MARATHON TRAINING

PLAYBOOK

The Ultimate Marathon Training Guide for All Abilities

YOUR MARATHON GO-TO GUIDE FOR ALL ABILITIES

MYLES MILO

The Marathon Training Playbook, The Ultimate Marathon Training Guide For All Abilities

The Complete Guide for Anybody Considering Taking on a Marathon, Regardless of Ability

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Ready, Steady, Go!

The advice I have for beginners is the same philosophy that I have for runners of all levels of experience and ability: consistency, a sane approach, moderation, and making your running an enjoyable, rather than dreaded, part of your life. -Bill Rodgers, four-time Boston Marathon Champion (Luff, 2020a).

What Is Marathon Running?

A marathon is a race that involves people running over a distance of 42.16 km (26.21 mi.). on the road. It is an exercise that takes quite a long time to complete. Additionally, runners require a lot of energy to cover the stipulated distance.

In most marathon races, runners tread on paved road courses that are easy to navigate and relatively straight. However, an ultra-marathon calls for runners to take to paved roads, dirty surfaces, and mountain trails, among other rugged terrains. Additionally, ultra-marathons technically cover a distance of over 42.2 km (26.22 mi.), but are usually within the range of 50 and 100 km.

There are several reasons why people run a marathon. Some of the reasons are:

- To test personal endurance
- To create awareness for something significant
- To support an important cause
- As a healthy lifestyle exercise
- To get relief from stress
- As a social event that makes people meet and form a friendship
- For the awards before and after finishing the race

The History of Marathon Running

The term *marathon* is a Greek word that describes how Pheidippides, a Greek messenger, ran from the Marathon Plains to Athens to give news about the victory of the Greeks over the Persian Army in 490 BCE.

After getting to Athens, he burst into parliament, gave out the news, collapsed, and then died.

In 1896, the marathon was first introduced in the Olympic Games. More importantly, the Athenian authorities started the Olympics as a means of creating a national feeling. During the Olympics, the marathon was held between the cities of Athens and Greece. It totaled approximately 40.8 km (25.35 mi.). Before the introduction of the marathon, people used to cover less than 5 km (3.10 mi.) in any race.

Informally, ancient hunters used to cover long distances when running after an animal. The animal could also chase the hunter, making him run for safety. The main reason was to make the animal deplete its energy reserves. During this hunting process, the hunters could cover a farther distance than what a marathon covers.

Famous Marathon Runners and Their Achievements

Men

Name of the Runner	Country	Awards/Accolades	Date
Gezahegne Abera	Ethiopia	Gold	2000, 2001
Abel Antón	Spain	Gold	1997, 1999
Stefano Baldini	Italy	Gold	2004
Abebe Bikila	Ethiopia	Gold	1960, 1964
Gelindo Bordin	Italy	Gold	1988
Robert Kipkoech Cheruiyot	Kenya	Gold	2006, 2007
Waldemar Cierpinski	East Germany	Gold	1976, 1980
Robert de Castella	Australia	Gold	1983
Martín Fiz	Spain	Gold	1995
Jaouad Gharib	Morocco	Gold	2003, 2005

Women

Name of the Runner	Country	Awards/Accolades	Date
Tomoe Abe	Japan	Bronze	1993
Yuko Arimori	Japan	Silver	1992
Junko Asari	Japan	Gold	1993
Joan Benoit	USA	Gold	1984
Joyce Chepchumba	Kenya	Bronze	1992
Zhou Chunxiu	China	Bronze	2008
Constantina Diţă- Tomescu	Romania	Gold	2008
Katrin Dörre-Heinig	Germany	Bronze	1998
Tiki Gelana	Ethiopia	Gold	2012
Ingrid Kristiansen	Norway	Gold	1987

Types of Marathons and Races

1. 6.21 mi. or 10 km

This distance of race is for individuals who are just starting on their marathon journey and is the perfect departure point for a new runner or one who is returning to the running game after some time, perhaps from injury.

2. Half-Marathon (13.1 mi. or 21.1 km)

If one manages to run the 6.21-mile race, then running a half marathon should be the next target. A half marathon requires intensive physical and mental training and a solid, nutritional diet.

3. Marathon (26.2 mi. or 42.2 km)

This distance is a full marathon that requires at least six months of training. The pace of a person that runs a marathon can range considerably, and is based on the goals the runner has made. Also, a person intending to run a marathon has to focus on improving their overall leg strength and health, rather than focusing on the distance one has to cover.

4. Ultra-Marathon

This is a race that covers more than 42.2 km or 26.2 mi. Thus, one ultramarathon is different from another in terms of the distance that a runner covers.

5. Stage Races

Stage races vary, and they take place over a period of several days. They are for experienced runners, and they require proper training and pace strategy.

How You Can Get to Where You Want to Be

As you might have guessed, different types of marathons can call for very different training strategies. Below is a brief description of the basic steps leading up to a successful completion of each respective distance:

How to Plan for a 10-km (6.2 mi.) Race

When planning to run a 6.2-mi. race, you have to employ a series of strategies geared towards the distance:

Step One

First thing's first: You have to sign up for the race. The move helps you to maintain discipline during your preparation. Signing up makes the race the ultimate objective that you want to achieve.

Step Two

You must create a realistic training schedule. A realistic schedule is one that is easy to follow, and it does not have targets that are impossible to achieve.

Step Three

Your first distance mark to cover should be 8 km (4.97 mi.). You should ensure that you hit the mark continuously before raising it to 10 km (6.21 mi.).

Step Four

You should identify the time that you want to take to finish the race. Even though it can be challenging to stick to the time limit at first, quality practicing will enable you to keep time in the subsequent races during the training session.

How to Plan for a Half Marathon

Now that you have already covered the 6.21-mi. distance races, it is time to raise your bar higher and tackle the half marathon. However, you need to do the following:

Step One

Spend quality time on improving your fitness. You should cover a series of 6.21-mi. races as part of your practice routine.

Step Two

Create a three-month training plan. You can opt to increase the number of months that your training program will take.

Step Three

Sign up for a half marathon. However, ensure that you stick to your training conditions. Deviating from these conditions during a marathon can result in poor performance.

Step Four

You should do a series of pace-setting exercises to ensure that you can stick to your pace.

How to Plan for a Full Marathon

You are already a seasoned runner, and it is now time to participate in the grand event. For successful results, here are the basic steps to get it done:

First Step

You should ensure that your training program will last for over six months. Such a long training time will ensure that your body is accustomed to running. Thus, you will not drop out or burn during the marathon or the training leading up to it.

Second Step

Ensure that you maintain a consistent pace while running. However, you can decide to open up and dash when finishing the race, especially when that adrenaline kicks in!

Third Step

Expect to feel numb after covering 35 km (21.74 mi.). At this point, your body stiffens, and it also becomes heavy. However, you need to motivate yourself, and dig deep to use the available energy reserves to get you to that finish line.

Fourth Step

After the race, take time to chat with other runners and engage with the media and race organizers. Finishing a marathon is an achievement that you should enjoy and revel in!

What It Feels Like After You Have Run a Marathon

People who take part in a marathon share an eclectic mix of feelings experienced after finishing their amazing feat.

To some people, it equates to taking part in a pain-tolerance exercise. However, finishing the marathon brings a different feeling for many others. Finishing the race leaves many with sweet memories of their perseverance. Additionally, one feels like an achiever given that they accomplished the quest to cover the entire marathon distance.

To others, as mentioned before, the final feelings are a bit less warm and fuzzy. Finishing a marathon makes them feel as if their body has been beaten pulp. However, they still tend to feel excited because they have accomplished their mission. So, we can say that the achievement brings mixed reactions and emotions.

Other runners hate a marathon, given the pain that it evokes. They give up racing because they never want to feel the pain again. However, finishing the race gives them bragging rights. They can always share the experience with others, especially those who have never taken part in a marathon.

The list of feelings of those that complete a marathon is endless. However, they live to tell about the excitement that they feel when the race comes to an end.

What You Can Expect to Get From This Book

This book is a complete guide for anybody considering taking on a marathon, regardless of ability.

Some people find it hard to run a marathon, but this book will simplify the process and training steps along the way. It will give you a starting point and shape you to become a confident marathon runner.

The book will provide you with inventive ways of preparing for different types of marathons regardless of whether you are a prospective, intermediate, or seasoned runner. Additionally, the book will provide you with answers to the frequently asked questions regarding running a marathon.

You will gain empowerment as you prepare for your race or marathon with this arsenal of tips that will ensure you are prepared to go the distance.

Chapter 1: 6.21 Mi. Race

There's not a better feeling than when you have found that moment of balance and harmony when both running and life come together. Then you know why you run and that you couldn't live without it. -Joan Benoit, 1984 Gold Medal Olympian (Luff, 2020b).

Why This Is the Ideal Departure Point

As a beginner, you need to know where to start when taking the first moves towards participating in a marathon. Running post-injury also calls for you to take baby steps to re-introduce your body, especially the injured part, to running.

So, beginners and post-injury runners can share a similar routine to become successful runners.

Understanding the benefits

To begin with, it might help your overall motivation to understand the benefits of running. A few general benefits include: improving your overall health, feeling better inside and out, and providing opportunities for socializing. Notably, understanding the benefits is similar to the carrot and stick formula. An old story asserts that dangling a carrot in front of a horse or donkey keeps it moving with the aim that it will get to the carrot and chew it.

So, when you understand the benefits of running and find a reason that resonates with you, you can keep it in your eyesight and find the motivation to go through what it takes to perfect your game without giving up.

Signing up for a race

As mentioned earlier, signing up for a race is more than just a practical step towards completing a race. As a beginner, you can sign up for any race. However, you need to maintain the newly acquired pace during the race. You also need to ensure that you have ample time to train.

When you sign up for a race, you get the motivation to work out—whether that is from fear of not being able to complete the race distance or from motivation to run your personal best. All you need to do is to identify the distance that you want to cover, pay, schedule the date on the calendar, and train with that date and distance in mind. To identify the available races easily, you can use an online race finder.

Identifying your natural stride

The third step is to identify your natural stride. Some people are heel strikers, while others are toe leaders. However, either of the natural strides is generally okay when running provided your center of gravity is still balanced. If you find yourself succumbing to injury after injury, your stride

may need some tweaking. After identifying your stride, it is now time to work it out and make it stronger.

Using the run-walk method

The fourth action is to apply the run-walk method. Jeff Galloway was the brain behind the introduction of the run-walk method when preparing for a race. The technique requires you to interchange between walking and running when training. However, you are not required to walk when you get tired. Instead, walk when you are still energized to run. Importantly, you need to pick a ratio that is comfortable for you.

When you use the run-walk method, training becomes less strenuous. Also, you reduce your vulnerability to injuries because your muscles get time to recover regularly.

However, the application of the method is optional. If you feel comfortable running throughout the training distance, then you can certainly go for it.

Create a training program

The fifth step in the process is to identify a simple mileage and fitness program. There is a program provided below, but you can always use an app if you prefer to track your progress that way.

A basic training program should include the following basics:

- Three training days in a week.
- 20-30 min walks for two days of the week.
- Longer weekend running or walking. You can opt to take 40 min to one hour.
- Cross-train or rest during your off days (also known as active rest).
- Apply a conversational pace when training so that you can get used to talking and running at the same time—you will enjoy this during the actual race too.
- Take regular walk breaks while you are running.

The starting distance

You can start by running a 5 km race (3.10 mi.) because it is friendlier than the longer races. You will find the race fun and relaxing because of the short distance that you will cover. For such a race, you should train for seven weeks while running for 30 min every Tuesday and Thursday. On weekends, you should cover more distance.

Proper Attire and Other Must-Haves

To run comfortably, you need to be in the proper attire. Obviously, there is no way you can run in your official dress or casual boots. So, what sorts of attire are suitable for running?

Sweats or leggings

Traditionally, runners used to wear sweats when running or practicing. However, nowadays, compression bottoms and tops are trending. However, the literature is unclear whether either of the two fits improves the performance of a runner.

The tip is to choose the most comfortable fit even though some people feel confined in leggings.

The right clothing

It is tempting to wear a funny-looking costume to draw attention or because of other reasons. However, you should wear something that adapts to the prevailing weather. So, wear something that matches your perception of cold or hot. For newcomers, it is okay to dress warmly when the weather is a little chilly.

