The Marathon Runner’s Handbook
Tips, Tricks & Tactics from Experienced Runners
Running a marathon is an incredible challenge that requires dedication and discipline. Knowing what challenges you may face along the way can help you to be prepared, and to be successful in completing your run... especially as there is no ‘one size fits all’ approach to the training, or the endurance of the race itself.

To help guide new runners to the finish line, Science in Sport has hand-picked and interviewed 12 highly experienced, accomplished, and passionate marathon runners, selecting the best of their answers and advice to include in this handbook.

The Marathon Runner’s Handbook consists of 24 questions around marathon training, race day, and post-marathon care. It also includes a beginner training plan and links to further learning resources. Please enjoy this compilation of top tips, and we’ll see you at the starting line!

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Contributors

Charlie Watson ♤ @charliedwatson
Charlie Watson was an unlikely marathon runner who was unhealthy and out of shape when she signed up for her first London Marathon. Changing her life for the better, she’s run 4 marathons (PB 3.49), and numerous halves, 5K, & 10Ks. Her ultimate goal is to run all six of the Marathon Majors and qualify for the Boston Marathon before hitting 35!

Matt Buck ♤ @running_bucky
Matt Buck first started running in 2008 when he did the Berlin Marathon. He’s since completed countless half marathons, marathons and ultra marathons. In 2014, he completed the Marathon Des Sables and began working as an ultra running coach. You can find out more about him here: www.runningadventures.uk/about.html

Dr. Jason Karp ♤ @drjasonkarp
One of the foremost running experts in America, Dr. Jason Karp is the creator of the Run-Fit Specialist certification, holds a Ph.D. in exercise physiology, and is the author of six books and 200+ published running, coaching, and fitness articles. He’s a frequent speaker at international fitness & coaching conferences and recipient of multiple awards.

Jesica D’Avanza ♤ @rUnladylike
Jesica D’Avanza is a runner, triathlete, certified marathon coach, writer, and blogger of runladylike.com. Jesica has completed 8 marathons, 8 half marathons and numerous triathlons, including 2 half iron distance races. She serves as vice president of marketing communications for the US’ largest nonprofit organization that fights muscle disease. You can follow her adventures on Instagram (@runladylike) and Facebook (facebook.com/runladylike).

Leah Evans ♤ @leahnaturally

Laura Anderson ♤ @Losingrace
Laura Anderson earned state, regional, & national honors in high school & college track & field. A few years ago she fell in love with distance running & has since run 18+ half marathons with 2 wins & 10 top-10 placements, 10 marathons (PB 3:04) with 3 top-5 placements, & is currently training for her first sub-3 hour marathon. Blog: www.catchingmybreath.com.
Contributors

**Kathleen Carroll** [@Leeny_Lou](https://twitter.com/Leeny_Lou)
Scottish amateur runner, based in Cheshire, who has run 40+ half marathons over 13 years and is currently training for her 9th marathon.

**Colin Barnes** [@myRaceKit](https://twitter.com/myRaceKit)
After a 12yr military background, Colin Barnes moved into running for fun & the distances kept growing. With a good grounding in marathon & half marathon distances, he’s completed the Marathon des Sables twice, SDW100 miles twice, NDW100, GURC145 & the UTMB. This Year brings on bigger challenges such as Thames Ring 250 & the PTL (300k in the Alps).

**Paul Navesey** [@ultra_paulo](https://twitter.com/ultra_paulo)
Paul Navesey is an Ultra distance runner for the Centurion Ultra Team & is supported by multiple sports brands. He loves to run - anything from 3000m Steeplechase to Ultra distance on trail, mountain, cross country, track or road. World Record holder for Treadmill 50k. Eats a lot of chocolate.

**Emma Barraclough** [@EmmaBSIS](https://twitter.com/EmmaBSIS)
Senior Sports Nutritionist at Science in Sport. Former netballer turned runner & triathlete. Dabbled in 10kms & half marathons after leaving university, her first marathon was London 2008 when she was lucky enough to get a surprise ballot entry! She’s been a bit addicted to long distance since then - 7 ironmans & 11 marathons later...

**Amy Whitehead** [@AmyRunningFeat](https://twitter.com/AmyRunningFeat)
Amy has competed for GB/England in various competitions & championships in cross country, road and track, most notably coming 9th in the 2014 Commonwealth Games and 13th (first Brit) at the 2014 London Marathon. She’s completed 7 marathons (6 London & 1 Berlin) with a PB of 2:33:44, and is proudly sponsored by a leading sports brand. Amy is also a busy working mum, coach, writer, and runs a website with running/journalist sister Lucy Waterlow: [www.runningfeat.co.uk](http://www.runningfeat.co.uk)

**Robbie Britton** [@ultrabritton](https://twitter.com/ultrabritton)
Team GB ultra runner, online coach and cheeky little man.
Pre-Marathon Training

“

The greatest lesson about running and life is that achieving our true potential starts with mastering the ability to believe in ourselves, and to carry a positive perspective.

Dreams become achievable when we let go of our fear of failure and cast away self-doubt.”

