

# Running Training Plan



## Spice — Marathon Training Plan

### Goal

After having run your first marathon, move on to improve speed over the distance and set a realistic but challenging time.

### Plan Duration – 16 weeks

This plan assumes that you have followed our beginners marathon plan or have already completed a marathon (26.2 miles, 42.2 km).

This plan is longer than all the beginner and other Spice plans at 16 weeks. If you are targeting a challenging time, i.e. not just running to complete the distance, this longer training plan is recommended. Unlike the beginners plan, this spice marathon plan includes a taper.

Running a marathon for a target time is akin to racing it and is a high risk endeavour. The marathon is unlike the typical shorter distances in that it requires more energy than is readily available in body (in the form of glycogen). Even a very lean body has huge total energy resources (in the form of fat) that can fuel us for hundreds of miles. But fat is much harder for the body to break down for use as energy (it takes much more oxygen to break down fat than glycogen). Hence, glycogen is the much preferred fuel and running out of it during a marathon can be an ugly experience.

### About the plan

The sessions are given in both time and distance, and are based on an easy jogging pace of 10 minutes per mile (6.13 per km). Distances are shown for guidance only and will vary according to your own running ability. It is preferable to schedule your running by time, but, of course you can convert to distance accordingly.

Throughout the 16 weeks, the aim is to gradually increase endurance by incorporating longer and longer runs. The plan also includes speed work to get you used to running harder for longer. The first

The problem is glycogen fuel stores are not large enough to carry us the whole 26.2 miles. Therefore, marathon training revolves around the need to make efficient use of energy whilst running as fast as possible; this is where the risk comes in. To run a marathon to ones full potential is to run it on a knife edge between success and often quite dramatic failure.

If you set a testing target time you should be aware that optimum training is paramount. To check your potential over the marathon distance, use the [prediction tool](#) on the website.

If this is only your second marathon, then it might be prudent to set a slightly conservative target, but this is of course entirely your decision.

The plan starts from a position of being fit enough to commence the 16-week training schedule. Take a look at the first two weeks, if this level of training is beyond what you are currently doing then you'll need to gradually build up before starting it.

8 weeks focus on preparing a strong endurance base. The next 8 weeks develop this base and build speed endurance on top so that you are ready to tackle the event according to your goal time.

Although the sessions are shown on specific days, it's ok to juggle the sessions according to your lifestyle or other commitments. However, it is important to allow sufficient recovery after tough sessions and not to stack hard days together.

There are some optional sessions, obviously, if you can do these it will help; decide according to your lifestyle, experience and susceptibility to injury.

## How to personalise your own training plan.

Because you are targeting a time, you will need to be specific with your training paces. One schedule will not suit all people so your running throughout this schedule should be determined by your own ability. There are 4 types of session in the schedule and you should set their intensity according to the notes below.

- 1 Recovery/easy runs. These must be run very easily, at least 1 minute per mile slower than marathon pace.
- 2 Steady runs. These should be run at your marathon race pace.
- 3 Long runs. These runs should be run in a controlled way at a pace around 1 minute per mile slower than race pace. If you do them quicker you will not be training optimally and your other training during the week will be compromised due to fatigue.
- 4 Tempo runs. For most runners, tempo runs are run at threshold pace; very slightly faster than half-marathon pace but not as fast as 10k race pace. Training at this speed develops your ability to run faster for longer durations. These tempo runs (aside from the warm-up and cool-down) must be run at a consistent intensity.

## More notes on pacing

To train effectively, it is well proven that we must train at different paces. We usually express pace in terms of minutes per mile or minutes per km. But, this is not effective for training runs if there are undulations during the run or it is windy. Instead we should become familiar with the intensity or perceived effort of running at these paces on the flat. You can obtain your optimum training paces based on your current running ability by using the [training pace calculator](#) on the RTP website. Use the ratings of perceived effort obtained to determine the intensities of your training runs on this schedule. Details of the effort rating are shown on [training paces page](#) on the website.

## The Long Runs

Because this schedule is more demanding than that of a beginner, we must be mindful of overload. Long runs are planned to build your endurance, but they must also enable you to benefit fully from the rest of your training which is designed to get you running faster. Therefore, the long runs are somewhat limited in time compared to some other schedules. The long runs are given with maximum distance and time and you should run whichever is the lower, e.g. 18 miles or 2hrs30.