You can also wear a water-resistant jacket when it rains during the marathon or working out day. You can always shed the coat when running but never carry it along because it will make you feel heavy and might impact your running form.

If the weather is hot, then you should wear loose-fitting clothes because tight-fitting clothes will make you warmer unless they are high-tech breathable brands. Also, you should apply sunscreen and wear running sunglasses that are light and fit correctly.

Headwear is also crucial during a marathon or workout. You should wear a cap to prevent sunstroke. If the weather is cold, then opt for fiber headgears but make sure that you are not sweating under them.

Shoes

You need a comfortable pair of sneakers for your training and racing. How do you measure the comfort of the shoes? The answer is simple: walk into a shoe store, pick three to five pairs of sneakers, try them out and do a little jog in the store. Your feet will decide the most comfortable pair of sneakers to buy.

Researchers found out that the most essential aspect of a running shoe is comfort. So, forget about the price or the brand of the shoe and try it out first. Some running stores offer a gait evaluation to help you choose the shoe with the best support for your frame and running style.

If you are running on difficult terrain, then you should get trail shoes. Track and speed training calls for lighter shoes, while the urban setting (longer running) requires sturdier shoes.

Socks

The most ideal pair of socks for runners are the breathable and snug options. Sometimes the socks can bunch up inside the shoes resulting in painful blisters that can force you to derail from your training schedule.

If you can also find socks made from sweat-wicking material, then you will be better off. Such socks absorb moisture from your feet, thus preventing the development of bacteria that cause odor.

The socks that you should choose for training should never have thick seams. Also, you can opt for no-show socks that prevent your ankle from rubbing against running shoes.

Last, try the socks out on a few runs before buying several pairs of the same.

Select your playlist

Listening to music, podcasts, or books when running keeps you distracted from the pains and the strain. However, you can also opt for silence, pick your path, and simply run. However, listening to something makes running more rewarding for some.

Timepiece

You need to manage your time when running. You can opt for a regular watch, smartphone, or high-tech fitness watch. The overarching objective of a timepiece is to identify the time that you take when training or during a race.

Practicing for a 6.21-mi. Race

When planning to run a 6.21-mi. (10 km) race, you should train adequately. Your training needs depend on your racing goal, current fitness, and running experience, among other factors.

Training period

If you have never run before, then you require eight to ten weeks of training. You should aim at running between three to four days every week. Any additional effort to improve your performance should be gradual to prevent injuries.

Runners that have a previous record of participating in a 5 km (3.10 mi.) race can run the 10 km (6.21 mi.) race without extra preparation apart from their regular workouts. However, such runners should dedicate between six to eight weeks of training to beat a personal record.

Daily Workout Schedule as a Build-Up Beginner schedule

Monday	Rest		
Tuesday	 Run comfortably Conversational running 		
Wednesday	1. 2. 3.	Cross-training Swimming Biking	
Thursday	1. 2.	Run comfortably Conversational running	
Friday	Rest		
Saturday	Long-running		
Sunday	 Active recovery day Run at a leisurely pace 		

Pre-Race Nutrition Build-Up and Meal Plan

What you eat before a race has the same importance as what you are to wear during the race. So, you need to pick your diet consciously and carefully. Also, you need to know how much you should eat and when to eat.

So, what do you need to know?

What to eat

Before you start running and after finishing your training or race, you should eat food the size of your fist. Such food is just an appetizer rather than a proper meal.

The fist-size meal should include carbohydrates and proteins. Half a peanut butter sandwich and low-fat milk chocolate are ideal combinations before and after your running session.

When to eat

Food keeps you fueled during a race or a training session. Thus, do not run on an empty stomach. Taking the recommended quantity of food one hour before the running session can boost your energy without causing stomach upsets.

Eat 30 minutes after your race is complete. Your glycogen will become resynthesized, and your muscles will heal quickly. Also, the practice prevents the delayed onset of soreness in your muscles.

However, your workout meal should never be at the cost of your overall meal intake. Your breakfast, lunch, and dinner routine should remain intact. Thus, you should have at least five meals a day. If you eat less than five meals when working out for a marathon, then your body will not have the sufficient energy that your body requires for the exercise and the recovery.

Meal plan

Carbo loading

A few days before the race, consume more carbohydrates and fewer fats.

Pre-race breakfast

• Eat a breakfast rich in carbohydrates (a minimum of 100g) and

less fiber.

- Take your meal three to four hours before the race.
- If your urine is dark, consume plenty of fluids.

Fluids

Water

Even though fluids are essential when working out for a marathon, you should only drink them when you become thirsty. So, take water along or head to the nearest fountain after feeling the urge to quench your thirst.

Importantly, do not over-hydrate before working out or racing. Such a move does not prevent you from becoming thirsty during the race. Also, it does not prevent cramping or heat issues. Listen to your body, and take water after feeling thirsty when working out.

Sports drinks

Your body loses electrolytes when you sweat. The loss of water-soluble nutrients leaves your energy reserves depleted. Drinking sports drinks replaces the electrolytes, and it helps you to maintain your pace.

However, you should not take any sports drinks after running for less than an hour. Instead, just consume water. If you continue running after one hour, you can take a few sips of your favorite sports drink to revamp your energy levels.

Importantly, having healthy meals can save you the cost of a sports drink. Your body does not require the extra sugar that the sports drinks contain when you ensure a balanced diet regularly.

Supplements

If you experience a drop in your performance when training, it is a sign that your body lacks some nutrients and minerals. Runners have a high nutritional demand because of the intense exercises that they carry out. Thus, they are required to replenish the decreasing nutrients and minerals.

Supplements come in handy as a sure way of ensuring that your body is not deficient in many minerals and nutrients. Even though you could be consuming a healthy diet, sometimes the absorption of the nutrients is delayed due to various reasons, requiring one to take supplements.

What are some of the supplements that a runner should take?

Protein

Moderate runners and those seeking to improve their endurance should take protein supplements. The supplements help to repair the torn muscles that come from strenuous exercises. If you fail to take the supplements, you may feel sore, and some of your hair can even start falling.

Runners require 1-1.6 g (0.03 oz to 0.06 oz) of protein for each kilogram or 2.2 lbs of food that they eat. If you cannot manage to get the right amount of protein, then you require protein supplements to keep your body in check.

Probiotics

Probiotics are beneficial for gut health and the immune system. If you have stomach issues, then you can take probiotics and avoid taking the bench because of feeling sickly.

Probiotics contain bacteria that preserves the gut barrier to prevent a leaky gut. If the barrier becomes weak, then one can have indigestion issues. Thus, your body stops absorbing nutrients from the food that you eat.

Taking probiotics ensures that your gut system can absorb the nutrients optimally.

Electrolytes

If your muscles lack electrolytes, then they may become weak, sore, and fatigued. If the condition becomes severe, you can develop blood pressure, increased chances of stroke, heart issues, and other serious complications.

Electrolytes are found in body liquids, and their loss through sweating causes their deficiency. In such a scenario, water is not enough. Taking sports drinks can help in replenishing the lost electrolytes. However, you should be careful in your selection because many of the drinks contain sugar levels that can influence your insulin levels.

A suitable alternative to sports drinks are products such as ZYM Sport Bali or Ultimate Replenisher—an electrolyte powder, which can be purchased via Amazon.

Vitamin B12

Vitamin B12 helps the body to respond well to stress. Lack of it gives rise to neurological issues, among other health complications.

If you feel fatigued, then you may be having a deficiency of vitamin B12; thus, your red blood cell count is low, and your muscles are not getting enough oxygen. The deficiency can make you fall occasionally, become emotionally unstable, and develop stomach ulcers.

An avid runner is prone to vitamin B12 deficiency due to exposure to stress, and there is a need for supplements.

Some countries allow B12 to be purchased over the counter in drug stores, and other countries require a doctor's prescription. If a general practitioner (GP) is required, you can opt for medication, or they can give you a jab.

Magnesium

Did you know that up to 70% of the global population suffers from a magnesium deficiency? (World's Marathons, n.d.). Thus, the statistics call an immediate assessment and control of the deficiency.

Magnesium helps muscles to repair and function properly. It helps in the absorption of minerals such as calcium in the body. Thus, the absence of it results in a lack of several other minerals because the body cannot absorb them.

Given the importance of magnesium, most healthy adults can take supplements to be on the safe side. Afterward, you will become strong and healthy, thus increasing your athletic drive. As always, consult with your physician for confirmation of any additional supplements you might add to your diet.

What to Pack for the Race

When gearing up for race day, you should be prepared to pack an array of essentials, including the following:

Reusable water bottle

If you are traveling to attend a marathon, then you need a reusable water bottle. Drinks are not allowed past the security check, but you can fill your bottle in the water fountains inside the airport to keep hydrated before the race. There are many bottle packs that you can wear around your waist for convenience while running.

Extra clothes

You need extra clothes that you can warm up in after arriving at the marathon location. You also need clothes that will help you adapt to any weather changes. Last, you can travel in your running shoes and pack an extra pair.

Throwaway clothing

You need to carry some clothes that you can dispose of after a change in the weather condition. They may include disposable raincoats and caps.

Bag a lip balm

To avoid chafing, carry a bag balm and apply it whenever necessary on your affected lips during the race.

Band-Aids

A small scratch should never stop you from running. You can use Band-Aids that also come in handy to cover nipples (for men, especially if the shirt is new or if you have sensitive nipples), thus preventing them from chafing and/or bleeding.

GPS watch

Time is everything in a race. So, bring along your GPS watch plus its charger.

Post-race comfy clothes and footwear

After the race is over, you can slip into your sweats and comfy shoes to reward and relax your body and feet.

Snacks

If you are traveling a distance to the race, be sure to have enough healthy snacks to keep you constantly nourished en route. Having a long flight, especially, leaves you with limited eating time. So, bring along some snacks that will sit well in your stomach.

What to Expect During the Race

You should expect some effects when running a marathon even though they do not apply across the board:

Running nose

Your nose might become runny due to runners' hay fever. However, do not worry on a larger scale as it is just your nose that goes into hyperactivity mode, thus becoming runny.

Cramps

Cramps are common during any race. It is thought to be a neuromuscular issue that emanates from a reflex between your spinal cord and muscles. Proper nutrition and stretching will help to minimize the occurrence of cramps.

Nausea

Your body produces gut hormone peptide YY, and it suppresses the acylated ghrelin making you feel nauseated after running. The biochemical process makes you hungry and lack appetite at the same time.

Sore feet

Continuous beating of the blood vessels in your feet makes your feet feel sore.

A positive feeling

Running raises the levels of positive neurotransmitters, making you more alert and giving you an overall positive feeling.

Troubleshooting During the Race

You should expect stitches, pain, and cramps during the race. However, it is possible to prevent them. How do you do it?

Stretching

Instead of static stretching that can make your muscles less powerful, you should carry out dynamic stretching. Static stretching does not involve a lot of movement, while dynamic stretching calls for repeated movements.

Dynamic stretching warms your muscles. You can try squats, form drills, and lunges. However, the literature does not have evidence that confirms dynamic stretching can prevent an injury.

Post-Race Care

Within 24-48 hours, your muscles will feel sore after running. However, you can try the following tips to manage the soreness:

Stretch

After the race, do static stretching for 10 minutes. You should focus on any tight spot, such as calves and hamstrings.

Use ice baths

Ice baths or cold swims can help your muscles to recover quickly. Alternatively, place ice packs on the sore areas for 10-15 minutes.

Yoga or massage

Yoga or massage can also provide relief to your sore muscles.

See a physician or physical therapist

If the pain lingers, you should seek medical attention. The pain could be a result of injury or an underlying medical condition.

Replenishing Your Body

Eat carbs and proteins

As soon as you finish the race, you should eat a meal with carbs and proteins. Not only will you replenish your lost energy, but you will also help your muscles to recover.

Rest

You should rest for one day for every mile that you raced. So, you should rest for around six days.

Train for the next race

After resting, you should follow the procedure for improving speed and endurance before running again.

Dos and Don'ts

Dos

- 1. Ensure that your outfits are not brand new when you are running for a marathon. Sometimes, new outfits are packed with surprises that can alter your performance. So, try running in your outfit two or three times to ensure that it is comfortable.
- 2. Never shy from using a lip balm to prevent chafing. You can also use functional clothing instead of cotton or specialized antichafing balms for the thighs. Additionally, men should tape their nipples if prone to chafing.
- 3. Be positive to keep your motivation high.
- 4. Break the race into chunks to spread your energy evenly. Know when to run faster and when to slow down.
- 5. Eat a balanced diet the night before the race.

