

How should each run feel?

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There are a number of different paces that you should aim to master that will make up your training:

Easy run – fully conversational at the speed of chat and about 6/10 effort.

Steady run – conversational, controlled but working at about 7/10 effort.

Threshold running – controlled discomfort, 3-4 word answer pace 8/10 effort.

Interval running
5k-10k effort - 9/10 and working hard.



In detail:

The feeling of not being sure how fast you should be running for any particular session is common, from beginners to elite international athletes. For beginners it never feels as though running is easy, but we can assure you that running doesn't need to be hard all the time.

At the beginning all you are trying to do is get out and run. That should be at **easy pace** or 'the speed of chat' – if you can't talk as you are running, you're going too fast, simple as that. For the more experienced runner, 'the speed of chat' is how your easy and recovery runs should feel - totally in control, relaxed and slow enough to talk. If you are combining walking and running, the effort level remains the same – you should be able to hold a conversation on both the walking and running segments.

Faster than easy, conversational running is **steady running**. This is the backbone of training for more experienced runners. This is where you must be honest and not push too hard or you might ruin your faster sessions, so conversation should still be possible, but a little strained.

Incorporating **threshold running** is how the elites train and you can train like this too. This is where you are running at a controlled discomfort level: you can still talk between breaths, but only 3 or 4 word phrases. This is not running to exhaustion or sprinting. You may already feel able to include some 3 minute blocks into a run each week which will grow in volume throughout your training.

Interval training and 3k/5k/10k pace is top-end training. This is often called the "hurt locker" and is used in training to replicate the feeling at the end of a hard race. The effort levels here should be almost at maximum.

Rest (R)

To help your body cope with the workload, rest is going to be as important a part of your training schedule as the running. Listen to your body and take heed of any warning signs. If you feel fatigued even before you've run a step, find yourself thinking up excuses not to run or start suffering a series of minor injuries; you probably need more time off. Taking enough rest allows physical and mental recovery and gives your body the time to adapt to your workload. Remember: on rest days, that is exactly what you should be doing!

Recovery Run (RR)

Training for endurance requires your body to work harder than it has ever done. To see improvement without breaking down, you'll need some recovery runs. These should be nice and easy and you should feel relaxed. Enjoy the scenery. You should be breathing easily and be capable of holding a conversation throughout the run. This will mean that you are running in the 60–65% range of your Maximum Heart Rate (MHR) and it should be no more than 45 minutes in duration. This allows your body to adapt to the training workload and therefore improve. It also helps with the removal of the waste products, which accumulate in your muscles after harder efforts.

Threshold Runs (THR)

After the long endurance runs, tempo runs are probably your most valuable workouts. You will find them slightly uncomfortable and they'll require concentration, but they are well worth the effort. As they're run at a controlled brisk pace, about 80–85% of your MHR, you'll only be capable of uttering a couple of words to your training partners. Tempo/threshold runs improve your lactate threshold (the speed above which your body struggles to cope with the lactic acid created by burning energy without oxygen), your running efficiency and aerobic capacity (your body's ability to utilise oxygen). All this helps to improve your endurance performance.

Long Runs (LR)

Long runs are vital in your plan and key to racing well in long distance races from 5km – marathon. At first, concentrate on increasing the time on your feet rather than worrying about distance. Start off by heading out for at least an hour and run at 65% of MHR (conversational pace). Gradually this will build to 75% of MHR as you start to practice periods of marathon pace (MP) running. These runs improve your muscular endurance and condition your body to burn fat as its primary fuel source.

Continuous Hills (CH)

Hill running develops strength in your muscles and tendons without putting them under the type of stress they are exposed to during faster running. Run up a 5-10% gradient for 45-90 seconds at a steady-threshold effort. Turn immediately at the top and run down the hill at the same effort, then turn at the bottom and repeat without any recovery until the rep time ends. Like a tempo/threshold run, a hill session is time to concentrate, as you should be working at about 80–85% of MHR and be able to utter just a word or two.

Fartlek (F)

This is a Swedish term that literally means “speed play”. It involves a number of bursts of effort over a variety of distances with a variable recovery. Originally the length of effort was based on the terrain, for example, pushing harder every time you came to a climb, no matter how long it was. But you can adapt it for your needs.

Interval Training (IT)

Intervals help to boost specific race pace speed and involve running timed efforts with a controlled recovery. The effort level is around 85–100% of MHR, depending on the duration of the event you are training for and the length and volume of intervals used. A typical example might be 6 x 3 minutes @ 5km race pace with a 90 second jog recovery.

Marathon Pace (MP)

Understanding the pace & effort you intend on running your marathon at is very important. Pace judgment and patience on the big day will be crucial to running your best marathon. Marathon Pace Practice, at about 75-80% of MHR, allows your body and mind to get used to what will be required on race day, and builds endurance quickly.

Warming Up/Warm down (WU)

When you are going to do any faster running such as Hills, Threshold Runs, Intervals or a race, it is important to warm up gradually. A 10-15 minute jog lets your muscles warm up and improve their range of movement. It also allows your cardiovascular system to prepare. You should also jog easily for 10-15 mins after any hard work out. This reduces muscle soreness; flushes away lactic build up and will make you feel better over the next few days.

