

18-Week First Marathon Training Plan

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Safety note. This is a general plan for healthy adults who can already run about 8–10 km comfortably, three times a week. It isn't personal medical or coaching advice. If you have a heart condition or cardiac risk factors, any other health condition, are pregnant or are returning from injury, check with your GP first. Stop and seek help for chest pain, dizziness, unusual breathlessness or palpitations. Pain that makes you limp or gets worse as you run means stop, and see a physio or GP.

How to read this plan

Effort is measured by how easy it is to talk. You don't need a watch.

Effort	How it feels	Talk test
Easy	Relaxed, could go on for ages	You can chat in full sentences
Steady	Purposeful but controlled	Short sentences only
Comfortably hard	Working, focused	A few words at a time
Marathon effort (ME)	The pace you hope to hold on race day (usually between easy and steady)	Short sentences, comfortably

- **Long run:** always easy. Walk breaks are fine. If a long run takes over ~3½ hours, stop at that time instead of the distance.
- **Cutback weeks** (4, 8, 12) are lighter on purpose. Don't make up the miles.
- **Taper** (16–18): run less, stay fresh.
- Distances are approximate (km, with miles $\approx \times 0.62$). Swap days to suit your week, but keep the long run and avoid two hard days in a row.
- **Missed sessions:** miss a few days and carry on. Miss a week and repeat the previous week. Ill for longer: drop back two weeks.
- **Strength (S):** 20–30 min bodyweight routine (squats, split squats, calf raises, glute bridges, side planks, dead-bugs).

Plan A: Finish strong (4 runs a week)

Four runs a week: two easy runs, one workout and a long run, plus strength. Longest run ~32 km in week 15.

Week 1 · Base

Day	Session
Mon	Rest
Tue	Easy 30 min
Wed	S + rest from running
Thu	Easy 30 min
Fri	Rest or S

Day	Session
Sat	Easy 25 min
Sun	Long run 10 km easy

Week 2 · Base

Day	Session
Mon	Rest
Tue	Easy 30 min
Wed	S + rest from running
Thu	Easy 30 min
Fri	Rest or S
Sat	Easy 25 min
Sun	Long run 11 km easy

Week 3 · Base

Day	Session
Mon	Rest
Tue	Easy 30 min
Wed	S + rest from running
Thu	30 min incl. 6 min steady
Fri	Rest or S
Sat	Easy 25 min
Sun	Long run 12 km easy

Week 4 · Base · CUTBACK

Day	Session
Mon	Rest
Tue	Easy 30 min
Wed	S + rest from running
Thu	Easy 30 min
Fri	Rest or S
Sat	Easy 20 min
Sun	Long run 10 km easy

Week 5 · Base

Day	Session
Mon	Rest
Tue	Easy 35 min
Wed	S + rest from running
Thu	35 min incl. 10 min steady

Day	Session
Fri	Rest or S
Sat	Easy 25 min
Sun	Long run 14 km easy

Week 6 · Base

Day	Session
Mon	Rest
Tue	Easy 35 min
Wed	S + rest from running
Thu	35 min incl. 12 min steady
Fri	Rest or S
Sat	Easy 25 min
Sun	Long run 16 km easy

Week 7 · Build

Day	Session
Mon	Rest
Tue	Easy 40 min
Wed	S + rest from running
Thu	45 min incl. 4×5 min comfortably hard, 2–3 min easy jogs
Fri	Rest or S
Sat	Easy 30 min
Sun	Long run 18 km easy

Week 8 · Build · CUTBACK

Day	Session
Mon	Rest
Tue	Easy 30 min
Wed	S + rest from running
Thu	Easy 30 min
Fri	Rest or S
Sat	Easy 20 min
Sun	Long run 14 km easy

Week 9 · Build

Day	Session
Mon	Rest
Tue	Easy 40 min
Wed	S + rest from running

Day	Session
Thu	45 min incl. 5×5 min comfortably hard, 2–3 min easy jogs
Fri	Rest or S
Sat	Easy 30 min
Sun	Long run 19 km easy

Week 10 · Build

Day	Session
Mon	Rest
Tue	Easy 40 min
Wed	S + rest from running
Thu	45 min incl. 2×12 min comfortably hard, 2–3 min easy jogs
Fri	Rest or S
Sat	Easy 30 min
Sun	Long run 21 km easy