Don'ts

- 1. You should never carry phones or keys during a marathon or when working out. Keep it light to ensure that you optimize your energy uses.
- 2. Do not sprint your heart out just out of the gate due to excitement because you will get tired quickly.
- 3. Don't shower before the race to keep your body cool from the secretion of your natural oils.
- 4. Do not walk too much to explore the scenery before the race.
- 5. Don't overhydrate.

FAQs

Q: Should I run when feeling pain?

A: You can run through general pain, but severe pain (especially if it is impeding your gait) suggests the need for medical assistance.

Q: How do I prevent and control cramps?

A: Ensure that you hydrate and drink fluids rich in electrolytes.

Q: How do I avoid blisters?

A: Wear comfortable shoes and sweat-wicking socks.

Q: How do I manage a stitch?

A: Eat two to three hours before a race. Alternatively, inhale with your nose and exhale through your mouth while running.

Chapter 2: The Half Marathon - 13.1 mi. (21 km)

In running, it doesn't matter whether you come in first, in the middle of the pack, or last. You can say, 'I have finished.' There is a lot of satisfaction in that. - Fred Lebow — New York City Marathon co-founder

Advancing to the Half Marathon

If you've run the 6.21 mi. (10 km) race and you've performed a search on how to advance to the next level; then the running bug has truly bitten you! You deserve a pat on the back for your desire to achieve more. You can opt to sign up for another 6.21-mi. marathon to improve your recorded time or advance to a half marathon.

How about moving on to the next race? Now that you have the word marathon under your belt, the levels of running following this one will eventually become easy because you already know the training drill. However, you will find training for the half marathon simpler than it was for the 6.21-mi. race that you ran as a novice.

If you can take your stock of achievements, then you will find that you have improved your cardiovascular fitness, speed, and endurance. Also, you have developed a training discipline that will go a long way to assist you in preparing for the longer marathons. Thus, you already have the tools that qualify you to run a half marathon.

However, what else do you need to know before running a half marathon?

Garner more distance

A half marathon covers more distance than the previous shorter races. So, you need to train how to cover more mileage for you to be prepared for the half marathon. However, the process should be gradual. All you need is to set a day for long runs. You should also increase the distance covered every week.

Developing such a target will make your stamina stronger, and you will also improve your cardiovascular and respiratory fitness, placing yourself in a better position to run a half marathon.

Carry on or get started with the strength training

Suppose you had not done any strength training before running the 6.21-mi. marathon, then it is time to take them up before running the half marathon. You need strong thighs, calves, glutes, and hamstrings, among other muscles, to succeed in a half marathon. Taking up strength training prevents injuries, and it also makes your muscles put up with strain without getting fatigued quickly.

Push yourself to improve speed and endurance

During your mid-week training, try to improve your lactate threshold, which is the process of the production of more lactic acid than your body can remove from the muscles. You should try to run faster and harder for longer than you used to when training for the 6.21-mi. marathon. The exercises will improve your speed endurance intervals.

The threshold pace is higher than the half marathon pace. The threshold pace takes place at 80% of your effort level (Women's Running, 2019). One of the signs that you are using your threshold pace is when you find yourself gasping for air. If you are having an effortless conversation when running, then you are not working out to your threshold pace.

To improve your speed endurance, try to work out at 85% of your effort level. However, you should interchange this with periods of recovery and rest.

Even though you will find the speed endurance intervals quite hard, they will make the rest of your workouts easy.

Cross-train

The intense workouts can make your muscles sore. Thus, you will find it difficult to climb stairs and undertake other Daily Personal Activities (DPAs). To manage the condition, you need to participate in some low-impact games, such as cycling and swimming. The games will reduce the risk of muscle injury, help you manage pain, and ensure that your next workouts will be productive.

Have a meal plan

The intense workouts that you engage in require a proper nutritional strategy. Workouts can easily deplete your energy levels and make it impossible to carry on or even participate in a half marathon. So, what do you need to do?

In the evening, ensure that your meal contains carbohydrates to keep your energy in check. After working out, take meals rich in protein to help your muscles recover.

Importantly, breakfasts are must-to-have meals every day, even when you are resting. They ensure that your body remains energized throughout the day. Whenever you carry out extra running, you should take a second breakfast that is rich in protein.

Find your pace

After increasing your mileage, you should identify the pace that makes you sustain your effort. Such a pace allows you to run at an increased speed,

but you do not feel an unbearable strain. After finding the required pace, ensure that you practice it to acclimatize to it fully. The move will help find running the half marathon comfortable and, most importantly, achievable.

Stick to your plan

Never cram your workouts into a short duration. You have to understand that a half marathon is a serious race. Thus, you need to stick to your workout plan to prevent injuries.

Not only do you require a few months to prepare for the half marathon, but you also need to ensure that you are building up your mileage and workout volume gradually.

If you are not sure about the workout and meal plan to follow, then you can browse the internet. You can find several templates of plans that you require when preparing to run a half marathon.

Last week of the race

Now that the half marathon is a week away, you need to preserve some energy for it. So, you can use the last week before the marathon to coast and rest. Your body requires you to recover, get good nutrition, and have the right mindset for the race.

If you were dieting during your workouts, then you need to increase your nutritional intake and energy. So, you can opt to replace a part of your fruit intake with carbs, such as pasta.

The following workout plan can work during the last week before racing:

Take the last long run.	
Rest.	
Run 3 mi. at an easy-medium pace.	
Run for 2 mi. at a comfortable pace.	
Rest or stroll for 1-2 mi.	
For beginners, do not run at all. However, experienced runners can run for half a mile at a very easy pace.	

Proper Attire and Other Must-Haves

It is such an inconvenience to get to a half marathon location only to find that you have forgotten your timepiece or any other essential. So, always ensure that you have a checklist of the necessities you need to make your race unforgettable.

What do you need to have for a half marathon?

Pre-race kit

The before-race kit should have the following items:

- Water bottle
- Hydration pack
- Timepiece
- Safety pins for your bib
- Sunblock
- Sun visor or a cap
- Anti-chafing products
- Headband
- Running shoes
- Running shorts or pants: The shorts or pants should never restrict your movement. Also, they should be comfortable to wear.
- Running shirt: It should be a moisture-wicking technical shirt.
- Sports bra: The bra should be comfortable and supportive.
- Socks: You should go for sweat-wicking socks that will absorb moisture from your feet.

Post-race kit

- Towel
- Recovery drink and snack
- Massage ball
- Deodorant
- Change of clothes
- First-aid kit
- Flip-flops
- Money or credit card

Tips on the best attire to have:

<u>Tops</u>

The tops should never be new or made of cotton. If you opt for a cotton-made top, you will stay wet for a long time. You can go for an old t-shirt or any other sweat-wicking tops that will dry fast.

Sports bra

The sports bra should have an adjustable back. It should also have straps to keep it in place as you race. Last, it should fit well and keep you comfortable.

The shorts or pants

You should select breezy and comfortable shorts or pants. The pants should also have a comfy in-seam that does not restrict your movement. If you opt for leggings, then you should select the ones that are made of soft and stretchy material.

The socks

Besides being sweat-wicking, your socks should rub softly against your skin. They should also have a precise compression that allows blood to flow to your feet. The overall idea is to wear socks that will keep your feet fresh throughout the half marathon.

Accessories

A half marathon is quite lengthy. So, you need additional calories and water to see you through the race. So, you should have a running belt. The belt enables you to carry your smartphone, car keys, gels, and balms, if needed. However, the belt should be made of a soft and stretchy material that keeps it in place while you are running.

Preparing for the 13.1-mi. (21 km) Half Marathon

The aim of this chapter is to ramp up your routine in preparation for the 13.1-mi. or 21 km half marathon. The secret to success in half marathon training is to garner sufficient weekly miles to help your body adapt to a long-running period.

First, beginners should initially target to cover 10-15 mi. (16-24 km) every week (Carter, 2020). Afterward, they should increase the mileage to 25-30 mi. (40-48 km) every week. Experienced runners can start with a 25-mi. (40-km) target and then build it up to over 40 mi. (64 km) every week.

The training should start at least two months before the race. If you covered a 3.10-mi. (5 km) race, then you need eight weeks of training for a half marathon.

However, the most ideal training period should cover between three to four months. Such a period will allow you to take time off when you are sick. Thus, it prevents you from the stress that is related to cramming your workouts into a few weeks.

If you have never taken part in a 3.10 mi. (5 km) race, then you should begin with covering three miles in the first week. Afterward, you can work your way up. Importantly, your weekday runs should take 30 minutes and then increase the time to cover the three miles eventually.

Always remember that the long runs are a very integral part of your training. You should carry them out at a conversational pace. If you can manage 10-11 mi. (16-17 km) for your long runs, then you will have it easy when covering the 13.1 mi. (21 km) that makes up the half marathon.

Daily workout schedule as a build-up

Monday	Take complete rest.	
Tuesday	Run at a moderate pace.	
Wednesday	Rest and cross-train for 35-40 minutes. (Strength training)	
Thursday	Run at a moderate pace.	
Friday	Cross-train or take a complete rest when feeling sluggish.	

Saturday	Take a long run.	
Sunday	Take a long-run.	

Pre-Race Nutrition Build-Up and Meal Plan

Running a half marathon without building up your nutrient and energy levels can result in poor performance, among other consequences.

So, how do you ensure that your body has sufficient energy and minerals before running the race?

Good nutrition

You should consume meals rich in carbohydrates, healthy fats, and lean proteins. Also, you should drink plenty of water.

Some of the healthy food categories that you should eat are:

- lean protein, including pork, fish, chicken, and eggs
- whole grains, including brown rice, barley, and oatmeal
- legumes, including beans and lentils
- vegetables, including leafy greens, cauliflower, and carrots
- fruits
- starch vegetables, including sweet potatoes
- healthy fats, including avocado and nut seeds
- low-fat dairy, including cheese and milk
- non-dairy options, including oat milk and cashew milk

Hydration tips

- You should take in 16 oz (0.47 l) of water two hours before the start of your workout.
- During training, take 6-8 oz (0.17-0.23 l) of water after every 20 minutes.
- Hydrate when thirsty.

Sports drinks

Sports drinks provide carbs (approximately 8 gm or 6 oz) and electrolytes. However, you need to dilute them with water to your taste.

Meal plan

6 AM	ProteinsCarbohydratesFats
9 AM	• Protein

	 Vegetables or Fruits
12 PM	Proteins
	 Carbohydrates
3 PM	Protein snack
7 PM	Proteins
	 Carbohydrates
	• Fats

Supplements

There's an array of supplements that you can take before running a half marathon. The following is a list of some of the supplements and their benefits:

- *Antioxidants* (Vitamins C and E, and coenzyme Q10): Helps to reduce fatigue and inflammation.
- *Arginine*: Increases blood flow.
- *Beetroot juice:* reduces oxygen consumption by dilating blood vessels.
- *Beta-alanine*: Reduces fatigue.
- *Betaine*: Increases the production of creatine.
- *Ginseng:* reduces fatigue while increasing stamina.
- *Iron:* increases oxygen uptake and reduces lactate concentration and heart rate.
- *Protein:* Helps in muscle recovery and buildup.

What to Pack for the Race

Besides your pre-race and post-race kits discussed above, you also need to pack the following essentials:

- Tissues in place of toilet paper.
- A jacket or coat to wear when the weather becomes chilly.
- Road ID. Sometimes, it is written on a bib.
- Your time tracker that is intertwined with the laces of one of your running shoes.
- Optional clothes that you can donate. Sometimes you may not be required to carry the jacket that you wore when the weather was cold. So, you can toss it in charity bins that are placed strategically on your running route.

