easy	Rest	12 long	Rest
6	Rest	3 easy	4 easy	3 easy	Rest	9 long	Rest
7	Rest	3 easy	4 easy	3 easy	Rest	14 long	Rest
8	Rest	3 easy	5 easy	3 easy	Rest	15 long	Rest
9	Rest	3 easy	5 easy	3 easy	Rest	11 long	Rest
10	Rest	4 easy	5 easy	4 easy	Rest	17 long	Rest
11	Rest	4 easy	6 easy	4 easy	Rest	18 long	Rest
12	Rest	4 easy	6 easy	4 easy	Rest	13 long	Rest
13	Rest	4 easy	7 easy	4 easy	Rest	20 long	Rest
14	Rest	5 easy	8 easy	5 easy	Rest	12 long	Rest
15	Rest	5 easy	8 easy	5 easy	Rest	20 long	Rest
16	Rest	5 easy	8 easy	5 easy	Rest	12 long	Rest
17	Rest	3 easy	5 easy	3 easy	Rest	8 long	Rest
18	Rest	3 easy	3 easy	3 easy	Rest	Rest	<b>26.2</b>

## Advanced Program

Week #	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
1	Rest	2 easy	3 easy	2 easy	Rest	8 long	5 pace
2	Rest	2 easy	3 Yassos	2 easy	Rest	9 long	5 pace
3	Rest	2 easy	4 Yassos	2 easy	Rest	6 long	5 pace
4	Rest	3 easy	5 Yassos	3 easy	Rest	11 long	6 pace
5	Rest	3 easy	6 Yassos	3 easy	Rest	12 long	6 pace
6	Rest	3 easy	6 Yassos	3 easy	Rest	9 long	6 pace
7	Rest	3 easy	7 Yassos	3 easy	Rest	14 long	7 pace
8	Rest	3 easy	7 Yassos	3 easy	Rest	15 long	7 pace
9	Rest	3 easy	8 Yassos	3 easy	Rest	11 long	7 pace
10	Rest	4 easy	8 Yassos	4 easy	Rest	17 long	8 pace
11	Rest	4 easy	9 Yassos	4 easy	Rest	18 long	8 pace
12	Rest	4 easy	9 Yassos	4 easy	Rest	13 long	8 pace
13	Rest	4 easy	10 Yassos	4 easy	Rest	20 long	5 pace
14	Rest	5 easy	10 Yassos	5 easy	Rest	12 long	8 pace
15	Rest	5 easy	8 easy	5 easy	Rest	20 long	5 pace
16	Rest	5 easy	8 easy	5 easy	Rest	12 long	4 pace
17	Rest	3 easy	5 easy	3 easy	Rest	8 long	3 pace
18	Rest	3 easy	3 easy	3 easy	Rest	Rest	<b>26.2</b>

**Notes:**

Saturday long runs and Sunday pace runs may be reversed with no loss of training effect.

Intermediate Options: (1) Replace Sunday pace runs with rest and run Saturday long runs at marathon pace or (2) replace Wednesday speedwork with easy miles from beginner program.

## A Note to Rookies – The Benefits of Running AND Walking

Believe it or not, it is easier to run/walk a marathon than it is to walk the entire distance. Alternating walking and running: (1) “mixes up” the muscles that you will be using, reducing the chance of overusing (and exhausting or injuring) a particular muscle and (2) simply gets you to the finish line faster, allowing you to go farther in training and reducing the time spent on your feet on marathon morning. Unless you have a medical condition that prevents you from running at all, you should consider a walk/run.

Walk/run training is straightforward. During the first week of your marathon training, acclimate yourself to the program by walking each workout. During the second week, break each workout into 10 minute segments. Run the 1<sup>st</sup> minute of each segment, and walk the remaining 9 minutes. Repeat this format for the entire workout. The next week (week 3), trade another minute of walking for one of running. Therefore, each 10 minute segment will consist of 2 minutes of running followed by 8 minutes of walking. Continue to trade an additional minute of walking for a minute of running each week. Eventually, your body will tell you that enough is enough! -- “Quit adding running minutes, will you please! Last week felt great. This week is too hard.” You will know when you reach this point. At this point, trade walking minutes for running minutes only every 2 weeks. At some point, you will no longer adapt to the increased running time. – You’ve found the ratio that you’ll use for the marathon! Most novice endurance athletes build up to equal amounts of running and walking for the marathon. Athletes with some running background can build to 100% running over a typical 18 week marathon training schedule.

Here is an example of how it may go for you:

Week #1	0 run/10 walk	This feels too easy.
Week #2	1 run/9 walk	Running feels strange, but it doesn’t fatigue me too terribly.
Week #3	2 run/8 walk	I’m running smooth this week, but 2 minutes is a long time.
Week #4	3 run/7 walk	Too much! I can’t run more than this. I’ll hold this ratio.
Week #4	3 run/7 walk	Much easier this week. I think I can run 4 minutes!
Week #5	4 run/6 walk	I can do it, but I think I’d better stop here.
Week #6	4 run/6 walk	This is great. I’ll complete the training schedule using 4/6!

The benefit of this program is that it follows "the 10% rule," which states that you are more likely to get injured if you increase your overall running 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 at 10% (even if you walk very, very slow).

Don't fall into the trap of thinking that you must continually increase your running to walking ratio. Progress to a level where you feel strong and healthy and maintain that level.