

RUNNING: ADVANCED

GOAL: TO RUN A MARATHON

Twenty-six-point-two miles! It can seem like an overwhelming goal that will take forever to reach, but in fact training for your first marathon should take about 6 months. You'll start out with low mileage, gradually increasing the number of miles you run each week. You'll also need to make your speedwork time-specific – for example, if you want to run a 4-hour marathon, then your 800s (which equals two laps around the track, or a 1/2 mile) need to equal 4 minutes each. You'll also want to get to know the course you'll be running: Are there hills, or is it flat? What is the typical temperature on race day? How many water and aid stops will there be and where are they located? If the course is hilly, you'll want to spend some weight training time focusing on the deceleration of the hamstrings, in which you train your hamstrings (not just your quadriceps) to absorb some of the impact as you run downhill. Runners tend to increase their speed and overstride (i.e., their downhill steps are longer than if they were running on a flat surface), which puts unnecessary pressure on the back and knees. If you can, videotape yourself running – it will give you a good indication of your running mechanics. Since running is done by striking the ground with one leg/foot at a time, the more you can incorporate single-leg strength and stabilization movements into your weight training, the stronger your structural alignment will be, and that decreases the chance of injury.

If you're not so lucky and injuries occur, be aware that muscle imbalances feed an injury cycle. When certain muscles are tight, it alters the relationship of length and tension in the muscles. Put another way, muscles are not the same length – when one is shorter than the opposing muscle, the first muscle becomes tight and the other is lengthened, making it weaker and causing pain and injury. For example, when the calf muscle is overactive and tight and the opposing muscle, the anterior tibialis, is weak, the result is pain (aka shin splints). That's why runners need to be diligent about stretching calf muscles and strengthening the anterior tib. (But don't do calf raises—they'll only make the problem worse.) If knee pain is your problem, you'll want to focus on stretching your iliotibial (IT) band, which is located on the outside of each thigh.

But physical strength is just half the battle in finishing your first marathon – mental strength is the other half. Use crowd support to your advantage: Knowing that your spouse is at mile 10 and Mom and Dad are at mile 16 will keep you going. Figure out what really will drive you to the finish line – whether it's seeing friends and family, knowing that you achieved a personal goal, or the free food awaiting you at the end! Whatever your motivation, all your sacrifice and training are about to pay off. Just remember to smile for the camera as you cross that line!

THE PLAN

On Mondays, Fridays, and Saturdays (your long run day), take your run at an easy pace. You'll spend Tuesdays at the track working on your speedwork; start those workouts with a 15-minute warm-up run at a slow pace. Then work up to doing the 800s at your marathon-goal pace in minutes: So if your marathon goal time is 4 hours, you'll need to perform two laps around the track (one 800) in 4 minutes.

MONTH 1			
WEEK 1	WEEK 2	WEEK 3	WEEK 4
Mon: 6 miles	Mon: 6 miles	Mon: 6 miles	Mon: 6 miles
Tues: 4 x 800	Tues: 4 x 800	Tues: 5 x 800	Tues: 5 x 800
Fri: 5 miles	Fri: 5 miles	Fri: 6 miles	Fri: 6 miles
Sat: 8 miles	Sat: 10 miles	Sat: 10 miles	Sat: 10 miles

MONTH 2			
WEEK 1	WEEK 2	WEEK 3	WEEK 4
Mon: 6 miles	Mon: 6 miles	Mon: 6 miles	Mon: 6 miles
Tues: 5 x 800	Tues: 5 x 800	Tues: 6 x 800	Tues: 6 x 800
Fri: 5 miles	Fri: 5 miles	Fri: 6 miles	Fri: 6 miles
Sat: 10 miles	Sat: 12 miles	Sat: 12 miles	Sat: 12 miles

MONTH 3

WEEK 1	WEEK 2	WEEK 3	WEEK 4
Mon: 6 miles	Mon: 6 miles	Mon: 6 miles	Mon: 6 miles
Tues: 6 x 800	Tues: 7 x 800	Tues: 7 x 800	Tues: 7 x 800
Fri: 6 miles	Fri: 5 miles	Fri: 5 miles	Fri: 5 miles
Sat: 14 miles	Sat: 14 miles	Sat: 12 miles	Sat: 16 miles

MONTH 4

WEEK 1	WEEK 2	WEEK 3	WEEK 4
Mon: 6 miles	Mon: 6 miles	Mon: 6 miles	Mon: 6 miles
Tues: 8 x 800	Tues: 8 x 800	Tues: 7 x 800	Tues: 7 x 800
Fri: 6 miles	Fri: 6 miles	Fri: 5 miles	Fri: 5 miles
Sat: 16 miles	Sat: 14 miles	Sat: 12 miles	Sat: 18 miles

MONTH 5

WEEK 1	WEEK 2	WEEK 3	WEEK 4
Mon: 6 miles	Mon: 6 miles	Mon: 5 miles	Mon: 6 miles
Tues: 9 x 800	Tues: 9 x 800	Tues: 9 x 800	Tues: 9 x 800
Fri: 6 miles	Fri: 5 miles	Fri: 6 miles	Fri: 5 miles
Sat: 18 miles	Sat: 16 miles	Sat: 12 miles	Sat: 20 miles

MONTH 6

WEEK 1	WEEK 2	WEEK 3	WEEK 4
Mon: 8 miles	Mon: 6 miles	Mon: 4 miles	Mon: 4 miles
Tues: 10 x 800	Tues: 4 x 400	Tues: 4 x 400	Tues: 2 x 200
Fri: 8 miles	Fri: 4 miles	Fri: 4 miles	Fri: Off
Sat: 22 miles	Sat: 12 miles	Sat: 8 miles	Sat: 2 miles

RACE DAY!