What to Expect During the Race

- 1. Expect the weather to change: The forces of nature do not respect anyone. Sometimes it can change abruptly, throwing you into disarray during the half marathon. If the forecast tells you to expect warm weather, then ensure that you still throw in a jacket in your pack.
- 2. Starting too fast will leave you drained before the race really gets going and certainly before it comes to an end. Control and maintain your pace even if everyone is dashing.
- 3. You can easily collide or get in the way of someone else in the race. So, when you opt to take a break or walk, check behind you to ensure that you are not in anyone's way.
- 4. You need to have a plan of where you will drop and pick up your spectators. Good cheering will make you motivated to finish the race.
- 5. You can develop cramps. So, just know that you only need to stretch the affected part when managing a cramp or a stitch.
- 6. A bathroom issue: You may have a stomach upset or any other assortment of bathroom issues. However, there are portable potties along the route and you can use one for relief.
- 7. You might be scared or nervous. However, try to ease up and remember that running is fun and you are amazing!
- 8. You will hit a wall. Most certainly, you will feel like giving up at some point when running. However, dig deep and keep going.

Troubleshooting During the Race

If you get cramps when running, then massage the affected area slowly and stretch it for 1-2 minutes. If the cramps persist, then you should consult the medics. Sometimes that persisting cramp can result from a lack of nutrients, underlying health issues, or side effects of some medicines. So, getting professional medical assistance is required when you have a persisting cramp.

Post-Race Care

Even after crossing the finish line, continue jogging. It will help to keep your legs warm and prevent cramps.

After the race, it is critical to rehydrate. You can check whether your urine is dark to know whether you are already dehydrated. If so, then rehydrate until when your urine gets a light-lemonade color.

You should also stretch after the race. The move helps your muscles to relax because you will have better blood flow.

Lastly, eat food rich in carbs and proteins after finishing the half marathon race. The food will help replenish your energy and recover your muscles.

Replenishing Your Body

You must recover sufficiently after running a half marathon. Proper recovery ensures that you do not get injuries when running again. Hopefully, you are now eager to run a full marathon or participate in another race. You feel like a professional and able to finish any other race. However, what do you need to do to ensure that your body is replenished?

Rest

You should take four to five days' rest after finishing a half marathon. Even though you might be worried that resting will make your hard-earned fitness fade, your muscles need to recover. Resting helps you to avoid fatigue and stress in your muscles. The lost fitness will be minor, and you can regain it quickly when you resume training.

Practice Yoga or Pilates

You can opt for low-impact activities, such as Yoga and Pilates. The activities will help you stretch and realign tight spots. Alternatively, you can pick any sport that will make your joints loosen up, increase your blood circulation, and strengthen your muscles.

Stick to easy runs

After resuming your workouts, you should start with easy runs. If you start running fast straight away, you will strain your already stressed muscles.

What to do after the recovery period

You will take around two weeks or more to recover after running a half marathon. During the period, focus on base building. Afterward, you can follow the procedure of improving your speed and stamina that will help you complete the next race.

Dos and Don'ts

Dos

The evening before the race

- 1. Pack your racing essentials.
- 2. Pin the bib to your shorts or pants.
- 3. Charge your watch or batteries.
- 4. Make your morning meal.
- 5. Set the alarm.
- 6. Get to know your way to the race location.
- 7. Have a backup strategy for the race. The plan comes in handy when unexpected things happen, such as a change of weather.

Last-minute checks

- Plan to meet with a friend or companion.
- Check the traffic.
- Check the weather forecast.
- Double-check your gear.
- Secure your belongings in the gear check bags.
- Use the bathroom a couple of times before the race starts. However, you will find portable potties along the way. So, do not worry about where to take your bio-breaks when racing.
- If you are to take a go-to meal, then do it two hours before the race.

15 minutes before the race

- 1. Confirm your corral (the group that you will be running in. This can be either age-related or skill-related.
- 2. Identify your pace for the race.
- 3. Relax a little while closing your eyes.
- 4. Fantasize on closing in on the finish line at the end of the race.
- 5. If you need fuel using a gel, then do it 15 minutes before the race.
- 6. You can opt to carry a water bottle or not. If it does not make you feel too heavy or interfere with your form, then go for it.

7. Remind yourself to take the race easy. You do not have to get stressed before running a half marathon. Consider it as an exciting experience rather than an activity that you are carrying out due to coercion.

Don'ts

- Never run a half marathon as your first race. You will be at risk of stress and injuries.
- Never ignore the cut-off time. A half marathon becomes more fun when you have a target time to observe.
- Don't fall victim to losing motivation when working out. Instead, dig deep and fight the temptation to skip your workouts.
- Never skip the long runs. If you do, then you will not improve your endurance.
- Never ignore pain. Even though you're expected to feel pain, you should never ignore it. Instead, take time off to rest and recover.
- Don't set unrealistic goals. If you expose yourself to pressure, then it will be impossible for you to perform well in a half marathon.

FAQs

- Q: How do I replenish after a half marathon?
- A: You should jog for a few minutes while hydrating.
- Q: How long will I spend recovering after a half marathon?
- A: You should take one to three days to recover your muscles.
- *Q*: What time should I take to run a half marathon?
- A: It varies based on age and experience. Beginners might aim for two hours as a highly successful time, while experienced runners might make around one and a half hours their end goal.
 - Q: What should I drink after a half marathon?
 - A: You can opt to drink water, milk, or sports drinks.

Chapter 3: The Marathon - 26.2 mi. (42.16 km)

It could all end tomorrow, so enjoy what you have and never take it for granted. And never forget to take an easy run for yourself once in a while and just remember why you love to run. -Dathan Ritzenhein (Brooks, 2021).

Mental Preparedness

Running a full marathon requires both physical and mental fitness. Sometimes you can prepare unconsciously. After all, you cannot think negatively about a marathon and undergo strenuous workouts. Thus, you already have a certain level of mental preparedness.

How can you attain full mental preparedness?

Relax when the race starts

It is common for one to think about finishing the race before even starting. However, it is a strategy that will get you stressed and fatigued easily because you are more likely to begin with too fast of a pace. Alternatively, you can run comfortably for the first few miles and panic that you have derailed from your speed.

To manage your race in a relaxed manner, you need to break it into parts. After covering each section, tick it off. You can opt to break it into several parts. If you do this, then you will find it easier to cover each segment than to have the whole distance in your head at once.

Troubleshooting

There is a high probability that you will hit a rough patch during the race. When it happens, you do not need to panic and think everything is lost. All you have to do is break the rough patch into smaller targets and work your way up to regain normalcy.

Remind yourself why you are running

When you were training for the marathon, you had already identified the reason why you are running. The reason kept you moving throughout the training, and it should remain as your motivating factor during the race.

Visualize positive things

Before and during the race, imagine crossing the line without any injuries. Such a move acts as a mental rehearsal of the race. If you visualize positive things, your brain will communicate with your body and help you endure until the end of the race.

Renaming emotions

If you wake up feeling an elevated heart rate and shaky hands, you may call the feeling nervousness. However, naming the feeling 'excitement,' instead, makes a huge difference. Thus, you will not fight the feeling, but you will ride on it.

Think about the process but not the outcome

Thinking about the process helps you be in control of what is happening at the moment. Winners think about their performance rather than winning. So, think about your breathing, movement, and rhythm when you are running rather than crossing the line.

Look up and around

Some people get their eyes fixed on the running path. The bad thing about such a move is that one tends to internalize the pain or strain they feel when running. However, using peripheral vision helps you feel less stress.

Establishing Pace

When one starts running a marathon, they intend to finish the race and focus mostly on that accomplishment. However, it is unavoidable that one thinks about the time. The median marathon time for men and women is four hours, 20 minutes (men) and four hours, 45 minutes (women). However, one can improve their time record using the strategies throughout their training.

How do you establish a pace that will help you finish the race?

Picking a time goal

Before running a full marathon, you need to pick the personal goal time that you want to achieve. The move will help you plan on how to reach or beat the time. But, just how do you do it?

Identify the reason why you are running

You are running either to finish or to improve your personal record. If you are running to finish the race only, then any pace can work for you as long as it is one that you can maintain until the end. However, running to improve a personal record requires a series of procedures that will see you to your goal.

Consider your last marathon pace

You should consider the pace that you applied during the various phases that you had set in your last marathon. Afterward, you should pick a better pace that will improve your time record.

What was your 3.10-mi. and 6.21-mi. marathon pace, respectively?

You can consider the pace that you applied for the 3.10-mi. and 6.21-mi. marathons. However, never add up the last time to get the time you will use during the full marathon, as the more miles you add the harder it will be to keep the pace of a shorter race. Instead, use a running prediction calculator to get the time you will use during the full marathon.

Picking your training plan

Now that you know the time that you want to use during the marathon, it is now time to come up with a training plan that will help you meet your target. Picking a six-day training plan is an effective strategy that will ensure you have enough time to practice.

After meeting your targeted pace, that will be the pace that you will apply during the marathon.

Advancing to the Full Marathon

Choosing to advance to a full marathon signifies that one is giving the marathon the respect it deserves. It is important to note that preparing for a full marathon does not call for any special workouts apart from the ones you did when training for the half marathon.

So, what does advancing to the full marathon require?

Make a wise choice of competition

You need to select a marathon event that gives you motivation. You can opt for one that will feature a flat terrain instead of one that has many hills. If you are lucky to select a marathon that is taking place in your home town, then it is a better option because you will get support from your friends and family members.

Have a runway

Training for a full marathon takes between 16-20 weeks. Such a period can accommodate workout adjustments and any uncertainty that comes along the way. When you decide to run a marathon, select a season when you don't already have several commitments.

Create a plan

You already had a plan that you followed when training for the half marathon. Instead of going for a new plan, you should stick to the one that you already know. During the first week, you should use your earlier method and make some adjustments as you progress.

Run longer

Given that a full marathon is longer than a half marathon, it's obvious that you need to cover longer distances. These longer runs require a leisurely and conversational pace. You can opt to run slowly or alternate running with walking.

During the long runs, you should train on a terrain that resembles the one that the marathon will feature. Significantly, you should increase the miles covered by one or two miles every week.

Increase your running efficiency

Employing the run-walk method makes your long runs easy and stressfree. The technique breaks up the distance mentally. It also facilitates minirecovery, thus reducing the overall impact of the workouts on your body. If you use this method, then you will manage to run for a long distance while feeling strong. You can opt to run for eight minutes and walk for one minute as you alternate between them (Hadfield, 2016).

Take it easy

You need to make your workouts mentally comfortable. You can come up with a training log and tick it off every time you accomplish a workout milestone. You can also run around your neighborhood in shorter loops to break down the longer runs. Walking and sipping a drink every 10 minutes will simplify your workouts from a mental perspective.

Proper Attire and Other Must-Haves

You need comfortable attire when running a full marathon. It is critical to ensure that everything that you will wear during the race is not new. Preferably, you should wear clothing that you have worn several times during your long runs and has passed the comfort test.

You should also be extra mindful of any weather changes that might occur during the day, especially as you'll be in the elements for much longer than during a half marathon. Pack some extra options in case the weather shifts.

You will require the following attire when running a full marathon:

Cold and wet weather

- 1. A technical t-shirt
- 2. Mid or lightweight leggings
- 3. A lightweight waterproof jacket or gilet
- 4. Ear warmers
- 5. Mittens/gloves

Warm weather

- 1. A sweat-wicking vest, t-shirt, or tank top
- 2. Lightweight shorts
- 3. Sun cream
- 4. Shades
- 5. Cap
- 6. Anti-chafing cream

Socks and shoes

Your socks and shoes should also not be new. You should use ones that you have worn for previous training or races—though, be mindful of how many miles the shoes have endured as the integrity and structure of the shoes can deplete after a certain number of miles and lead to injuries. They should be comfortable but not super light. The shoes should cushion your feet throughout the race.

Gels and water

If the marathon organizers do not provide you with gels and water, then plan to carry your own. However, most marathons supply these two essentials to the participants, together with sugary drinks and bananas to increase potassium levels during the race.

Before the race

If you will wait for long periods while checking in to the race, then you need to be sure to stay warm and dry. You can carry old sweats that you can drop in charity bins found in the marathon location.

After the race

After finishing the race, make sure you have a warm and comfy outfit to wear during the celebrations, assuming the weather allows it.

Preparing for a 26.2-mi. Marathon

The time is now to morph into a 26.2-mi. marathon finisher. You need an efficient training program that will enable you to improve your speed and endurance. This program will work to improve speed, which breaks the monotony of training for a marathon.

You can try the following:

Speed-training

Fartleks

Fartleks is a term from the Swedish language that means "speed play." The workout calls for you to speed up and down without following any uniform interval. For example, you can run hard for three minutes, run easy for four minutes, and then run hard again for four minutes. Alternatively, you can select objects that will guide your fartleks (e.g., light posts or city blocks.