## Training advice

Stretching for runners is a contentious subject. However, it's worth remembering that to participate effectively in any sport an athlete's body must allow the range of movement required to perform efficiently and without causing damage. It's certainly not vital — and indeed can be counter-productive — to be excessively flexible for running. But, of the many runners we see, the majority lack necessary flexibility and do not work enough on this important aspect of their training.

We recommend light stretching (10-15 seconds per muscle) after each session, and also allocating some time during the week for developmental stretching, paying particular attention to calf muscles, hamstrings, quadriceps, gluteal muscles and piriformis muscles. All of which, if tight can inhibit your running and lead to increased loading on the body which can cause injury.

Long runs can and do cause leg soreness, [ice baths](#) after your long runs can help. But, note that research suggests that icing can inhibit the recovery and repair process of damaged muscles.

Regardless of a cautious training approach, illness and injury can occur. Sometimes, it is better to miss training altogether and return stronger on another day than risk complete breakdown. Remember, the aim of the training is to place you in optimal condition on the start line to achieve your goal, not in a weakened or risk-prone state.

This training plan is long enough and structured to allow for some missed days, but if too much time is lost then it might be prudent to abandon to ensure complete recovery and then to reschedule.

## Special Notes

This training plan is for people who have completed our marathon beginners plan or who have already run a marathon. It is not for those new to running. Some people should speak to their doctor before undertaking any form of physical exercise, in particular, those who are (or have):

- More than 20% over their ideal weight
- More than 40 years old
- A smoker or ex-smoker
- Pregnant
- Personal or family history of heart trouble
- High blood pressure, diabetes or other medical condition

### Weeks one and two

Day	Session	Distance	Duration
Monday	Easy run 30 mins	3	0.30
Tuesday	10mins easy, 16 mins threshold, 10 easy	4	0.36
Wednesday	Rest or cross train. Stretching.		
Thursday	Steady run	5	0.50
Friday	Rest, optional stretching		
Saturday	Optional steady run	5	0.50
<b>Sunday</b>	long run 10 miles	10	1.40
Monday	Easy run 30 mins	3	0.30
Tuesday	10mins easy, 16 mins threshold, 10 easy	4	0.36
Wednesday	Rest or cross train. Stretching.		
Thursday	Steady run	5	0.50
Friday	Rest, optional stretching		
Saturday	Optional steady run	5	0.50
<b>Sunday</b>	long run 11 miles	11	1.50
<b>Total exercise distance &amp; time for 14 days</b>		<b>55</b>	<b>9.02</b>

### Weeks three and four

Day	Session	Distance	Duration
Monday	Easy run 30 mins	3	0.30
Tuesday	10mins easy, 24 mins threshold, 10 easy	5	0.44
Wednesday	Rest or cross train. Stretching.		
Thursday	Steady run	5	0.50
Friday	Rest, optional stretching		
Saturday	Optional steady run	5	0.50
<b>Sunday</b>	long run 12 miles	12	2.00
Monday	Easy run 30 mins	3	0.30
Tuesday	10mins easy, 24 mins threshold, 10 easy	5	0.44
Wednesday	Rest or cross train. Stretching.		
Thursday	Steady run	5	0.50
Friday	Rest, optional stretching		
Saturday	Optional steady run	5	0.50
<b>Sunday</b>	long run 8 m	8	1.20
<b>Total exercise distance &amp; time for 14 days</b>		<b>56</b>	<b>9.08</b>

## Weeks five and six

Day	Session	Distance	Duration
Monday	Easy run 35 mins	3.5	0.35
Tuesday	10mins easy, 24 mins threshold, 10 easy	5	0.44
Wednesday	Rest or cross train. Stretching.		
Thursday	Steady run	6	1.00
Friday	Rest, optional stretching		
Saturday	Optional steady run	5	0.50
<b>Sunday</b>	long run 14	14	2.20
Monday	Easy run 35 mins	3.5	0.35
Tuesday	10mins easy, 32 mins threshold, 10 easy	6	0.52
Wednesday	Rest or cross train. Stretching.		
Thursday	Steady run	6	1.00
Friday	Rest, optional stretching		
Saturday	Optional steady run	5	0.50
<b>Sunday</b>	long run 15	15	2.30
<b>Total exercise distance &amp; time for 14 days</b>		<b>69</b>	<b>11.16</b>

## Tuesday mixed pace sessions

Distances shown on the Tuesday sessions will vary according to your own training paces.

