

10km – cracking the distance

10km is a distance that needs to be respected but it's also very achievable for most runners whilst still balancing a busy home and work life. It's the perfect mix of speed, strength and endurance and your training should reflect this. If you get your training right 10ks are exciting races that will push your body to the limit. They hurt and racing just over 6 miles can be longer than you think so pace judgement and endurance are still the key.

Firm foundations

We're not running a marathon and most people can feel confident of covering the distance with a consistent build up in training but this doesn't mean that including a weekly long run isn't still vital. 10km still in large part relies on your aerobic fitness. Build this by including a weekly long run building up to 90 minutes – 1hr 40 mins. Try to mix up the terrain on which you run, including trails and grass if possible. Don't get caught up in chasing times on this run – relax, run with friends and keep it under control. Perhaps build the long run by 10 mins each week and run at the speed of chat...otherwise known as conversational pace.

Try this – Run these at a genuinely conversational effort and as you get closer to race day try to include blocks of threshold running at a controlled discomfort within the last 45 minutes of this long run for example 90 minutes including 3 x 6 mins @ threshold within the last 45 minutes.

Feel the tempo

'Threshold' running should to be an essential element of your weekly training. Running at a 'controlled discomfort' helps to develop your running economy allowing you to sustain a race effort for longer.

Try this - Build blocks of running at 3-4 word answer effort at between 10km and HM pace within a 45-60 minute run. Ensure these blocks progress through your plan building up from, for example 6 x 3 minutes, to bigger sessions such as 5 x 5 minutes, 3 x 10 minutes and even a continuous 20-25 minutes. The key is to run at controlled discomfort level or 8/10 in perceived effort.

An upward curve

Many runners think they are 'one paced' and end up running their 10kms at the same speed as their half marathon races. Simply put, no one is 'once paced'; if you vary up your training and intensities you'll have ability to step up that extra gear in both your 5-10km races. Hill training builds strength, power and leg speed and can give you a massive boost to finding that 5th and 6th gear.

Try this – Incorporate some 45-60s bursts of fast hill running into your weekly training. Complete 6-10 reps with a 90-120s jogged recovery focusing on running with a tall posture, quick, light foot-strike and generating power from driving your arms. Over time you can build this session to include some blocks of race paced running on the flat after you have finished the reps, getting used to sustaining your pace on tired legs.

Power to the finish

Nailing your race will mean you need finish the final 2-3km running strongly, when your body is beginning to fatigue. It's hard but if you get this right you'll find yourself racing those around you and flying past the competition, finishing feeling fantastic, rather than clinging on as the world in fancy dress comes back past you.

Try this – practice running 'progressively' in your training. Don't try to nail your paces straight out of the front door. Including sessions such as 10/10/10 – 10 minutes easy, 10 minutes steady, 10 minutes race pace can help you adapt your body to finishing strongly, building your effort throughout at a run. This again can progress to 15/15/15 and even 20/20/20 when you are feeling confident.

Visit the hurt locker

In the final 6-8 weeks of your training plan it's time to specific. If you want a 45 min 10k you need to be able to run 10 x 1k at 4.30 pace without stopping...simple! This is where interval training comes into play and top VO2 max sessions such as 6 x 1k at race pace off 90 seconds progressing to 8 x 1k off 60 seconds over the weeks are great examples of key 10k training moments. You have to be fit to run these sessions and also prepared to hurt and focus as the session progresses. In the final weeks you may even run intervals at quicker than race pace...the icing on the cake getting sharper. This makes the race day pace suddenly seem comfortable and initially easy to hit when the gun goes.

Mix it up

Training well doesn't have to just mean running. Cross training and strength and conditioning can really help boost your cardiovascular fitness, whilst also leaving you a stronger and less injury prone runner. Include a weekly cross training sessions and a couple of shorter core strengthening sessions to give your running a boost without putting your body under additional strain.

Try this – Aqua jogging is a highly effective, low impact addition to running can help to add another higher intensity session into your week. As it mimics the running action we can replicate many of the threshold and Vo2 max sessions you'd undertake if our on the road. It's also a test of whether you don't mind looking a bit weird down at your local pool...but look you already dress is brightly coloured lycra.

Enjoy the competition

Are you one of those people that gets overwhelmed building up to races? Getting stressed about performances, listening to the guy that says he's done double what you have and questioning why you ever enter races! Get into the mindset of enjoying the boost competition and races can give you.

Try this – Your local 5km parkrun (www.parkrun.org.uk) can provide an excellent way of getting some friendly, light-hearted competition into your training plan and will get you used to running around other people and pushing yourself harder than 10km pace. They are also a great way to meet other local runners – remember to volunteer too!