Tempo runs

Tempo runs call for one to run at a consistent pace that may be slightly faster than what you are used to. You should aim for sustaining your optimal marathon pace for as long as possible and increase the duration throughout your training.

<u>Intervals</u>

Intervals employ intensified set points in a run. They seek to improve your endurance. You should run a set distance at top speed and another set distance at a slower speed. Common marathon intervals are 0.5 mi. (0.80 km), 0.75 mi. (1.20 km), or 1 mi. (1.60 km).

Strength training

One-legged hip raise

To increase your lateral stability, you should strengthen your gluteus medius muscle (the large muscle in your thigh) found around your pelvic area. Carrying out the one-legged hip raise is an ideal workout that strengthens the gluteus muscle, thus preventing muscle injuries.

Front raise and deadlift

This exercise involves your upper back, hips, shoulders, and lower back. It prevents back pain and makes your running motion powerful.

Knee Tucks

The move strengthens the muscles that you use when running. It gives you an extra power burst in your strides.

<u>Dumbbell swings</u>

The workout strengthens the muscles around your abdomen. It helps to lock down things when you are moving. It also enables you to run upright.

Daily workout schedule as a build-up

Sunday	Rest.
Monday	An easy run.
Tuesday	Strength-training.
Wednesday	Cross-training.
Thursday	Rest.
Friday	An easy run.
Saturday	A long run.

Pre-race nutrition build-up and meal plan

Working out for a marathon can make you extremely hungry. You may feel like binge eating, but you have to be smart about how you carry out your nutrition build-up.

The following tips will help you manage your nutrition build-up efficiently:

Learn to fight hunger

If you are constantly feeling hungry, then it is time to change your diet. However, you still need to eat more and replenish the lost calories. To fight hunger effectively, you need to have an array of healthy snacks that will squash hunger.

If you find yourself putting on weight while training, you do not have to worry. You can add a little weight and still be fit to run. Your primary focus is to improve your race performance but not mind the readings on your weighing scale.

Eat whole foods

You need to eat food that has high-quality nutrients. If you eat the wrong foods, then you will run the risk of gaining a lot of weight, and you risk having stomach upsets. It's much safer to go for whole food instead of processed food. Also, you need to eat what you feel like eating rather (listen to your body) than stressing out and tracking your calorie intake.

Your diet should contain healthy fats, dark meat, and chicken with skin, among other unprocessed foods.

Plenty of fluids

Your sweat rate is one of the determinants of the number of fluids that you should take in. Weighing yourself before and after working out will give you the amount of liquid you have lost. Simply match the ounces of fluids you take in after a workout with the lost fluids as shown in your weight check.

You should also adjust your fluid intake according to the weather changes. You tend to lose more fluids when you train in warm weather.

If you do not urinate 30 minutes after a race, then you definitely need to hydrate.

Meal plan

	Eat easily digestible carbs and a small amount of
Before	protein.
the race	 Avoid foods that have a high-fiber content and eat raw vegetables one-two days before the race.
	Consume sports gels or chewables that give you
During the race	energy.
	Drink water
	 When the weather calls for it (warm), then you
	can also take tissue salts with high sodium content.
After the race	 Eat carbs and proteins 60 minutes after finishing
	the race.
	 You can also drink chocolate-flavored milk.

Supplements

Marathon runners should get the most significant proportion of their nutrients from whole foods to avoid overconsumption of supplements. However, our bodies sometimes do not manage to get the most nutrients from the food we eat.

The following supplements will go a long way to ensure your body is not deprived of the nutrients that improve your performance when you run:

- **Caffeine:** It helps to improve your metabolic and vascular systems.
- **Iron:** It reduces fatigue after working out or running.
- **Nitrate/Beetroot Juice:** It also helps to improve your metabolic and vascular systems.
- **Beta-Alanine:** It delays fatigue during the long runs.
- **Vitamin D:** It helps the body to absorb calcium to strengthen the bones.
- **Calcium:** It prevents blood clots and muscle contractions.
- **Zinc:** It improves immunity.

What to Pack for the Race

You need to do a few tasks before the day of the race. First, you need to make a schedule that will provide you with ample time to get to the marathon location. Secondly, you need to make reservations for accommodation.

You should travel smart to ensure you get to the marathon location safe and sound. Always do your homework to ensure that you comply with any government regulations. Lastly, pack your essentials, including:

- Running attire
- Prescription medications
- Medical certificate
- Health insurance card
- Identification
- Race entry confirmation
- Travel itinerary
- Healthy snacks

What to Expect During the Race

Various things can happen to you during a full marathon:

- 1. You will get anxious at the starting line, making your heart rate go up.
- 2. The amount of heat that your body will produce will rise to 40 times. However, your body will produce sweat to cool you off.
- 3. You will hit a wall. The condition occurs when your sugar level drops. So, take a sports drink to revamp your energy.
- 4. You will take around 40,000 steps. So, expect your muscles to become sore because steps alone will strain your joints and muscles.
- 5. After finishing the marathon, your immunity level might drop, leaving you susceptible to colds and flu.

Troubleshooting During the Race

Some issues that you encounter during a marathon are temporary. They call for troubleshooting to control them and allow you to carry on with the race. The information below will give you an idea of what should you expect, and what you should do when the issues occur:

Tight calf muscles

If you get tightness on your calf muscles, then take time to stretch the affected muscles. You should also do some stretches well ahead of the race.

Slowing down

It is normal to feel like slowing down. However, you will lose time. To overcome the issue, plan your marathon in fast and slow intervals.

Cramps

Cramps are awful during a marathon. However, planning your meals well can help you avoid this menace. Also, try to stay hydrated throughout the race.

Post-Race Care

Sometimes you can get an injury during the race. What are some of the common injuries, and how will you address them?

Muscle soreness

Stretching your muscles after the race is one way you can use to prevent the condition. If you already have sore muscles, try static stretches. You can also take a cold swim or place an icepack on the affected part(s) of your body. Lastly, remember to eat meals with protein to help in your muscle recovery.

Stress fractures

An overly-stressed muscle can stop taking more stress and transfer it to the bone, profoundly injuring it and possibly causing a stress fracture. To fix the issue, rest for a significant period.

Runner's knee

When your knee cap rubs against your thigh bone, then you are having a runner's knee. It causes intense pain under the knee. To cure the condition, you need to stretch your calves and hamstrings.

Blisters

If you wear poorly-fitting shoes, then your feet can develop blisters. To manage the blisters, drain them and rub them using alcohol.

Replenishing Your Body

Your body tends to lose energy and fluids after a marathon. Additionally, you also get tired and sore. How do you bring your body back to shape?

Rehydrate

Make sure that you will be taking in plenty of fluids after running a marathon.

Eat healthily

Your body loses glycogen during the race. So, ensure that your meals contain carbohydrates that will help you replenish your lost energy. Importantly, eating meals rich in proteins will also help your muscles to recover.

Limber down

You should walk around often instead of sitting for a long time. Your muscles will recover faster when you take a walk.

Sleep

Sleep as deeply as you can every night after a marathon. It will relax your body and help your muscles to recover.

Cross-train before running again

You need to revamp your oxygen levels in your body and heal the tissues and cells that wore out when you ran the marathon. Cross-training will help you get in shape for another race. You can opt to swim or jog.

Also, ensure that you rest from running for two to three weeks. You can use this period for cross-training instead.

Dos and Don'ts

Dos

- Invest in the long runs. They build your confidence, train your legs, and prepare your body for the marathon.
- Take a rest when the body asks for it. When you skip a training day, it will not have a significant effect on your overall performance.
- Do other things besides running. You can choose to strength train, play soccer, or cycle.

Don'ts

- Don't listen to music for too much of the time. Sometimes you need to focus on your pace and listen to your body when working out.
- Don't overlook the speed work. If you do so, then you will never improve your record time.
- Do not forget the hard work. Sometimes it is tempting to take your workouts easy, but success in a marathon takes hard work.

FAQs

Q: When should I stop working out before a marathon?

A: Two days.

Q: *Is running several marathons unhealthy?*

A: Running too much has the potential to be unhealthy for your body. It can affect your heart condition and increase your cortisol levels. Always consult a medical professional for guidance on your specific health.

Q: Can I walk during a marathon?

A: Yes. You should rest when your body asks for it.

Q: Can I run a marathon without training?

A: You can develop or run into serious health implications when you attempt a marathon without training.

Chapter 4: The Ultra-Marathon - 26.2+ mi. (42.16+ km)

You're running on guts. On fumes. Your muscles twitch. You throw up. You're delirious. But you keep running because there's no way out of this hell you're in because there's no way you're not crossing the finish line. It's a misery that non-runners don't understand. - Martine Costello (Luff, 2020d).

Training for the Distance and the Terrain

Before advancing to running an ultra-marathon, you should understand that it comes in all sizes and shapes. You can find one that has only 3.10 mi. (4.98 km) extra distance than a marathon and the other with over 62.14 mi. (100 km) extra distance. Additionally, the extra distance can be coupled with rugged terrain, bad weather, and high altitude.

What do the features of an ultra-marathon tell you?

You need not only address the winning factors but also the extra factors that your intended marathon features.

So, how do you address all factors comprehensively?

The following details will guide you:

Factor 1: Leg durability

You have to note that you are going to cover over 45,000 steps, unlike in the shorter marathons where the number of steps is lower. If your legs fail to have the right durability to carry you throughout the ultra-marathon, then you will hit a wall and have a hard time finishing the race.

How do you achieve leg durability? You should maintain consistent and sustainable weekly mileage, long runs, special long runs to cover the expected marathon terrain, and strength exercises specifically aimed at the legs.

Factor 2: Mental toughness

The largest part of ultra-marathon training goes to the achievement of mental toughness. The marathon requires extreme mental resilience, and overlooking the aspect can make you tap out before gaining any significant coverage of the marathon. Running for hours on end is not easy. It requires the right mindset that focuses on positivity rather than pity partying.

Factor 3: Fueling/Nutrition

Fueling comes in different ways, and you should select one that works best for you. Different conditions also dictate the kind of fueling that you will undertake. Sometimes, the fueling methods that work for you in cold conditions cannot work the same in warm conditions.

So, you need to experiment with an array of fueling strategies and identify the ones that work for you in different conditions.

Factor 4: Equipment

Unlike in the shorter races where you might be more concerned with apparel or the shoes that you will wear, an ultra-marathon demands more essentials. To begin with, you might need multiple changes of outfits during the race. You may also need an extra pair of shoes, extra fluids, and lighting. Sometimes an ultra-marathon requires you to run when it is dark as one of the contributing factors to your success.

Mental Preparedness

As discussed earlier, you require mental toughness to finish an ultramarathon. So, what kind of strategies do you need to achieve this?

Test your mental toughness

Hold on through various workouts for longer to convince yourself about how tough you have become. Such tests go a long way to improve your confidence in knowing that you will make it in the race.

Understand why you are running

During the race, your reason for running will motivate you to finish the race. Running for charity, running to set an example, and running for self-improvement are some of the reasons that some people employ when running an ultra-marathon. Regardless of the reason that you adopt, you will have a reward already formed in your mind, and finishing the race will become easier.

Establishing Pace

Ultra-race runners employ different pace strategies during a race. Some of the strategies include:

- Covering as long of a distance as possible before your legs start to feel fatigued.
- Starting easy and going hard in the last section of the race.
- Maintaining the same pace throughout the race.

If you were to select a strategy, which one mentioned above can you use?

To help you make an informed choice, let's talk about the various strategies that are relevant to use during a 62.14 mi. (100 km) ultramarathon:

The starting pace

To run the race, you should start at a fraction of the pace that you intend to use in your long runs—27 mi. (43 km). After a selected distance, you should consciously slow down as little as possible. After all, slowing the pace is inevitable.

The strategy sounds easy, but it has a few issues. However, you will find it easy to start at a convenient pace and then slow down a bit after covering a selected distance.

The last-half pace

In the last half, you should try to hold your first-half pace as much as possible. Even though you will still slow down, try to allow minimal slowing down of your intended pace.

Up-hill pace

If you still have power, you can run below your power level and then hike. Never try to push too hard up a hill and bank on recovering afterward. After getting to the top of the hill, go at your usual pace when running down the hill. If you push yourself too hard up the hill, then much of your downhill time will be used for recovery.

