



HALF MARATHON SERIES



**Healthy**  
habits

# TRAINING PLANS EXPLAINED

**This guide will help you choose the right programme for you – and explains some of the terms within each training plan, such as ‘easy runs’, ‘long runs’, ‘tempo runs’ and ‘cross training’.**

## Beginner Programmes

The ‘walk to run’ and 5km beginner programmes will suit you if you have little or no running experience but are generally fit and in good health.

The 10km and above distance programmes are ideal if you want to run a longer event and are in the habit of running at least twice a week. They will suit you if you could complete a 5km run in 30 to 40 minutes, with a mix of walking and running.

## Intermediate Programmes

You don’t need to have run the full distance before you follow an intermediate programme. However, we recommend that you’ve been running regularly (two to three times a week) for at least 10 weeks. You regularly run 5km in less than 30 minutes and have probably also run 10km a couple of times in around an hour. Bear in mind that these programmes involve training on at least four days a week with some faster paced running.

## Advanced Programmes

Advanced programmes suit runner who consider themselves as experienced. You have completed half marathon races before (sub 1.45 hours for men and 2.00 hours for women) and have some experience of regularly training for a sustained period of time.

Remember, a programme is there as a guide. It is also important for you to listen to your body and adjust any programme accordingly. And remember, as life takes over (as it does from time to time) don’t be too disheartened if you don’t have time to do exactly what the programme tells you – no programme is set in stone and there is room for flexibility.

**All you can do is the best you can and enjoy it!**

## How does a programme work?

All the training programmes have three key elements, which alter as you progress. These are 'FIT' which stands for:



**Frequency**  
(how often)



**Intensity or pace**  
(how hard)



**Time**  
(how long)

Exercising regularly and gradually increasing how much you do is key to improving your health and fitness. As you get fitter, you'll be able to train more often and for longer in each session. As a beginner, this will mean that gradually you can run more and so need to walk less. At an intermediate level, you should find that you're able to run faster.

All the training programmes you'll see out there involves a combination of long runs, easy (recovery) runs, fast runs (tempo and speed work) and cross training. All training programmes are slightly different - there is no wrong or right programme! The key is finding a programme that suits you and your needs. It's hard to define 'intensity' (or pace) because it depends on your individual level of fitness, which will increase as your training progresses.

To make things a little clearer, we've created a chart for 'perceived effort scale'. The scale runs from one to 10, where one is standing still, and 10 is your maximum effort - running flat out. It can be seen overleaf. To get the best from the effort scale, listen to your whole body and think about how it feels. Consider your posture, your breathing, heart rate and how your arms and legs feel. With running, the more efficient your style, the easier running will feel.

## Perceived effort levels

LEVEL	RATING	ACTIVITY (APPROXIMATE)	DESCRIPTION
1	None	None	Standing still
2	Minimal	Shuffle	Minimal activity
3	Easy	Slow walk	Used in cool down
4	Light	Moderate walk	Normal pace - used in warm up/cool down
5	Fairly light	Brisk walk/light jog	Walking - striding out or jogging a little above march pace; heart rate and breathing increase a little
6	Moderate	Jog/easy running	Easy jog - active but not challenging; breathing is easy and steady
7	Slightly challenging	Steady running	Sustainable steady running - general race pace; breathing and heart rate are raised but not uncomfortable
8	Challenging	Tempo running	Brisk - challenging running at increased pace; breathing should be harder
9	Hard	Hard running	Fast running with arms pumping - used in speed work and 400 to 800m distances
10	Maximum	Maximum	Maximum effort - sustainable for one minute or less



## Definitions

### Easy runs

These allow your legs to recover from a hard effort run as well as prepare you for the next day of training. Take them at an easy pace (effort level of 4 to six – 10 being the highest effort level) and no longer than 40 minutes. You should be able to enjoy running without feeling tired.

### Long runs

These should be your longest run of the week. They are for increasing your distance and the aim is to build up your aerobic fitness, efficiency and endurance. Your long run should be at a steady pace, effort level 6 to 7, so you can hold a conversation as you run. This will become your race pace.

### Tempo runs

Constant speed running is sometimes referred to as tempo running. This improves your running pace. Although the true definition of tempo running varies, the aim is to run at a constant speed that feels 'comfortably hard'. This should be about an 8, maximum 9, on the effort scale. Stick to about 20 to 30 minutes at this pace and always include at least five minutes of warming up and cooling down.

### Speed work

Speed work, either using intervals (fartlek) or hills, builds your aerobic fitness, strength and speed. Interval training involves running fast, but not sprinting, over a set distance or time at an effort level of 10. Hill running involves keeping your pace roughly constant but increasing intensity to effort level 10 by changing the gradient that you're running up. Follow each hard run with an easy one of at least the same length, then repeat. Try using a treadmill to help you get the distances, times or gradients right.

### Cross training

This helps you to keep up your fitness but reduces the strain on the muscles you use for running. Take one session a week to do an activity such as swimming, cycling or using a cross trainer in the gym. This will work your muscle groups in different ways and help to stop fatigue and can also help you from getting bored of just running then repeat. Try using a treadmill to help you get the distances, times or gradients right.