Week 11 · Build

Day	Session
Mon	Rest
Tue	Easy 40 min
Wed	S + rest from running
Thu	45 min incl. 4×6 min comfortably hard, 2–3 min easy jogs
Fri	Rest or S
Sat	Easy 30 min
Sun	Long run 23 km easy

Week 12 · Build · CUTBACK

Day	Session
Mon	Rest
Tue	Easy 30 min
Wed	S + rest from running
Thu	Easy 30 min
Fri	Rest or S
Sat	Easy 20 min
Sun	Long run 18 km easy

Week 13 · Peak

Day	Session
Mon	Rest
Tue	Easy 45 min

Day	Session
Wed	S + rest from running
Thu	50 min incl. 20 min ME (or easy 45 min if tired)
Fri	Rest or S
Sat	Easy 30 min
Sun	Long run 24 km easy

Week 14 · Peak

Day	Session
Mon	Rest
Tue	Easy 45 min
Wed	S + rest from running
Thu	50 min incl. 25 min ME (or easy 45 min if tired)
Fri	Rest or S
Sat	Easy 30 min
Sun	Long run 28 km easy

Week 15 · Peak · LONGEST RUN

Day	Session
Mon	Rest
Tue	Easy 45 min
Wed	S + rest from running
Thu	55 min incl. 30 min ME (or easy 45 min if tired)
Fri	Rest or S
Sat	Easy 30 min
Sun	Long run 32 km easy

Week 16 · Taper

Day	Session
Mon	Rest
Tue	Easy 40 min
Wed	S + rest from running
Thu	40 min incl. 20 min ME
Fri	Rest or S
Sat	Easy 20 min
Sun	Long run 24 km easy

Week 17 · Taper

Day	Session
Mon	Rest

Day	Session
Tue	Easy 35 min
Wed	S + rest from running
Thu	35 min incl. 10 min ME
Fri	Rest or S
Sat	Easy 20 min
Sun	Long run 16 km easy

Week 18 · Taper · RACE WEEK

Day	Session
Mon	Rest
Tue	Easy 30 min + 3×3 min ME
Wed	Rest or S (light)
Thu	Easy 20 min
Fri	Rest
Sat	Easy 15 min + strides (optional)
Sun	RACE DAY 42.2 km

Plan B: Time-short (3 runs plus other exercise)

Made for busy working weeks: three runs (one easy run with strength, one workout and a long run) plus one session of low-impact exercise. Longest run ~29 km in week 15. Got a spare 30 minutes? Add an extra easy run on Wednesday from week 7.

Week 1 · Base

Day	Session
Mon	Rest
Tue	Easy 30 min + S
Wed	Rest
Thu	Easy 30 min
Fri	S (or rest)
Sat	Cross-train 45 min easy (bike, swim, cross-trainer, hilly walk)
Sun	Long run 10 km easy

Week 2 · Base

Day	Session
Mon	Rest
Tue	Easy 30 min + S
Wed	Rest
Thu	Easy 30 min
Fri	S (or rest)
Sat	Cross-train 45 min easy (bike, swim, cross-trainer, hilly walk)
Sun	Long run 11 km easy

Week 3 · Base

Day	Session
Mon	Rest
Tue	Easy 30 min + S
Wed	Rest
Thu	30 min incl. 6 min steady
Fri	S (or rest)
Sat	Cross-train 45 min easy (bike, swim, cross-trainer, hilly walk)
Sun	Long run 12 km easy

Week 4 · Base · CUTBACK

Day	Session
Mon	Rest
Tue	Easy 30 min + S
Wed	Rest

Day	Session
Thu	Easy 30 min
Fri	S (or rest)
Sat	Cross-train 30 min easy (bike, swim, cross-trainer, hilly walk)
Sun	Long run 10 km easy

Week 5 · Base

Day	Session
Mon	Rest
Tue	Easy 30 min + S
Wed	Rest
Thu	30 min incl. 10 min steady
Fri	S (or rest)
Sat	Cross-train 45 min easy (bike, swim, cross-trainer, hilly walk)
Sun	Long run 14 km easy

Week 6 · Base

Day	Session
Mon	Rest
Tue	Easy 30 min + S
Wed	Rest
Thu	30 min incl. 12 min steady
Fri	S (or rest)
Sat	Cross-train 45 min easy (bike, swim, cross-trainer, hilly walk)
Sun	Long run 16 km easy