Down-hill pace

When running down a hill, your cardiovascular system will find it easy. However, your legs will put up some resistance. So, running down a slope is time to minimize your quad load.

So, instead of breaking, allow the gravitational pull to act on you while using high-cadence short strides. Runners with a high cadence imply that they have an increased blood flow to the muscles, which produces more oxygen-rich blood and increased performance.

It is said that these types of runners have a shorter stride length than those with a low cadence (which have a longer stride). The low cadence runners then balance a more significant weight load on their heels when the foot hits the ground.

Such a strategy will be friendly to your quads, and it will minimize the risk of any damages.

Other factors that dictate your pace

- *Training specialty:* If you did not incorporate workouts that benefit an ultra-marathon, then your pace will be slower, and you will get fatigued quickly.
- *Weather:* Hot and humid weather calls for a slow-paced start. However, if you have trained under such conditions, then you can increase your starting speed.

Ultra-marathon cut-off time

Notably, there are no regulations that govern the selection of the cut-off time in any marathon. The identified cut-off time is a result of an arbitrary decision that the race organizer makes.

Sometimes the cutoff time depends on traffic peaks.

Some of the examples of cut-off times include 12 hours for the Comrades Marathon (59.65 mi./96 km), 46 hours for the UTMB Mont-Blanc marathon (103.15 mi./ 166 km), and 30 hours for the Western States (100 mi./160.93 km) endurance run.

Advancing to the Ultra-Marathon

If people deemed you crazy for running a full marathon, then scare them off completely by running an ultra-marathon. However, you need to know how to advance to this longer race, given the massive increase in already significant distances.

What do you need to do?

- 1. Similar to other marathons, the first step means signing up for an ultra-race at least three months before the marathon day.
- 2. Lose some weight. This doesn't go for everyone, but it has been said that you gain two racing minutes for every pound that you lose. However, weight-loss shouldn't be the main goal unless your extra weight is causing mobility or impact issues.
- 3. Do weekly back-to-back long runs. After identifying the time record you want to achieve, then you can carry out back-to-back long runs that will improve your endurance.
- 4. Create your nutrition plan and stick to it when training before and during the race.
- 5. Practice wasting no motion. To do so, carry your head high, step up minimally, and run smoothly.
- 6. Find gear that you like wearing when training and racing.
- 7. Imitate the terrain intended for the marathon when training.

Proper Attire and Other Must-Haves

The environment around the location hosting a marathon largely determines what you will wear during an ultra-marathon. In sunny weather, you can run comfortably in light-colored gear that will keep you cool. However, throw in some gloves and beanies in your hydration vest when you expect the weather to change abruptly.

Essentially, you require the following gear when running an ultra-race:

Above the waist

A sweat-wicking short-sleeved shirt is recommended. It should prevent chafing and offer sun protection. More importantly, whatever you wear under the vest should be comfortable. So, avoid tops that have narrower straps than the ones on the vest.

In a chilly environment, go for a short-sleeved tech t-shirt. You can also wear arm warmers because they are easy to peel off when the weather gets warm. Alternatively, you can wear a long-sleeve sweat-wicking top. Such a top can also prevent chafing.

A rain jacket or a wind shell comes in handy when running under rainy or windy conditions. However, they should be light and small enough to fit in your vest. If you can find a rain jacket with taped seams, then you will be largely protected against the rain.

Below the waist

Get a warm and comfortable pair of shorts when the weather is warm. If you expect chilly conditions, then choose leggings. Alternatively, you can get a pair of pants to throw over your shorts.

Accessories

You can opt for flasks that are small enough to be stashed in your vest when empty. They will help you to carry fluids to remain hydrated.

You should also carry a cap for sunny conditions and a beanie and gloves for chilly conditions.

If you find a hydration vest cumbersome, then you can go for a belt instead. Belts remove weight from your shoulders.

Lastly, you need a headlamp. It should be light, rechargeable, and it should feature a sweat-wicking headband.

Preparing for an Ultra-Marathon

To be successful in an ultra-marathon, there are several components that your training plan requires. Now that you know the factors that contribute to a successful race, you need to understand how to make provision for them during a training session. Try to incorporate the following items in your plan:

Item 1: Weekly mileage

As said earlier, your weekly mileage should be consistent and sustainable. Sustainability means that you need to come up with realistic mileage marks. So, you need to assess your energy levels and identify the distance you can cover without too much strain. Also, you need a plan that can accommodate any uncertainties. Thus, have a backup plan that you can switch to whenever the inevitable unpredictable setback happens.

Sometimes feelings can get the better part of you. So, your weekly mileage plan should be flexible enough to accommodate your low moments. Remember, it is okay to feel down, and taking a day off from your workout won't have a significant impact on your overall outcomes.

You should choose a plan that includes a range of mileage, frequency, and intensity requirements. Such a plan helps you adjust accordingly whenever the need arises. If you learn to adjust your weekly mileage successfully, then you can reduce the risk of injuries and soreness.

Lastly, your plan should include "down weeks." You can opt to treat your third or fourth week as a down week. During the week, you should reduce your workout load by 15%-25% (McMillan, n.d.). The reduction helps your musculoskeletal system to recover, and it also recharges your brain, making it ready for the next stage of training. By doing this, you will manage to reduce the risk of injuries and increase the quality of your workouts.

Item 2: Long runs

Long runs increase your leg durability, help you run to burn fat without depleting your energy levels and exposing your brain to prolonged suffering. However, you should practice long safe runs that allow you to step back for your muscles to recover. Such a strategy makes you more robust while reducing the chances of injuries.

During the eight-to-ten-week mark before the race, you can alternate easy regular runs with fast-finishing ones. The fast runs will improve your endurance speed. Given that the easy and fast long runs will be part of the race, you need to practice them in short doses.

Item 3: Back-to-back long runs

Back-to-back long runs entail running a longer run on one day followed by another shorter long run on the following day. They help you to develop a strong mind and legs—aspects that are crucial in successfully completing an ultra-marathon.

Even though the back-to-back long runs take time to get used to, you will find your body adjusting to them over time.

Item 4: Race-like experiment

You should learn to employ your goal pace in your workouts. The rate helps you to avoid early fast starts, and they spread your pace throughout the race. If you practice the goal pace, then you will set your mind to get used to it, helping you avoid fatigue at the end phase.

You can start with short achievable goal paces in the beginning and build them up as you progress. If you find that your goal pace training is not going well, do not panic. Simply adjust your expectations to end up with a successful and positive race.

When training for an ultra-race, you need to prepare under similar conditions to the ones that you will experience during the actual race. So, the terrain, weather, and gear should match with the ones that you will use and experience on the day of the race.

You should also learn how to use an effort-distribution tactic, especially over difficult terrain. Through this, you will identify the parts that require walking rather than running.

Item 5: Workout diversity

Having a variety of workouts helps to break the monotony of training and might even make your workouts fun! You should have a good mix of exercises that challenge your stamina, speed, ability to run on rugged terrains, and your general running form. Such a variety helps to make your goal pace more natural and achievable.

Item 6: Practice fueling

You should also practice your fueling frequency. The practice will help you establish when to fuel automatically during the race.

Item 7: Prevention of injuries

Research shows that between 50%-80% of runners get injured during their workout program (McMillan, n.d.). Of course, all runners are trying to avoid being a part of those statistics. To do this, you should come up with a flexible plan that addresses your core, mobility, and strength. In other words, try not to get hurt during working out sessions. You should prioritize showing up for the race feeling whole, rested, and ready to have the experience of a lifetime.

Daily workout schedule as a build-up

	<u>-</u>
Monday	Rest.
Tuesday	Easy run.
Wednesday	A long run at a leisurely pace.
Thursday	Strength training.Cross-training.
Friday	Fast and easy interval runs.
Saturday	Rest.
Sunday	A long run at a leisurely pace.

Pre-race nutrition build-up and meal plan

You need to follow the following basic nutrition rules before taking part in an ultra-marathon:

- Eat effectively. You should make advanced plans for your meals. Additionally, you should come up with the timing for your meals, so you don't let crucial meals slip past you.
- Eat meals aimed at healing your body, preventing injuries, and improving your health. Your meals should contain micronutrients and healthy fats.
- Eat to maintain your ideal weight. Your meals should be in favor of keeping a lean weight.
- Eat for your enjoyment. Never give up on your favorites. If they are not healthy, then you should consume them moderately.

Suggested meal plan

Breakfast	 Lean high-protein meals. Meals with a high carb count. Meals that contain low counts of healthy fats.
Lunch	 Lean high-protein meals.

	Meals with a high carb count.Meals that contain high counts of healthy fats.
Snacks	Potato chips.
	Carrots.
	 A selection of fruits.
	Dark chocolate.
Dinner	 Lean high-protein meals.
	 Meals with a high carb count.
	 Meals that contain low counts of healthy fats.

Supplements

An ultra-marathon requires you to have sufficient energy reserves and muscle recovery capabilities. The following supplements, among others, will help you remain energized mile after mile when you are running:

- **Branched-chain amino acids (BCAAs)**—They help to offset muscle loss into energy. They also reduce soreness and promote muscle recovery.
- Whey protein—It also offsets muscle loss.
- **Multivitamins**–They increase your endurance.
- **Glutamine**–Increases your immunity.
- L-Carnitine—Boosts your energy levels and prevents muscle loss.
- **Fish oil**—Offers an array of health benefits, including fighting inflammation and reducing the buildup of lactic acid.

What to Pack for the Race

Besides your running gear, you should plan to pack the following items:

- **Nutrition and hydration**—liquid calories, sports drinks, endurance nutrition, real food snacks, and supplements.
- **Electronics**—headlamp, rechargeable batteries, charging cord, and cell phone.
- **Personal care**—anti-chafing product, hair ties, sunscreen, bug spray, toothpaste, toothbrush, lip balm, deodorant, tampons, and any prescription drugs.
- **Transition station gear**—chair, towel, pop-up tent, a cooking stove, a cooler, and a massage stick.
- **Other essentials**—trekking poles, sunglasses, safety blanket, reflective vest, blinking lights, and any other listed requirement.

What to Expect During the Race

Given the extreme stress and pressure that an ultra-marathon exerts on a runner, a few common conditions may occur in your body. They include:

- 1. Feeling dizzy, headaches, and other symptoms that come with running in hot weather and testing weather conditions.
- 2. Even under normal weather conditions, you may feel stomach sickness, including nausea and vomiting.
- 3. Blurred vision can occur as a result of windy conditions.
- 4. Sleepiness and sometimes hallucinations.
- 5. Your wearable tech devices might fail.
- 6. Chafing.
- 7. Falling due to tripping.
- 8. Missed crew members' meet-ups due to differences in running speed.
- 9. Smiling spectators.
- 10. Disrupted emotions due to anxiety and stress.

Troubleshooting During the Race

Some problems that you encounter during an ultra-race require simple troubleshooting. The following are tips on how to fix the minor issues:

- Nausea and vomiting—Slow down to cool off and rehydrate.
- Fatigue and sleepiness—Eat or drink something sweet.
- Depression and/or anxiety—Listen to music, if the race permits this. Otherwise, engage in conversation with fellow runners.
- Headache–Ingest caffeine.
- Heat burn–Relax and take a breather.
- Blisters–Apply tape or plasters to the blisters.
- Painful legs—Have caffeine or something sweet.
- Cramping—Eat something salty, massage, and stretch.
- Chafing—Lubricate and tape the affected part, or wear something fitting.

Post-Race Care

After running an ultra-marathon, your body can feel sore. There is an obvious need for recovery. The following strategies will help you recover after the race:

- 1. Stretch and massage the affected part
- 2. Hydrate.
- 3. Take a swim in ice water, sit in an ice bath, or apply ice packs on the sore parts of your body.

Replenishing Your Body

Given that your body has used a lot of energy and your muscles require recovery after an ultra-race, you need to replenish your body. The following strategies will help your body recover.

- Avoid running for anything over 20 minutes in the following week. Your body requires rest.
- Sleep. Your physiological processes need recovery, and there is no better way of achieving it than sleeping. Sleep for seven to eight hours in temperatures of 62-70 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Eat healthily Consume food rich in calories. Also, eat fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins.
- Treat injuries If possible, then visit a physical therapist for the maintenance of your injuries.
- Engage in non-running activities You can swim, kayak, cycle, or do Yoga to give your feet and legs a break.
- Focus your thoughts elsewhere in your life to stop thinking about the race for a while to achieve a mental recovery.

