

RUNNING: BEGINNER

GOAL: TO FINISH A 5K RACE

As a new runner, a lot of different emotions are probably “running” through your mind -- excitement, awkwardness, all the goals you hope to achieve. Self-doubt and disappointment may surface if you struggled to finish your first scheduled run. But don't give up! Try to focus simply on finishing each run – not on how long it takes you to finish. You'll find that as your mileage increases, so does your stamina. If you can, buddy up with a friend or neighbor or join a local running club. Knowing that you must show up is a tremendous motivator.

One of your top goals for this program will be finding your pace. Your pace is the comfortable tempo at which you can continue running for an extended period of time without exerting all of your energy. As a runner, knowing this is half the battle. Like anything else, repetition is key—the more you run, the more your pace will become second nature.

Beginners should start with 3 days of running (or a combination of running and walking at the start) per week; this will give you a foundation on which to build. For faster improvements in strength and stamina, add to your training regimen 2 or 3 days each week; this will strengthen weak muscles, leaving you feeling stronger after each run.

WARM-UP

Before you head out for each run, warm up by walking for 5 minutes, then doing the following stretches to optimize neuromuscular efficiency, or how well your brain and body work together. Hold each stretch to the point of tension for 20 to 30 seconds.

CALF STRETCH

Stand in front of a sturdy object such as a pole or wall with one foot about 2 feet in front of the other. The heel of the back foot should be flat on the ground in order for the calf to stretch. Place both hands against a sturdy object such as a wall and shift your body weight onto the front leg, keeping the back heel flat. Repeat on other side.

QUAD STRETCH

While standing, shift your weight onto your right foot and bend the left knee so the left foot is behind you. Grab the top of the left foot (or the ankle) with your left hand, ensuring that the knee is aligned with the hip as you draw the foot toward your buttocks to feel a stretch in your thigh. Don't let the knee rotate to the outside. Hold for 20 to 30 seconds, then release and stretch the right side.

PIRIFORMIS/ GLUTES STRETCH

Sit on the floor with your right knee bent at a 90-degree angle in front of you and your big toe facing up (away from the floor). Bend your left leg behind you at a 90-degree angle with your big toe on the floor. The bottom of your right foot should touch the top of your left thigh. Slightly rotate your upper body to the right and lean forward so that you're bent over your right knee. Repeat on the left side.

WEEK 1

DAY 1	Run for 3 minutes, then walk for 1 minute, alternating for 1 mile.
DAY 2	Run for 3 minutes, then walk for 1 minute, alternating for 1 mile.
DAY 3	Run for 4 minutes, then walk for 1 minute, alternating for 1 mile.

WEEK 2 : PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR RECOVERY TIME (THE AMOUNT OF TIME YOU NEED TO WALK) TO SEE IF IT'S DROPPING.

DAY 1	Run for 5 minutes, then walk for 2 minutes, alternating for 1 1/2 miles.
DAY 2	Run 1 mile at a slow pace without stopping.
DAY 3	Run 1 mile, walk for 2 minutes to recover, then run another 1/2 mile slowly.

WEEK 3

DAY 1	Run 1 1/2 miles at a slow pace.
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DAY 2	Run 1 1/2 miles at any pace.
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DAY 3	Run 2 miles at your pace.
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WEEK 4

DAY 1	Run 2 miles without stopping. (You should be running approximately a 10- to 12-minute mile.)
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DAY 2	Run 2 1/2 miles without stopping.
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DAY 3	Run 2 1/2 to 3 miles without stopping. You're now ready to run your 5K!
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COOL-DOWN

After each run, do the same stretches as in the warm-up; this improves any muscle imbalances or muscle overload your body experienced during your run.