Jesica D’Avanza: Runner, Triathlete and Marathon Coach
Mental preparation is as important as physical training. There’s a few key things to mentally prepare for a big race:

1) Trust your training. Forget workouts that didn’t go as planned and focus on successful tough/long workouts. Remember these during the race when it’s challenging - you did it then and you will do it now.

2) Set goals that aren’t just tied to pace or the clock. Think about soaking in the moment, feeling strong and happy. Enjoy the experience despite the challenge and believe that you are capable of more than you think.

3) Have a personal mantra(s) that gives you encouragement and strength. I often repeat ‘You are stronger than you think’ and ‘I own this race.’

4) Control the things you can control and do everything to set up for success - sleep, fuelling and hydrating, the right gear, etc. This will ease your mind on race weekend.

Being mentally ready to run any race is half the battle, and this gets more important the longer the distance. You need to WANT to run the race, if you don’t want to be there the race will be considerably harder. I visualise finishing big races, as it reminds me how amazing that moment will be, making me more determined to get there.

I like to have my training plan set out and in the diary a couple of months before I start training. That way, I know what I am in for and can make sure it takes priority.
Do you have any tips for getting your breathing into a rhythm, and how do you manage a stitch?

**Matt Buck**
You need to be relaxed at all times, settle into a comfortable pace and control your breathing. If you push too hard your breathing will get out of control and you’ll struggle - this should be saved for the sprint to the finish. Sip your drink and eat small amounts as you run, if you do get a stitch, slow down slightly and ensure your breathing is relaxed, take some big breaths. Wait for it to completely pass before pushing on.

**Leah Evans**
I have found running with a friend and talking is really good for regulating my breathing - it’s an extra challenge, but in the end it makes running on your own much easier!

**Dr. Jason Karp**
Breathe in concert with your footsteps. Exhale when your leg lands. Aim for a 3 to 4-step-to-breath ratio.
3. How many weeks/times a week should you train before you can enter for a marathon, and what distances?

**Jesica D’Avanza**

I recommend comfortably running 3 miles 3-4 times per week before thinking about a marathon. Try a half marathon first, training 16-18 weeks before race day. Train 4-6 days a week and include 1-3 easy runs, a speed/interval day, a tempo run, and a long run day.

Full marathon training would follow an additional 16-21 week program depending on fitness level and experience. There’s no ‘one size fits all’ approach.

**Leah Evans**

I suffered an injury and wasn’t able to run for the last 5 weeks before my first marathon - the longest I’d run was 30km/18mi.

I held onto the saying “you run the first third with your feet, the second third with your mind, and the last third with your heart”. So after 30km it was all unchartered territory, but I truly believed I could do it - and I did!

Before I entered, I was running 3 x a week (no more than 10k), and I used the month before my training plan started to build up general running fitness.

**Laura Anderson**

The goal of long training runs is to come close to that wall (glycogen depletion) but not actually cross it. The general rule is running up to 20 miles usually 1-2 times before the marathon - I find the most benefit in my longer runs (up to 23+ miles) as the time on the feet is mentally and physically confidence boosting. Each person is different and their goal may require different methods to reach it.
Do you have any running gear or resources that you would recommend to help with training?

Amy Whitehead
Kit that wicks the sweat away from your skin. Florescent tops and waterproofs to keep dry during dark morning runs and wet training days. Garmin watch - ideal for monitoring training and miles. Compression socks - great for helping with recovery.

Paul Navesey
I love Strava! It tracks everything I need. Distance, pace and elevation. It’s easy to access, use and great for looking back over information. Plus the social aspect of it is fun and can add motivation. Kit wise, find a pair of comfortable shoes and socks.

Emma Barraclough
I like tracking everything with apps such as Training peaks. It’s great to pair with nutrition ones such as myfitnesspal too which let you balance out calories and energy expenditure.
Which type(s) of terrain are better for marathon training, and why?

Laura Anderson
If you’re training for a race with lots of UP and DOWNHILL, finding routes that incorporate these elements is important. If training for a flat race, you want to get used to running for hours on flat surfaces - that doesn’t mean neglect hills as they will only make you stronger, but getting used to working the same muscles for extended periods of time is important. The treadmill is an incredible training aid as it allows you to run in the worst weather and it’s a great pacing tool - teaching your muscles certain paces that YOU control.

Leah Evans
I loathe the treadmill, but doing speed sessions is much easier on the treadmill as I have greater control of my pace. I love running trails and offroad, but ultimately my marathon is on pavement, so my feet need to get used to that too! Offroad and trails are a lot softer on the legs/feet, but there is risk of rolling an ankle.

Amy Whitehead
Definitely outdoor as this is what you are preparing to run in. Traffic free and relatively flat tarmac for hard tempo runs and sessions. Off road trails and grass for recovery runs, ideally with scenic views!

Kathleen Carroll
I always go with training on the terrain which your race will be on. So for example, if it’s a road marathon, training on the roads and hills are always good to do anyway.
Do you have any tips for avoiding/managing injuries? What’s your advice/tricks for injury recovery?