Dos and Don'ts

Dos

- 1. Study the running course well ahead of the race.
- 2. Read race reports.
- 3. Trust your training outcomes.
- 4. Stay positive when running.
- 5. Hike uphill.

Don'ts

- 1. Don't panic because of the race reports.
- 2. Don't rely on your crew.
- 3. Don't act like a know-it-all during the race.
- 4. Don't allow tension to build on your shoulders.
- 5. Don't compare yourself with others.

FAQs

- *Q*: How long will it take to recover after an ultra-race?
- A: Two weeks.
- *Q*: Do *Ultra-marathon* runners live a long life?
- A: Yes. Running improves your health.
- *Q*: Can I run an ultra-marathon without training?
- A: No. Running an ultra-race requires intense physical and mental training.
 - Q: Are Ultra-runners crazy?
 - A: No. They are simply unique.
 - *Q*: *Is running an ultra-race dangerous?*
- A: The simple answer is no, but you need to train and eat well before the race.

Chapter 5: Stage Races

Winning has nothing to do with racing. Most days don't have races anyway. Winning is about struggle and effort and optimism, and never, ever, ever giving up. -Amby Burfoot (Brooks, 2021b).

Training for the Distance and the Terrain

Running a stage race is listed as one of the most exciting outdoor activities. Not only do you run, but you get a chance to explore the world, bond with friends, and challenge yourself. A stage race comes as a funfilled package of activities.

If you plan well for a stage race, you will finish strong. The idea is not to just finish the race but to achieve the desired outcome. So, you need a different strategy or a good mix of strategies to make a stage race different from your past races. The reason behind the need for special strategies is that you will experience stress for a couple of days, unlike most of the races that only span over one day.

To endure throughout a stage race, the following tips will help you become successful:

Plan well ahead

Sometimes, stage runners take a year to prepare for the race. Such a period gives them time to rest and work out effectively. However, more seasoned runners might only take between four to six months to train for a stage race. Additionally, they treat a stage race as a ramp-up to running an ultra-marathon because it helps them to acquire the right push for such a race.

Increase time spent on your feet

You should adjust to carrying the same load by increasing the time that you spend on your feet. Adopting a combination of power walking and running will give you the right skills for the multi-day event.

More importantly, power walking helps you learn how to move purposely. It can help you cover a vast distance, be efficient, and give you a break from running. In this way, the race stops intimidating you because you will feel that it is doable.

Never ignore speed work

Even though it will be rare for you to sprint during any part of the race, speed runs remain an essential part of your training. The high-intensity bouts will help your legs to gain and maintain strength. With this strength, you will manage to maintain solid strides for an extended time.

However, you should apply caution because sprinting too soon can result in injuries. So, you need to have a decent base of at least four to six months of running before commencing your speed work.

Mimic the race conditions

You cannot miss an inclined terrain during your multi-day race. So, learn to run both uphill and downhill. If you cannot find a hill near you, you can set your treadmill at an inclined position. You can do this exercise once or twice a week.

If the conditions have desert weather, then running on a beach will help you adapt to the climate.

You should also carry the pack that you will use on the day of the race. Doing so helps you get used to the weight and how it hangs. You can carry the weight once every week for three to four months. However, you should start with less weight and progress to the actual weight of the pack that you will carry during the actual race.

Moreover, you also need to practice your nutrition. It can be disappointing to find out that those expensive energy bars you've been banking on don't actually work for you on the day of the race.

Run an ultra-race

Running an ultra-marathon will help you practice fueling and hydration tactics. It will also build your confidence that you can manage to run a stage race. When you run an ultra-race, you tend to compress the challenges of a stage race into one day. Thus, running a multi-day race will look like a simple task after running an ultra.

Be keen on recovery

You should give recovery the same priority as you do with running and training. To prevent injuries, practice Yoga, stretch regularly, and practice healthy sleep habits. You should also never forget that what you eat contributes significantly to the prevention of injuries. So, eat like the champ that you are!

You should prioritize meals that have anti-inflammatory properties. Healthy fats, fruits, and veggies should also be part of your daily diet. Remember, food is curative, and it is also the backbone of your training and recovery.

Mental Preparedness

Mental preparedness is equally vital as physiological preparedness when training for any marathon, including a stage race. To ensure that you prepare well for a stage race, you should employ a technique called visualization.

Several successful marathon runners attest that visualization helps to summon confidence reservoirs. Thus, a runner manages to dig deep even when the temptation to slow down or quit is very high.

Visualization has a premise based on the fact that there is no difference between an actual occurrence and an imagined one in the mind of a human being. So, when you visualize, you are running your race.

So, how do you visualize?

Be detailed and specific

During the visualization process, you have to come up with a complete mental picture. You should begin with finding yourself at the starting line and all other activities that take place before the race starts. Afterward, you should imagine yourself feeling comfortable during the scene despite the chaotic moment.

To be more specific when visualizing to be calm during the starting of the race, you can consider the following aspects:

- 1. **Weather**—You should research and visualize how to race under adverse weather conditions. Doing this, you can imagine what to do when running in both hot and cold weather minimizing the stress that might come when it does happen.
- 2. **Course**—You should also visualize and research how to tackle the hilly parts of the course. You should also consider imagining running past a cheering crowd.
- 3. **Population**—Research how many people attend the race and visualize standing among them. Such imagery will help you reduce nervousness. In essence, it is really nothing to be afraid of as each person is busy running their own race and is too busy focusing on themselves.
- 4. **Scenery**—Study the environment that will surround the course and visualize what you will be looking at while running.

Visualize the unexpected things

Even though it is important to remain positive, you also need to visualize the bad things that may happen during the race. That means you should imagine the bad things, such as fatigue, that may occur during the race and how to resolve them.

You should also visualize the negative feelings that you will have when something goes wrong during the race. Such thoughts will help you come up with strategies for overcoming those feelings instead of panicking.

So, you need to write down some of the less savory things that can happen and come up with a contingency plan of how you will feel and overcome them.

Lift your self-confidence

One of the overarching objectives of visualization is to lift your self-confidence. More importantly, high confidence translates to better performance.

To lift your self-confidence, incorporate self-talk and self-affirmation in your workout. Saying positive messages to yourself when standing in front of a mirror activates your visual brain receptors and helps you to internalize the positive affirmations.

However, you do not need to force any generic positive messages. You can create messages that will boost your confidence and ones that you know will personally work for you in these types of situations, as each person is different.

Before the race

Visualize how hard you worked out. It will help you see the race as achievable. You should also visualize what you can control. So, shift your focus from lousy weather, finishing time, and opponents to successful execution of race strategies instead.

During the race

Repeat your self-talk and self-affirmation messages. You should also implement your mental cues. For example, you can adopt the following mantra during the last leg of the race: *Relax and Go!*

Implementation of visualization

- 1. Relax.
- 2. Set the scene in your mind.
- 3. Focus on the physical and emotional feelings.

- 4. Think about a positive outcome.
- 5. Repeat. Visualize the different scenarios at least one to two nights every week.

Establishing pace

You should understand that a small mistake during a race can end up in a mixed-up energy system and a missed personal best. For this reason, running too fast at any point of the race can derail your race expectations. You need to come up with a pace that will enable you to be in control of your systems.

Research shows that recreational runners miss their pace by close to 40 seconds per mile while experienced runners err by 10 seconds per mile.

To establish an ideal pace, you need to practice it. It is a rigorous process that calls for patience. After a while, be sure that you will come up with a pace that will result in success in your race.

The following tips will help you stand out from runners that miss their pace:

Learn to listen to yourself

One of the things that you should do when establishing your pace involves listening to your body to identify the changes in effort and rate and listening to how you breathe. At the same time, running will help you identify the said changes. So, you should shift your focus from your GPS and listen to your breathing, and notice the motion of your arms and the rhythm of your legs.

When you identify your breathing rate, correlate it with your speed. Afterward, analyze your splits to see whether you maintained a consistent pace. Putting this action into practice will help you to associate your effort with pace eventually.

Develop pace-oriented workouts

You can integrate the cutdown run and alternating tempo runs in your workouts to be able to notice the changes that occur in your pace.

During the cutdown run, you should drop between five to ten seconds per mile. Even though it is challenging, it will help you identify close paces and help you notice when you slow down.

On the other hand, the alternating tempo run calls for you to alternate between the marathon pace and 6.21 mi./10 km pace for each mile. The

workout helps you move from a comfortable zone into a more challenging zone, allowing you to lock your rates in certain parts of the race.

Simulate race conditions

The next step is to work out under actual conditions of the race. You can run up your local neighborhood roads. The main aim is to run at your own pace.

Vary the terrain

If you experience difficulty when controlling your paces when working out and running in local races, then shift your workout to a track. After every 0.25 mi./0.40 km, audit your pacing.

Calibrate your pacing

Whether you are experienced or not, you should calibrate your pacing after recovering from an injury or advancing your fitness level. Never jump into a race without assessing your current fitness level.

Advancing to the Marathon

Advancing to a stage race requires a series of preparation exercises. To run the race successfully, you should:

Run

Not only are you required to run but also to run differently as follows:

- Effort-based runs—You should ensure that you are applying easy effort while running during your workouts.
- Back-to-back long runs—You need to break your running distance into sections that you will run on consecutive days when your legs are sore.

Simulate conditions

You should research the terrain of the actual race and train under similar conditions. For example, train at night if the actual race will require night runs.

Wear your gear

If you are required to carry anything during the actual race, then you should take similar items when training.

Strength training

You should undertake consistent strength training. Each week, train your upper and lower body for two days.

Core

Train your core, which includes your hips, abdominal muscles, glutes, and lower back. The core helps you run in a straight position, and it also

assists you in moving your legs most efficiently.

Practice recovery techniques

You should consider the following:

- 1. Recovery nutrition for each stage.
- 2. Stretching, massaging, and foam-rolling routines.
- 3. Recovery products, such as recovery sandals.
- 4. Pleasant topical products.
- 5. Active recovery—will you rest or continue running?
- 6. Sleep patterns—How many hours will you be sleeping to recover?

Nutrition

Pay attention to your diet to get the necessary nutrients that you require during the race. You should also learn to fuel your body to replace the lost glycogen.

Rest

Resting helps your muscles to recover after working out. Notably, the resting period should match with the effort applied when working out.

Mental fortitude

You have to train your mind to stay positive and focused during the race. You should also achieve a mindset that looks for a solution rather than panicking.

Proper Attire and Other Must-Haves

You should note that sometimes it is not possible to replenish your gear once the race starts. So, you need to consider the weather, the terrain, the altitude, and other factors that determine the kind of equipment that you should have.

Essentially, you require the following:

Backpack

You should look for a backpack with gear capacity, weight, functionality, and comfort balance. Never be afraid to customize your pack to your liking. Note that your pack will be your home over the time that you will be running.

Shoes

You need shoes with high-quality cushioning and heft. They should also be soft to prevent the development of blisters. Lastly, go for shoes without a mesh to avoid sand and fine dirt from getting on your feet or into your shoes.

Sleeping bag

Get a warm sleeping bag with a face muff to lock out others when you sleep.

Sleeping mat

You can opt for an inflatable sleeping mat that will cushion you from the raw earth surface.

Clothing

Go for compression shorts/tights and a long-sleeved tech-shirt. Alternatively, you can have a main tee and a long-sleeve tech shirt. You also need a lightweight jacket to keep you warm when it gets chilly. However, you need a full-down jacket in extremely cold temperatures. Lastly, bring camp shorts for a change after racing for the day.

Organization

You should also have compartmentalized storage to stock your toiletries and other items.

Food

You require up to 2000 calories every day of the race (Hughes, 2019). So, carry energy-giving food, freeze-dried meals, and recovery drinks.

Planning for the 26.2+ mi. Marathon

You should carry out the following workouts when preparing for a stage race:

Weekly long runs

You should do the weekly long runs when you have plenty of time, especially on weekend mornings. Ensure that you are increasing mileage until one month prior to the race.

Doubles

You should carry out the back-to-back long runs twice a week in the months close to the race.

Typical run

You should run your 6.21 mi./10 km at a comfortable pace a few times a week.