Week 7 · Build

Day	Session
Mon	Rest
Tue	Easy 40 min + S
Wed	Rest
Thu	45 min incl. 4×5 min comfortably hard
Fri	S (or rest)
Sat	Cross-train 45 min easy (bike, swim, cross-trainer, hilly walk)
Sun	Long run 18 km easy

Week 8 · Build · CUTBACK

Day	Session
Mon	Rest
Tue	Easy 30 min + S

Day	Session
Wed	Rest
Thu	Easy 30 min
Fri	S (or rest)
Sat	Cross-train 30 min easy (bike, swim, cross-trainer, hilly walk)
Sun	Long run 14 km easy

Week 9 · Build

Day	Session
Mon	Rest
Tue	Easy 40 min + S
Wed	Rest
Thu	45 min incl. 5×5 min comfortably hard
Fri	S (or rest)
Sat	Cross-train 60 min easy (bike, swim, cross-trainer, hilly walk)
Sun	Long run 19 km easy

Week 10 · Build

Day	Session
Mon	Rest
Tue	Easy 40 min + S
Wed	Rest
Thu	45 min incl. 2×12 min comfortably hard
Fri	S (or rest)
Sat	Cross-train 60 min easy (bike, swim, cross-trainer, hilly walk)
Sun	Long run 21 km easy

Week 11 · Build

Day	Session
Mon	Rest
Tue	Easy 40 min + S
Wed	Rest
Thu	45 min incl. 4×6 min comfortably hard
Fri	S (or rest)
Sat	Cross-train 60 min easy (bike, swim, cross-trainer, hilly walk)
Sun	Long run 23 km easy

Week 12 · Build · CUTBACK

Day	Session
Mon	Rest

Day	Session
Tue	Easy 30 min + S
Wed	Rest
Thu	Easy 30 min
Fri	S (or rest)
Sat	Cross-train 30 min easy (bike, swim, cross-trainer, hilly walk)
Sun	Long run 18 km easy

Week 13 · Peak

Day	Session
Mon	Rest
Tue	Easy 40 min + S
Wed	Rest
Thu	45 min incl. 20 min ME (or easy 40 min if tired)
Fri	S (or rest)
Sat	Cross-train 60 min easy (bike, swim, cross-trainer, hilly walk)
Sun	Long run 24 km easy

Week 14 · Peak

Day	Session
Mon	Rest
Tue	Easy 40 min + S
Wed	Rest
Thu	45 min incl. 25 min ME (or easy 40 min if tired)
Fri	S (or rest)
Sat	Cross-train 60 min easy (bike, swim, cross-trainer, hilly walk)
Sun	Long run 26 km easy

Week 15 · Peak · LONGEST RUN

Day	Session
Mon	Rest
Tue	Easy 40 min + S
Wed	Rest
Thu	50 min incl. 25 min ME (or easy 40 min if tired)
Fri	S (or rest)
Sat	Cross-train 60 min easy (bike, swim, cross-trainer, hilly walk)
Sun	Long run 29 km easy

Week 16 · Taper

Day	Session
Mon	Rest
Tue	Easy 35 min + S
Wed	Rest
Thu	35 min incl. 20 min ME
Fri	S (or rest)
Sat	Cross-train 30 min easy (bike, swim, cross-trainer, hilly walk)
Sun	Long run 22 km easy

Week 17 · Taper

Day	Session
Mon	Rest
Tue	Easy 35 min + S
Wed	Rest
Thu	35 min incl. 10 min ME
Fri	S (or rest)
Sat	Cross-train 30 min easy (bike, swim, cross-trainer, hilly walk)
Sun	Long run 16 km easy

Week 18 · Taper · RACE WEEK

Day	Session
Mon	Rest
Tue	Easy 30 min + 3×3 min ME
Wed	Cross-train 20 min easy
Thu	Rest
Fri	Easy 15–20 min
Sat	Rest
Sun	RACE DAY 42.2 km

Race-week checklist

- ☐ Race info read: start time, pen, bag drop, drink/gel stations
- ☐ Travel planned with time to spare
- ☐ Tested kit laid out, number pinned, gels, anti-chafe, throwaway layer
- ☐ Tested breakfast ready
- ☐ Target: start comfortably, finish feeling good

Long-run fuelling log

Week	Distance	What I ate before	Fuel during	Drink	How my stomach felt
6					
7					
8					
9					

Week	Distance	What I ate before	Fuel during	Drink	How my stomach felt
10					
11					
12					
13					
14					
15					

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