**Matt Buck**
Listen to your body, if you feel a niggle, ice it. Make sure your trainers are well fitted - go to a good running shop for a gait analysis - most injuries occur because the person bought off the shelf trainers. There’s a few things you can do to help you run better, recover faster and stay injury free. **Stretching** is important to avoid injury: **Before** - Dynamic stretching loosens and activates all your leg muscles. Try leg swings, walking lunges, & heel kicks. **After** - slow your pace, move into a walk, & finish with static stretches to maintain healthy flexibility & range of motion. Try kneeling hip flexor & hamstring, standing quad, & standing calf. **Refuel** within 30 minutes of finishing as this is when the body needs fuel the most, ensuring you get the most out of your training. The easiest way to quickly refuel is with a sports drink. **Ice baths** - try staying in for up to 10 minutes as soon as you can (I only do this after long runs), start with less time the first few goes. Follow with a warm bath.

**Dr. Jason Karp**
Train smart - never make huge jumps, run the same distances until your body becomes habituated, only then should you increase the distance/intensity. When you have a cold, it’s okay to run if the symptoms are above your neck, if they’re below your neck or you have a fever, don’t run.

**Emma Barraclough**
Your muscles can adapt in 3/4 weeks, but tendons & ligaments can take 8-12 weeks to adjust, which can make your achilles, patella tendons, etc. more prone to injury, so don’t jump to big mileage or lots of speed work too quickly.

**Laura Anderson**
Increasing weekly mileage at 10% per week is a good rule of thumb to avoid injury. Cross training (cycling, elliptical, yoga, etc.) is also important as it works the body without adding stress. Injuries/illness can happen no matter how well we prepare. Learning when NOT to run is important - it’s better to rest than to push and make things worse, setting you back 2 weeks instead of 2 days. I follow workouts with stretching, foam rolling, & ice baths in summer/hot epsom salt baths in winter.
How do you regain motivation after underperforming during a training session?

Paul Navesey
Take a look at why it may have not gone so well. Was it a lack of sleep? Not eaten properly? Or just tired? Try to work out what may have lead to it and learn. Don’t dwell on it too much and get back out there for an easy run - it will soon be forgotten.

Jesica D’Avanza
Sometimes the hardest races where we struggle to finish or fall short of our goals are often the most important. They teach us about ourselves and running, and what we learn can help us improve moving forward. Embrace the hard runs, allow them to motivate you and grow from them. Accept that disappointment is going to happen in running, but it doesn’t mean the next run won’t be awesome. Take a little time off to decompress and re-energize, then set a new goal and move on.

Leah Evans
Go for a run with friends - that always picks me up!

Robbie Britton
Don’t lose motivation in the first place. Understand we all have bad days and as long as you can identify what went wrong (tiredness, dodgy food, bad sleep, etc.) then you have learnt something and can move on. Take the next day easy and don’t try to play catch up.
What are effective ‘day/night before’ practices?

Emma Barraclough
Carb loading for 48 hours before is definitely key. I avoid huge portions at meals and graze throughout the days, making all meals carb-based (oats, rice, potatoes, or pasta). The night before I’ll have a small amount of lean protein and avoid anything too fatty so that it passes through the gut easily. Hydration is really important too, and shouldn’t be crammed into the morning or night before!

Laura Anderson
Sleep before a race is very important, and while the night before is important, two nights before actually has the biggest effect. I like a short shake-out run the day before a race, but nothing long or strenuous. Pre-race fuel: I prefer a larger carbohydrate rich lunch the day before and a lighter dinner (easier to digest) the evening prior.

Robbie Britton
I’ll carb load the day before by eating a few more carb snacks during the day, but not a massive bowl of pasta the night before! I get my race number stuck on the night before and plan how I’m getting to the start.

Kathleen Carroll
Your training is done and the best thing you can do now is conserve energy and relax. Lay out your running stuff the day before. Make up a checklist in advance and determine that you definitely have everything ready: run number, timing chip, Garmin, gels, well-worn run clothes, trainers, etc. Do you also have contingency clothing in case the weather is not as predicted?
9. Any other general training tips or guidance for pre-marathon training?

**Charlie Watson**
Don’t stick to your training plan no matter what. If you’re feeling ill, in pain, or too tired, adjust your plan instead of slogging your guts out because the plan says so and ending up more unwell or injured. Cross training and rest/recovery is just as important as the running!

**Paul Navesey**
Join a local running club - they’re full of like-minded people/knowledge of training and racing. Clubs often organise group sessions/long runs, which adds motivation and socialising to your training. A training partner is a great addition too.

**Robbie Britton**
Consistency is key! Don’t get caught up trying to run a set number of miles, just make sure you get week after week of good training. Include some hills/speed – a strong core helps you maintain form in the latter stages and run efficiently.

**Matt Buck**
Make sure all your kit is ready, know where you’re going, how long it’ll take you, etc. - being organised is key to a stress free race. If you’ve never run amongst others, enter a 10k or half - it’s good experience. Speak to experienced runners about any concerns/worries, relax and enjoy every minute.