Increasing mileage

Increase your mileage by 10% every week. Such a strategy lowers the risk of injuries.

Carrying a backpack

Ensure that you run while carrying your fully loaded backpack once a week.

Injuries

Address every injury and pain that occurs when you are training for a stage race. If any discomfort persists, then you should visit a reputable physiotherapist.

Cross-training

You should reserve an hour or two every week for cross-training. It will strengthen your body and reduce the risk of injuries.

Build endurance

Endurance should come before pacing. So, pick a pace that you can maintain for the most training sessions of the week. However, sometimes you should push yourself to a slightly uncomfortable level.

Peak mileage

At the very least, have one 37.28 - 43.5 mi./60-70 km long run before the race. Also, have two doubles of around 26.1 mi./42 km before the race.

Daily workout schedule as a build-up

Monday	Rest.

Tuesday	Easy run between 20-30 minutes.	
Wednesday	Easy run between 20-30 minutes.	
Thursday	Speedy run between 20-30 minutes.	
Friday	Cross-training.	
Saturday	Walk uphill and run slowly downhill for a period of	
	one hour.	
Sunday	Walk uphill and run slowly downhill for a period of	
	one hour.	

Pre-race nutrition build-up and meal plan

If you make a nutritional mistake when training for a stage race, it can have a ripple effect on your performance in the weeks that follows. So, you should have a plan and stick to it.

After finishing one race, you should eat a meal rich in carbohydrates and proteins within a window of 30 minutes.

Hydration also forms a crucial part of the nutrition build-up plan. While water is an obvious solution, sports drinks come in handy because they replace the lost electrolytes. However, you should mix the two.

More importantly, always ensure that you eat food that you enjoy and not just because the food is rich in carbohydrates and proteins.

In the morning, eat breakfast two to three hours before the race.

Meal plan

Breakfast	Carbohydrates.Consume fewer fats.Fruits.
Lunch	Lean proteins.CarbsHealthy fats.
Snacks	Apples.Beetroot.Carrots.
Dinner	Lean proteins.CarbsHealthy fats.

Supplements etc.

The following are some of the supplements that you can take when training and running a stage race:

- **Proteins.** Helps in muscle recovery.
- Omega-3. Reduces soreness of muscles.
- Magnesium. Reduces lactic acid build-up.
- **Vitamin D.** Promotes calcium absorption making your bones strong.
- **Electrolytes.** Helps in the proper use of muscles and hydration.

What to pack for the race

Besides the gear mentioned above, you need to pack the following when attending a stage race:

- Any prescription drugs
- Anti-chafing products
- Compass
- Knife
- Signal mirror
- A whistle
- An emergency blanket
- Two headlamps
- Red flashlight
- Blister kit
- Country flag patch

What to Expect During the Race

When running a stage race, expect the following incidents:

- 1. **You will gain experience**—After running the race, you can tell others how it feels.
- 2. **Your tummy will get trained**—Due to the nutrition discipline—your gut will appear different.
- 3. **You will feel like quitting**—The running experience is different than working out. However, dig deep to maintain the course.
- 4. **You may be carried away**—It is an exciting event with happy moments that can derail you from your objective of the race.
- 5. **You will lose control of some conditions**—However, just focus on what you can control.

Troubleshooting During the Race

The following are minor problems that you can fix when running a stage race:

- Cramps. Whenever cramps occur, stretch and massage the affected part.
- Worn-out shoes. Change your shoes after every 300-350 mi./482.8-563.27 km.
- Starting too fast. Walk and then start running.
- Over-striding. Stop lunging forward with your legs.
- Losing control on hills. Lean forward slightly and take shorter strides.

Post-Race Care

If you are feeling any pain after the race, you can try the following recovery strategies:

- 1. **An ice bath**—Take an ice bath for 10-15 minutes.
- 2. **Stretch and massage**—Wait for two hours and then stretch and massage your muscles.
- 3. **Cross-training**—Take a swim, cycle, or practice Yoga.

Replenishing Your Body

You can enjoy a meal rich in carbohydrates and protein 30 minutes after completing the race. The meal should not be big, but you can have a more extensive meal after two hours. You can also keep on consuming recovery snacks.

Regarding taking a rest, you should take one day's rest for every mile that you ran.

Dos and Don'ts

Dos

- 1. Land on the midsole when running.
- 2. Take short and effective strides.
- 3. Buy barefoot running shoes.
- 4. Invest in working out.
- 5. Run for time.

Don'ts

- 1. Never run with your heels first.
- 2. Never use long strides.
- 3. Your shoes should not be too comfortable.
- 4. Don't run too hard.
- 5. Don't overuse your odometer.

FAQs

Q: Can you run a stage race without training?

A: No. You will be prone to injuries.

Q: Can I run the day before the race?

A: Yes, but only a shakeout race.

Q: How many days should I take as rest before the race?

A: Two days.

Conclusion

Tips, Tricks, and Hacks

Now that you have worked out perfectly and are raring to go, you should know how to get the most out of your experience. With the following tips, you will achieve extra knowledge on how to hack your race successfully.

Don't overdress

Even though the starting point of the race is cold and you are dressed warmly, ensure that you lose some of the layers as you progress. Additionally, do not tie your unwanted attire on your waist. Instead, wear layers that you can peel off and dispose of along the route. Better still, you can donate the clothes to charity by depositing them in the bins along the way.

Think about the moment

Wandering thoughts can cost you big during a marathon. So, try to think about the present moment. Thus, you will be able to remember crucial things, such as hydrating and minding your pace. Better still, try to notice most of the things that you are passing along the way as you run.

Break your race into manageable chunks

Thinking about the entire marathon distance can wear you out before you even start running. Instead, break the race into manageable chunks. Once you finish each chunk, you can reward yourself.

An easy way to break the race is to identify a landmark, an object, a building, or a tree in a far distance. Afterward, you can think about getting there instead of finishing the entire race.

Run with your head up

Looking down throws your spine out of position. Thus, you risk the development of tension on your neck and shoulders. For this reason, run while holding your head up. It will also be invigorating to do so because you will manage to see the cheering crowd and get motivated.

Opt for the shortest course

If the conditions allow, you should follow the marked path at all times. Doing so will ensure that you will get to the finishing line as soon as possible.

However, hot and windy conditions call for you to block out the conditions. You will run better for longer by staying comfortable and

healthy. You can try to run under shade when it is hot and behind a group of runners to block out the wind, if possible and it doesn't increase your distance too much.

Get support

If you are independent, then you might find the race difficult to finish. Regardless of the reason why you are running, get spectators that will cheer you on as you run. Additionally, you should tell them where they should stand so that you will not miss them and so you have a consistent pocket of cheerleaders all along the route.

Even though putting your name on your shirt is ancient, it still counts during the race because spectators that don't know you will call you out by your name. Getting support from strangers is surprisingly motivating.

Resist bio breaks

Sometimes you can ignore the call for a bio break, and the urge will fade away. You will save some time and use it to cover the mileage. However, the persistent urge can derail your thoughts from the race. So, take a few minutes to relieve yourself and continue running with a focused mind.

Scan your body

One of the most essential tips that you can get is to scan your body from head to toes while you are running. The action helps you identify whether there is any part of your body that requires stretching or massage because of tension.

Sometimes you also need to loosen up some of your body parts for you to run comfortably. For example, you can scan your body and find that your jaws are tightly clenched. Loosening up your jaws gives a sudden relief that enables you to run more comfortably.

So, every 15 minutes, always take time to scan your body when running.

Stick to your plan

When running, you may find an opponent that is using a strategy that you don't know about. Even though the temptation to imitate your opponent is high, you should stick to the strategies that you already know.

The same tip applies to your running attire. Never wear anything new because you do not know whether it is comfortable and whether the comfort will fade away during the race.

So, eat, wear, and run the way you know.

Step cautiously

Before putting your foot down when stepping, always be watchful, especially at the start of the race. Sometimes people throw things in your way, and you can trip and get injured on top of losing time.

It's best to run well behind the person running in front of you, and remember to use a hand signal when you intend to move sideways.

Self-talk while running

Talking to yourself is one of the most motivating factors during a race. You should use positive affirmations with yourself. Better still, have a mantra that you can repeat when running. Remember, you are your best supporter during a marathon.

Drink when running

Hydration is a fundamental part of a marathon. So, always have a sports drink at hand when running. You will not only quench your thirst but also replace the lost electrolytes. Importantly, having a drink nearby can help you to quench your thirst whenever you want instead of running until you get to a hydrating station.

Wear to the occasion

Even though some run in costumes for their own reasons, you should always wear attire that fits the occasion and your physical needs. So, no, you cannot run in an office suit or high heels.

Lockout greed

In addition to sticking to your plan, never fall to the temptation of getting greedy. You might get some freebie snacks or sports drinks. You do not have to eat or drink everything. Stick to your eating routine to ensure that you run efficiently and prevent stomach upsets.

Run the clock

Always ensure that you work out at the exact time as the timings of your expected marathon. If you do so, then you will get acclimatized to the conditions of the day during the day of the race.

See success

Always run for success and nothing lower. Always remind yourself that even participating in the marathon is an achievement. So, never let the rankings of the medals define the success of running a marathon race.

Treat the race as a treat

Along the way, there are beautiful scenes of places that you might have never visited. So, instead of focusing on the pain and stress that awaits you ahead, you should enjoy the view and remember that you are going to achieve a lifetime experience.

Always enjoy running!

How Do Runners Make It to the Olympics?

It's never too soon or late to dream of the big times. Just in case you are aiming for the stars, here is a bit of information about becoming an Olympic Marathon runner.

The International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) is the body behind the regulation of the Olympics. It creates the rules that one should follow to take part in the Olympics.

Qualifying for the Olympics is a dream of many marathon runners. However, a question arises about the process of qualifying.

So, what is the process of qualifying for the Olympics?

To begin with, you need to have put in years of practice and discipline. Those that qualify count themselves as the best marathon runners in the world, even if some of them do not win any medal.

One of the qualification requirements entails adherence to the Olympic charter and the IAAF rules and regulations. The charter contains rules from the International Olympic Committee. The committee is also responsible for approving the IAAF rules.

The qualification events occur within a specific period. So, runners must achieve the qualification standards before the lapse of the given period. The IAAF creates a performance event that the runners should attend.

The National Federation of any country has to approve any university or school competitions. Competitions in which male and female runners mixed up while running does not count. Additionally, wind-assisted performances are not acceptable.

After the qualifying event, the National Federation provides a list of the runners that are adequately prepared for the Olympics. Afterward, the National Olympic Committee (NOC) enters the qualified runners in the list of those that will participate in the Olympics.

The NOC has the responsibility to assess whether the list that the National Federation forwarded is out of merit and was non-discriminatory. So, the National Federation should never discriminate against runners using

their race, gender, religion, or any other factor when selecting the qualified runners.

There are two qualifying standards: A and B. The NOC should forward three names of the qualified participants when all of them meet the A standard (Olympic Games Marathon). If all of the runners met the B standard, then NOC can forward the name of only one runner. If four runners meet the A standard, the fourth runner is dispatched as a reserve. A similar condition applies when two runners meet the B standard.

If any NOC doesn't have any standard A or B qualified runners, then they can forward their best male and female athletes. However, the admittance of the unqualified runners is the discretion of the IAAF technical delegates. Additionally, the unqualified selected runners have to prove their competence at a recognized IAAF international event.

Famous Marathons

Marathons know no language or social barrier. So, you can attend any marathon as long as you register on time.

So, how about trying the following marathons out?

- 1. **Great Ocean Road Running Festival:** It takes place in Australia, and it covers an ultra-marathon, full marathon, half marathon, and 3.73 mi./6 km race.
- 2. **Icefjord Midnight Marathon:** It happens in Greenland and offers magnificently unique terrain.
- 3. **Midnight Sun Marathon:** It takes place in Norway, and as the name suggests will expose you to long days of the Nordic countries.
- 4. **Big Five Marathon**: It happens in South Africa and you might be lucky enough to catch a glimpse of some amazing wildlife.
- 5. **Iceland Volcano Marathon:** It takes place in Iceland and the scenic views will astound you!

If you cannot make it to the listed marathons, then you can find any marathon that will happen close to your location. What is great about these types of marathons is that you can combine them with a vacation or just some downtime.

They will take you to magnificent locations all over the world for a truly once-in-a-lifetime experience and race that you will never forget!

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