## Weeks seven and eight

Day	Session	Distance	Duration
Monday	Easy run 35 mins	3.5	0.35
Tuesday	10mins easy, 32 mins threshold, 10 easy	6	0.52
Wednesday	Rest or cross train. Stretching.		
Thursday	Steady run	6	1.00
Friday	Rest, optional stretching		
Saturday	Optional steady run	5	0.50
<b>Sunday</b>	long run 17	17	2.50
Monday	Easy run 35 mins	3.5	0.35
Tuesday	10mins easy, 32 mins threshold, 10 easy	6	0.52
Wednesday	Rest or cross train. Stretching.		
Thursday	Steady run	6	1.00
Friday	Rest, optional stretching		
Saturday	Optional steady run	5	0.50
<b>Sunday</b>	long run 10	10	1.40
<b>Total exercise distance &amp; time for 14 days</b>		<b>68</b>	<b>11.04</b>

### Weeks nine and ten

Day	Session	Distance	Duration
Monday	Easy run 40 mins	4	0.40
Tuesday	10mins easy, 32 mins threshold, 10 easy	6	0.52
Wednesday	Rest or cross train. Stretching.		
Thursday	Steady run	7	1.10
Friday	Rest, optional stretching		
Saturday	Optional steady run	5	0.50
<b>Sunday</b>	half marathon	14	2.20
Monday	Easy run 40 mins	4	0.40
Tuesday	10mins easy, 2x20 mins threshold with 3 min rec, 8 easy	7	1.01
Wednesday	Rest or cross train. Stretching.		
Thursday	Steady run	7	1.10
Friday	Rest, optional stretching		
Saturday	Optional steady run	5	0.50
<b>Sunday</b>	long run 18 (3 hours max)	18	3.00
<b>Total exercise distance &amp; time for 14 days</b>		<b>77</b>	<b>12.33</b>

### Weeks eleven and twelve

Day	Session	Distance	Duration
Monday	Easy run 40 mins	4	0.40
Tuesday	10mins easy, 2x20 mins threshold with 3 min rec, 8 easy	7	1.01
Wednesday	Rest or cross train. Stretching.		
Thursday	Steady run	7	1.10
Friday	Rest, optional stretching		
Saturday	Optional steady run	5	0.50
<b>Sunday</b>	long run 12	12	2.00
Monday	Easy run 40 mins	4	0.40
Tuesday	10mins easy, 2x20 mins threshold with 3 min rec, 8 easy	7	1.01
Wednesday	Rest or cross train. Stretching.		
Thursday	Steady run	7	1.10
Friday	Rest, optional stretching		
Saturday	Optional steady run	5	0.50
<b>Sunday</b>	long run 20 (3 hours max)	20	3.00
<b>Total exercise distance &amp; time for 14 days</b>		<b>78</b>	<b>12.22</b>

### Weeks thirteen and fourteen

Day	Session	Distance	Duration
Monday	Easy run 45 mins	4.5	0.45
Tuesday	10mins easy, 40 mins threshold, 10 easy	7	1.00
Wednesday	Rest or cross train. Stretching.		
Thursday	Steady run	7	1.10
Friday	Rest, optional stretching		
Saturday	Optional steady run	5	0.50
<b>Sunday</b>	long run 16	16	2.40
Monday	Easy run 45 mins	4.5	0.45
Tuesday	10mins easy, 40 mins threshold, 10 easy	7	1.00
Wednesday	Rest or cross train. Stretching.		
Thursday	Steady run	7	1.10
Friday	Rest, optional stretching		
Saturday	Optional steady run	5	0.50
<b>Sunday</b>	long run 12	12	2.00
<b>Total exercise distance &amp; time for 14 days</b>		<b>75</b>	<b>12.10</b>

### Good luck

If you need any more detailed help, just get in touch via the [Running Training Plan](#) website.

### Weeks fifteen and sixteen

Day	Session	Distance	Duration
Monday	Easy run 40 mins	4	0.40
Tuesday	10mins easy, 2x20 mins threshold with 3 min rec, 8 easy	7	1.01
Wednesday	Rest or cross train. Stretching.		
Thursday	Steady run	6	1.00
Friday	Rest, optional stretching		
Saturday	Optional steady run	5	0.50
<b>Sunday</b>	long run 8	8	1.20
Monday	Easy run 30 mins	3	0.30
Tuesday	10mins easy, 20 mins threshold, 8 easy	4.5	0.38
Wednesday	Rest or cross train. Stretching.		
Thursday	Steady run	4	0.40
Friday	Rest, optional stretching		
Saturday	Optional steady run	5	0.50
<b>Sunday</b>	Marathon	26.2	??
<b>Total exercise distance &amp; time for 14 days</b>		<b>72.7</b>	<b>7.29</b>