**Laura Anderson**
A good support system is incredibly important - it’s a big goal so having help makes a difference. Race websites typically have helpful information – e.g. elevation profiles so you can train on similar terrain. If the course has lots of turns, practice tangents to avoid running extra distance. Train in various race outfits for different temperatures/weather. Check where aid stops are and what’s available so you can train with certain fuels and avoid an upset stomach trying something new! Practice drinking at certain miles so the body adjusts to the race’s water stops. Being prepared for all the little things leading up to race day leaves you with less to stress about.
On The Day...

Don’t forget to visualise the best bit: sighting the finishing line, the crowd roaring, willing you on, and that amazing feeling of pride and sense of accomplishment as you cross that finish line, clutching the cold, shiny brightness of your very first marathon medal.”

Kathleen Carroll, runner of 40+ half marathons & 8+ marathons
10. Are there any mental preparations or practices you can recommend for race day?

**Jesica D'Avanza**
Be in the mile you are in - don’t think about how many miles are left at the 3-mile mark. Evaluate how you’re feeling and your breathing - what is your mind telling you? If you’re feeling stressed or uneasy, go back to a comfortable place until you feel better - there’re good miles and bad miles during every race. Break it down into smaller, achievable goals - don’t think about the 26.2 miles to go, focus on the 3-mile mark, then 10K, 10 miles, the half way point, 17 miles, 21 miles, 23 miles. These small milestones make the race more attainable and less intimidating.

**Paul Navesey**
Race day is what all the training has been for so enjoy the benefits of that hard work! Remind yourself of the goal, keep relaxed and stick to the plan. When it gets tough towards the end, I break the remaining distance down into time. If you have about 45 minutes to go, think how many times you have been out in training longer than 45 minutes - it’s still just running and it’s nothing you can’t do.

**Colin Barnes**
I don’t just work to a training plan but I also have a race plan and like 90% of runners, I struggle with sticking to the race plan when the gun goes. Be aware of your early pace and rein it in.

**Matt Buck**
Be prepared and stick to your race day plan. If your plan says that you need to be running 9min/miles, don’t shoot off doing 8min/miles. Try not to dwell on the miles ticking by too much, and try not to check your watch too often, it can make you go a bit crazy! Let your mind wander and enjoy watching other runners or the crowds. Focus on 10km at a time, split the race up into smaller manageable chunks.
How far in advance should you arrive at a race and what are your pre-race tips/routines/rituals?

Emma Barraclough
At least 90 minutes – you don’t want to rush around stressed, especially as queuing for the toilets, bag drop, etc. can be quite time consuming at big events. I always have a double serving of porridge for breakfast and take an energy bar with me to the start. I drink a carbohydrate-electrolyte drink so that I’m well hydrated and have fully topped-up glycogen stores.

Dr. Jason Karp
Don’t wake up too close to the start time of a marathon - give yourself plenty of time to do everything — eat, drink, dress, drive to the start, go to the bathroom, warm up, stretch, and mentally prepare. Your blood glucose is low when you wake up because it’s been 9-12 hours since you’ve eaten. 1-2 hours before the race, eat 300-400 calories of easily digestible carbohydrate and protein - a nutrition bar, eggs, toast with jelly. Stay away from fibre and fat.

Jesica D’Avanza
Do a proper warm-up – this prevents you from using the first mile or two to warm up and it helps avoid injury - many new runners forget about this. Jog very slowly/ easily for 10 minutes and complete 5-10 minutes of dynamic stretching. You want to prepare your body for the stress you’re about to put on it.

Robbie Britton
I eat porridge and honey for breakfast or bread and a banana. Just something simple that your body can handle. Keep your sleep pattern as normal as possible before the race and get there in good time to avoid rushing.
What do you take with you to eat or drink, in what combination, and why?

**Paul Navesey**
For marathons I use energy gels and the water provided. Find out how often water stations are, if they provide energy gels, and which brand. If it’s a brand you train with, that’s ideal, if not, stick to the brand you know. It may mean carrying an extra gel or 2 but that’s better than being derailed by stomach issues. Use long training runs to test what works best, but I always go for water and an energy gel.

**Emma Barraclough**
I use energy gels (light & easy to digest) and avoid simple sugars (jelly sweets, etc.), which can upset my stomach. I take my first gel within 30-40mins and then at regular intervals thereafter. I carry gels in a waist pack to avoid relying on aid stations but pick up water as I go - the amount depends on conditions.

**Jesica D’Avanza**
You want fuels that absorb quickly into your system (gels/liquid-based) - trying to eat food gets harder as the miles go on. As a new runner, you’ll hear a lot about electrolytes, which are essential for functioning cells. Choosing gels, chews, sports drinks, etc. that contain electrolytes helps you to replenish lost sodium and potassium.

**Colin Barnes**
Practice with the foods and drinks you will take on race day. I use isotonic gels and tend to opt for the citrus fresher tasting ones. I do take some extra water to help speed the digestion.
What happens if you injure yourself during the race? Is it game over? How do you handle it?

Laura Anderson
Maybe you get injured, experience cramping, or the weather is causing issues - if it’s going to harm you more, then you should stop (serious injury/pain, dehydration, etc.). If it’s a matter of adjusting your goal and finishing a bit slower but unharmed, I would try pushing through- you’ll regret it more if you don’t finish and know that you could have.