Cross Training & Core Conditioning (XT)

It is important that your training is balanced with some non-impact activities such as swimming, cycling, rowing, aerobics, etc, otherwise you are more likely to pick up an annoying injury that will set back your training. But more experienced runners should also add cross training to their regime. Endurance running, especially the marathon, requires whole body-conditioning. To achieve this you should aim to work a variety of muscle groups and not just your legs. Remember, though, that you are a runner, so just be careful not to make the cross-training, whether it is core conditioning, lifting weights, using an elliptical trainer or practicing Pilates, so intense that you are left too tired for your running.



HALF MARATHON - IMPROVER PLAN

Week	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday		
1	Rest/easy XT + conditioning	Threshold session. 30-45 mins including 3 x 5 mins @ threshold with 2 min jog rec.	30 min rec run or 45 min X train	30-40 min easy run	Rest	3 x 5 mins of continuous hills with a 2-3 min jog rec	45 – 50 min easy run	<input type="checkbox"/>	☺ ☹ ☹
2	Rest/easy XT + conditioning	Threshold session. 30-45 mins including 4 x 5 mins @ threshold with 2 min jog rec.	30 min rec run or 45 min X train	30 min progression run with 10 easy, 10 steady and 10 @ threshold	Rest	3 x 6 mins of continuous hills with a 2-3 min jog rec.	50-60 mins easy	<input type="checkbox"/>	☺ ☹ ☹
3	Rest/easy XT + conditioning	Threshold session. 45 mins including 3 x 7 mins @ threshold with 3 min jog rec.	30 min rec run or 45 min X train	30 min progression run with 10 easy, 10 steady and 10 @ threshold	Rest	2 x 10 mins of continuous hills with a 3 min jog rec.	60-70 mins easy	<input type="checkbox"/>	☺ ☹ ☹
4	Rest	30 mins easy & conditioning	45 mins with 8 x 3 mins with Odd numbers @ threshold, even numbers @ steady run pace	30 mins relaxed or rest	Rest	40 min hilly run. Easy but faster up hills OR easy 20 min run if racing tom.	60 mins easy or 10k race.	<input type="checkbox"/>	☺ ☹ ☹
5	Rest/easy XT + conditioning	40 mins easy	45mins relaxed (still recovering from 10k)	45 mins as: (15 easy, 15 steady, 15 threshold)	REST	2 x 10 mins of continuous hills with a 3 min jog rec.	80 mins easy	<input type="checkbox"/>	☺ ☹ ☹

6	Rest/easy XT + conditioning	Threshold session. 5 x 5 mins with a 2 min jog rec	30 min rec run or 45 min X train	45 mins as: (15 easy, 15 steady, 15 threshold)	REST	45 mins relaxed run	80 – 90 mins with last 20 @ HM race pace	<input type="checkbox"/>	☺ ☹ ☹
7	REST	30 mins easy & conditioning	45 mins as: (15 easy, 15 steady, 15 Threshold)	30 mins easy or rest	REST	5 x 5 mins of continuous hills with a 2 min jog rec.	60 mins easy	<input type="checkbox"/>	☺ ☹ ☹
8	Rest/easy XT + conditioning	Threshold session. 3 x 10 mins with a 2-3 min jog rec	30 min rec run or 45 min X train	Fartlek session of 5,4,3,2,1 mins built into a 45 min run with 90 sec rec inbetween each rep.	REST	45 min relaxed run	90 – 1.40 mins easy with last 30 @ HM race pace	<input type="checkbox"/>	☺ ☹ ☹
9	Rest/easy XT + conditioning	40 mins easy	10 mins @ threshold + 4 x 3 mins @ 10k pace + 10 mins @ threshold all with a 2 min rec jog	30 min recovery run	REST	Progression run – 45 mins to include 15 easy, 15 steady and 15 @ threshold	1.40 – 1.50 mins easy pace	<input type="checkbox"/>	☺ ☹ ☹
10	Rest/easy XT + conditioning	40 mins easy	Fartlek session of 2 x 4,3,2,1 mins built into a 45 min run with 90 sec rec jog	30 mins easy or rest	REST	30-45 min recovery run	2hrs easy pace run with last 20-30 @ target half marathon pace if you feel good.	<input type="checkbox"/>	☺ ☹ ☹
11	REST	30 mins easy + conditioning	60 mins with 8 x 3 min threshold/3 min easy within the run	30 mins easy	REST	5k Park run or session with 5 x 4 mins @ 10k pace. 90 sec rec	60 mins relaxed	<input type="checkbox"/>	☺ ☹ ☹
12	REST	30 mins including 3 x 5 mins @ half marathon pace with 3-5 min jog rec	30 mins easy or light X train	20-25 mins easy	REST	15 mins easy	HALF MARATHON RACE DAY Good Luck!!	<input type="checkbox"/>	☺ ☹ ☹

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- Note please do a 15 minute warm up and cool down before Threshold, Continuous Hills or Interval sessions
- If your are feeling ok you may wish to consider a 20-30 minute recovery run in the morning before any of the quality sessions above
- Always substitute cross training for running if you are injured, very sore or it is not safe to run.

- **Please add a Core conditioning, Pilates or Yoga classes once or twice a week if you have time.**
- **Try to stretch every day for at least 10 mins.**
- **Always eat within 20-30 mins of finishing a run**
- **Always train at your target pace, don't compromise or run too hard. Tiredness always catches up and take extra rest if required...**