Paul Navesey
Long races will be uncomfortable and hurt at times - being able to distinguish between that discomfort and an injury is important. Try a few things before making a decision to stop: Eat (a gel, bar, etc.), grab a drink at the next opportunity, and walk. Breaking into a walk may not be ideal but taking a minute or 2 may help get you back on track - a short reduction in effort can work wonders.

Colin Barnes
Unexpected incidents are inevitable on race days, if something happens during your race, always be prepared to adapt your plan.
14. How do you pace yourself to avoid starting too quickly?

Matt Buck
I’ll have a plan so I know the exact pace I need run. I allow myself a mile or two to get into my rhythm, keeping an eye on my watch until confident that I’m on pace, then I try to relax. I check how I’m doing compared to my plan at halfway - I know then if it was realistic and I decide whether to speed up, slow down, or stick to my current pace. You need to be open to changing your plan as you run.

Amy Whitehead
Run as controlled as you can and have a maximum limit in your head that you will not go over per mile. Courses can vary so you will have some miles that are faster than others but you need to be strict with yourself overall so that you don’t pay later. I’d always recommend a negative split.

Robbie Britton
I nearly always start too quickly. Go on feel, think about what you’re doing and try not to race someone else’s race. Go for that negative split, it’s the dream.

Laura Anderson
I prefer to start conservatively and speed up over the course of the race in small chunks of time/distance. Practicing this in training allows you and your body to get used to the feeling of negative splitting and finishing stronger.
What do you recommend to keep well hydrated?

**Dr. Jason Karp**

Hydration is very important because water is involved in the chemical reactions that enable your muscles to contract. Water also helps the flow of blood and oxygen to your muscles. If your body weight drops more than 2-3% during the race because of fluid loss, your pace slows down dramatically. Don’t let that happen - drink early and often.

**Laura Anderson**

Fuel and hydrate early on in the race - waiting until you NEED replenishment may be too late as most fuels take time to kick in, and dehydration is very hard, if not impossible, to reverse mid-race. So drink water often, even if it’s just a sip or two at each stop. This also helps mentally break up the race - knowing you can take fuel at the next stop keeps you moving forward.

**Leah Evans**

I like to carry a hydration drink to make sure I am replacing fluid and salts lost during the run. About half way through, I find the taste becomes too sickly, so I switch to plain water.
16. Some people feel claustrophobic in the crowds, what is your advice for overcoming this?

**Colin Barnes**
Practice runs in smaller races before the marathon are always good so that you get used to running amongst others and get a bit of exposure with the ever supportive spectators.

**Amy Whitehead**
Try to distance yourself from your surroundings. Focus on your breathing, your race plan, and think positive thoughts.

**Matt Buck**
If you feel claustrophobic in a crowd situation then remove yourself from it! Start further back and stick to the sides, it’s less busy and you will have more space.
17. What is your advice for pushing through ‘The Wall’?

**Emma Barraclough**
Make a nutrition plan and stick to it – ‘the wall’ happens if you completely deplete your glycogen stores. Start your nutrition early and keep feeding every 20-30mins depending on the carbohydrate contents of your gels, or whatever you’re using.

**Charlie Watson**
Save something to look forward to around mile 20, whether it’s turning on your music, a favourite flavour gel, or your family/friends watching on the side-lines. You’ll need a little extra to get through the painful bits. I also like to have a motivational quote when times get tough - my favourite helped me through my first marathon: ‘one day you won’t be able to do this, today is not that day.”

**Matt Buck**
If you train well, eat well, and stay hydrated throughout, you won’t need to worry about hitting ‘the wall’. If you do, it’s mind over matter - your body wants you to stop, you need to tell it to keep going. My tip is to think about irrelevant things - switch your mind off from running. I work out my perfect England squad, then the team and before you know it, 20 minutes and a load of miles have passed by!

**Dr. Jason Karp**
Don’t think of there being a ‘wall’. Focus on each mile at a time - focus on mile 21 the same way you focused on mile 3. Consume carbs throughout the race to keep blood glucose elevated for as long as possible.
18. Any other general tips/advice/recommendations for race day?

Kathleen Carroll
Have your race plan ready, know roughly how many minutes per mile, and remember to fuel and hydrate as you practiced in training. Don’t get caught up in the nerves/excitement of other runners at the start - relax, focus, and run your own pace. Get into a good rhythm - use your music, the crowds, or chatting to other runners and the miles will soon melt away. Be prepared for feeling tired near the end - concentrate on putting one foot in front of the other and use the crowd’s energy.

Amy Whitehead
Take confidence from your training. A marathon is a huge achievement that you can always be proud of - it requires commitment, willpower, and belief. Run smart - don’t go off too fast, stay calm, believe in yourself, and remind yourself that you’re about to do something very special. Don’t forget to reward your efforts with a post-race treat and polish that medal!

Dr. Jason Karp
One of the biggest mistakes is to wear new shoes, even if they’re the same type of shoes you’ve been wearing. You can buy new ones in preparation, but buy at least three weeks before and do one long run in them. Practice wearing all your clothes and gear well before the race, especially on long runs, so you’re comfortable with everything. Enjoy the process and don’t worry about the outcome. Focus on what you’re doing when you’re doing it.

Colin Barnes
Enjoy the day, have a plan and be prepared to adapt that plan. Never leave disappointed but take away useful lessons for the next marathon.
Post-Marathon Care

“What matters most is walking away from the race honestly saying that you gave it everything you had. That alone is worth the race entry fee and something to be immensely proud of.”

Dr. Jason Karp, running expert, coach, writer & speaker
What should you do after a race and how do you effectively cool down?

Amy Whitehead
Keep moving to prevent the legs stiffening up - even if you’re hobbling, this is better than just staying still. Get into dry, clean kit as quickly as possible.

Colin Barnes
Try to eat a mix of carbs and protein within an hour or so of finishing the race and steadily rehydrate. Do regular easy walks over the coming days as an active recovery process – keep moving the legs!

Jesica D’Avanza
Immediately following a race cool down by walking or slowly jogging until your heart rate returns to normal. Wait about an hour or two after a long race to stretch. If you can, soak your legs in cold water to help reduce inflammation. Hydrate by drinking a cup of water every hour for 6 hours, and be sure to replenish lost electrolytes. After a race, stop worrying about the race, your training and doing everything perfect - take some time off, do something fun, and relax!
20. What types, amounts, and timings of nutritional supplements for post-race recovery do you choose?

**Emma Barraclough**
Have something fast-release within 30 minutes of finishing - recovery shakes are ideal as they’re light on your stomach and you might not have the appetite for solid food the minute you finish. Enjoy a decent meal within a couple of hours but avoid alcohol as it doesn’t help recovery the next day! A recovery product that has slow-release protein before bed can really help too.

**Laura Anderson**
Drinking water and eating something that is high in carbohydrates and protein right after the race is important. The first 30 minutes after is crucial to start the recovery process for the muscles. Your stomach might feel ‘off’ after the race, making eating difficult but trying to get something rather than nothing down is important.

**Paul Navesey**
Recovery starts straight away and getting some food and drink on board as so as you are able will help, even if it is a pre-prepared snack or recovery drink until you can get a meal. There is no need to over eat (you’ve earned the right to a little indulgence) but a good meal relatively soon after will help a lot. My personal choice is usually a pizza!
How do you handle a bad race time, and do you have any tips for dealing with the post-race blues?

Dr. Jason Karp
After a marathon, many runners experience depression. There’s so much build up—the choice to do it, training, planning, travel, anticipation, excitement, the effort, and then it’s over. Now what? The best way to overcome the post-marathon blues is to set another goal or do a different activity- another marathon or something else entirely - the world is full of possibilities.

Robbie Britton
Bad race time - use it as an experience and learn from the mistakes you made in that race. No one learns anything from a good race so take this opportunity. Post-race blues - plan your next adventure :-)

Amy Whitehead
Work out any positives from the race and what did not go well - target how you can improve and address this for next time. Forget about running for a little while and rest up. When you feel ready to begin running again, find a target that excites you and re-focus. Everyone has a bad race at some point and it does not make you a bad athlete.

Charlie Watson
I took stock of what had gone well and what had gone badly on race day and training, and looked at whether it was in my hands or not. Some of it could be changed, and some was just fate- use it as a learning experience and move on to the next thing.
How long should you leave before racing another marathon/half-marathon?

Emma Barraclough
Some light training that’s non-impact (swimming, cycling) for a short duration (30-60 mins) in the first week is fine. I’d give yourself at least 4 weeks before you do anything of real intensity or distance again.

Leah Evans
I think emotionally and mentally it took me a lot longer to recover than physically. I wasn’t interested in running for a good month after my first marathon. It’s said for every mile you run, it takes your body a day to recover – and I found this to be very true. I focused on other classes and forms of exercise.

Amy Whitehead
I usually have a week of no running after a marathon. I then begin gentle running every other day - if I don’t feel ready, I wait, many athletes have two weeks off if they still feel tired. I wouldn’t race until at least 5 weeks after the marathon and only a 10k. It’s wise to leave at least 3 months before another marathon and two months for a half. Elite athletes ideally run one or two marathons a year to perform at their best.

Paul Navesey
Allow yourself as much time as you need before resuming training. Walking is great for recovery as is easy jogging. Avoid diving straight back into a plan and allow yourself some unstructured running for a while. Leave a decent gap between marathons - a spring and autumn marathon is a good split. This allows for recovery and plenty of training into the next one.
Any other general tips/advice/recommendations for post-race recovery?

Robbie Britton
Prepare a plan for after the race too. Chill out and enjoy what you have done! Save the celebratory booze up until a couple of days after and let your body recover a bit first.

Matt Buck
Try not to sit around too much, yes you’ve earned a night on the couch with a pizza and movie, but you need to loosen up those muscles, try to move around and keep active.

Amy Whitehead
Indulge in things you had restricted, e.g. the odd glass of wine, banned food, etc. - you’ve earned it and you’ll soon be back in training. Be patient with the body - it’s common to become ill due to the stress the marathon put on the immune system. Try to get additional sleep and listen to your body, it takes about 3 months before you feel fully recovered and ‘bouncy’ in sessions again. Trust your body will be fit and raring to go if you treat it well in this recovery phase.

Charlie Watson
Everyone loves ice baths but I find my body responds best to a hot bath with arnica salts and some light stretching.
24. Final thoughts?

Laura Anderson
The training takes months and the race only a few hours, so enjoy the process - try new workouts to keep your mind fresh, occasionally run with friends, find new roads to train on so you don’t get bored, etc. –anything that keeps you from falling into a training rut. I also set little goals to keep me focused throughout training and I plan rewards for when I reach those goals.

Colin Barnes
Enjoy running and run because you enjoy it. Run with friends, work towards goals but never let it become a chore.

Charlie Watson
Your training is the hard work, your race is like a lap of glory. Enjoy it, leave it all there on the course, and be proud of your achievement no matter the time.

Kathleen Carroll
A marathon is not just an amazing physical achievement: it’s also a testament to your mental toughness.

Paul Navesey
Consistency is the most important part of any training plan – once this is mastered, add in the specific sessions. A consistent base will have huge fitness benefits as well as preparing the body for the increased training load you will place on it.
## 12 Week Beginner Marathon Training Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Mon</th>
<th>Tue</th>
<th>Wed</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Rest</td>
<td>30mins</td>
<td>40mins Cross-</td>
<td>30mins Steady run + Stretch</td>
<td>Rest or Yoga</td>
<td>60mins Long run - Easy effort, off-road if possible + Stretch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recovery Run</td>
<td>Recovery Run</td>
<td>Training - focus on upper body and core + Stretch</td>
<td>+ Stretch</td>
<td>or Swim</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 x (5mins Walk, 30 mins at Easy effort) + Stretch</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Rest</td>
<td>30mins</td>
<td>40mins Cross-</td>
<td>15mins warm-up, 4 x 3 mins</td>
<td>Rest or Yoga</td>
<td>80mins Long run - Easy effort, off-road if possible + Stretch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recovery Run</td>
<td>Recovery Run</td>
<td>Training - focus on upper body and core + Stretch</td>
<td>at Threshold effort with 90 secs jog recovery between effort, 15mins cool-down + Stretch</td>
<td>or Swim</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 x (5mins Walk, 35 mins run) + Stretch</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Rest</td>
<td>30mins</td>
<td>20mins Recovery</td>
<td>15mins warm-up, 3 x 4 mins</td>
<td>Rest</td>
<td>100mins Long run - Easy effort, off-road if possible + Stretch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recovery Run</td>
<td>Recovery Run</td>
<td>run + 30 mins Cross-Training + Stretch</td>
<td>at Threshold effort with 90 secs jog recovery between effort, 15mins cool-down + Stretch</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 x (5mins Walk, 25mins at Easy effort) + Stretch</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Rest</td>
<td>40mins</td>
<td>45mins Recovery</td>
<td>15mins warm-up, 4 x 4 mins</td>
<td>Rest</td>
<td>Long run, 120mins - Easy effort, off-road if possible + Stretch</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recovery Run</td>
<td>Recovery Run</td>
<td>run or Cross-</td>
<td>at Threshold effort with 90 secs jog recovery between efforts, 15 mins cool-down + Stretch</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Training + Stretch</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 x (5mins Walk, 40 mins Recovery run) + Stretch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Rest</td>
<td>40mins</td>
<td>60mins Cross-</td>
<td>15mins warm-up, 4 x 4mins at Threshold effort with 90 secs jog recovery between efforts, 15 mins cool-down + Stretch</td>
<td>Rest</td>
<td>135mins Long run - Easy effort, off-road if possible + Stretch</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recovery Run</td>
<td>Cross-</td>
<td>Training +</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4 x (5mins Walk, 35 mins Recovery run) + Stretch</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Training</td>
<td>Stretch</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Rest</td>
<td>40 -</td>
<td>60mins steady run</td>
<td>40mins Steady undulating run + Stretch</td>
<td>Rest or Swim</td>
<td>150mins Long run - Easy effort, off-road if possible + Stretch</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>60mins Cross-training</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>30min recovery run</td>
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## Endurance nutrition. Without compromise.

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## 12 Week Beginner Marathon Training Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
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<th>Sat</th>
<th>Sun</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Rest</td>
<td>40 mins Cross-training</td>
<td>45mins steady run + Stretch</td>
<td>35mins Recovery run + Stretch</td>
<td>Rest</td>
<td>40mins cross-training</td>
<td>90 mins Long run - Easy effort, off-road if possible + Stretch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Rest</td>
<td>40mins Recovery Run</td>
<td>45mins steady run + Stretch</td>
<td>Rest</td>
<td>Rest or Swim</td>
<td>Rest or swim + stretch</td>
<td>Half Marathon Race</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Rest</td>
<td>40mins Recovery Run</td>
<td>45mins steady run/ cross train + Stretch</td>
<td>15mins warm-up, 3 x 4 mins at Threshold effort with 90 secs jog recovery between effort, 15 mins cool-down + Stretch</td>
<td>Rest</td>
<td>40mins Recovery run</td>
<td>180 mins Long run -with last 60 mins at Marathon pace + Stretch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Rest or Swim + Stretch</td>
<td>40mins Recovery Run</td>
<td>45mins steady run/ cross train + Stretch</td>
<td>15mins warm-up, 4 x 4 mins at Threshold effort with 90 secs jog recovery between effort, 15 mins cool-down + Stretch</td>
<td>Rest</td>
<td>40mins Recovery run</td>
<td>150 mins Long run with last 40 mins at Marathon pace + Stretch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Rest or Swim + Stretch</td>
<td>40mins Recovery Run</td>
<td>30mins steady run/ cross train + Stretch</td>
<td>15mins warm-up, 4 x 4 mins at Threshold effort with 60 secs jog recovery between effort, 15 mins cool-down + Stretch</td>
<td>Rest</td>
<td>40mins Recovery run + Stretch</td>
<td>120 mins Long run -with last 60 mins at Marathon pace + Stretch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Rest or Swim + Stretch</td>
<td>30mins Recovery Run</td>
<td>30mins steady run/ cross train + Stretch</td>
<td>Rest</td>
<td>Rest</td>
<td>20mins Recovery run including 5 x 20 secs strides + Stretch</td>
<td>Marathon Race Day</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The full training plan with nutrition advice can be downloaded and printed here**

Long runs
The long run is important as it improves muscular endurance, body condition, running efficiency & economy. First, concentrate on increasing the time on your feet instead of worrying about pace & distance. The key is working at a conversational pace (brisk walk, a run with walk, or a run depending on fitness & experience) with a perceived effort level of 6.5-7.5 out of 10 (65-75% of your maximum heart rate).

Threshold runs
Threshold runs are a valuable workout but require some effort. They are run at a level of controlled discomfort that’s a perceived effort level of 8-8.5 out of 10 (80-85% of MHR), leaving you only capable of uttering 4 or 5 words to training partners. They require concentration, but greatly improve your speed endurance, running style & economy.

Interval training
Interval training allows you to practise specific race speeds & involves running timed efforts with a controlled recovery period. The perceived effort level is 9-9.5 out of 10 (90-95% of MHR), which means you cannot talk at the same time.

Steady runs
Steady runs are carried out at a perceived effort level of 7.5-8 out of 10 (75-80% MHR) & means running at a level of some discomfort. A lot of runners run at this level because they feel they’re working hard, but it’s not focused enough for real benefit nor easy enough to represent recovery. However, we do recommend steady runs at certain points during training.

Marathon pace practice
Understanding the pace at which you can run your marathon is very important. Marathon pace practice is around 7.8-8.2 out of 10 (78-82% of MHR) & enables your body & mind to get used to what will be required on race day.
### Terminology & Techniques

| **Warming-up** | When you’re doing faster training, it’s important to warm up gradually. A 10-15 min jog warms up your muscles naturally & improves their range of movement. It also allows your cardiovascular system to prepare for the harder training. |
| **Cooling down** | At least 10-15mins easy jogging & light stretching helps your body back to a state of rest. Cooling down stops blood pooling in your legs, & helps remove waste products such as lactic acid from muscle cells, which helps you avoid undue muscle soreness. |
| **Recovery run** | Endurance training requires your body to work hard, so it’s important to plan recovery runs that are easy & relaxed, & no more than 45 minutes. You should be able to hold a conversation throughout, with your effort level at 6-6.5 out of 10 (60-65% MHR). This allows your body to adapt to the training workload & helps with the removal of waste products which accumulate in your muscles after hard effort. |
| **Cross-training & body conditioning** | Non-impact activities (swimming, cycling, aerobics, body & core exercises) should balance your training, so you don’t pick up an injury that’ll set you back. Endurance running requires whole body conditioning to help maintain an efficient running style to the end of a race - aim to work a variety of muscle groups, but remember it complements your running & shouldn’t be so intense that you’re too tired to run. |
| **Rest** | Rest is as important as your running - it helps the body adapt & cope with the workload. Listen to your body & heed warning signs. If you feel fatigued before you’ve run a step, make up excuses not to run, or suffer a series of minor injuries, you may need more time off. Rest enables your physical & mental recovery, so on rest days, REST! |
Learn More About Training & Race Nutrition


Isotonicity: Instant Energy for Intense Exercise
[www.scienceinsport.com/resources/what-is-isotonicity/index.html](http://www.scienceinsport.com/resources/what-is-isotonicity/index.html)
This guide covers the science of carbohydrates and how your body absorbs them during exercise.

Hydration: Keep Cool and Carry On
[www.scienceinsport.com/resources/how-hydration-works/index.html](http://www.scienceinsport.com/resources/how-hydration-works/index.html)
A guide breaking down the science of hydration and why you need more than just water.

Recovery: for Training & Endurance
[www.scienceinsport.com/resources/training-recovery/index.html](http://www.scienceinsport.com/resources/training-recovery/index.html)
This explains muscle recovery and highlights the importance of getting the correct nutrients.

Protein: The Science of Protein & Rebuild
A guide revealing the science behind protein.