16-WEEK FULL MARATHON PLAN

Comprehensive Dual-Unit Race Preparation • Miles & Kilometers

Program Overview

Designed for runners looking to conquer the 26.2 mile / 42.2 km marathon distance. Progressive volume increases build aerobic capacity, muscular endurance, and mental toughness.

Prerequisite Base

Prior to starting, runners should comfortably run 20–25 miles (32–40 km) per week and have completed a half marathon or equivalent long run of 8–10 miles (13–16 km).

Easy / Recovery	Marathon Pace (MP)	Tempo / Intervals	Long Run
Zone 2 • Chatty pace	Target race speed	Zone 3-4 • Lactate threshold	Slow, steady glycogen build

PHASE 1: BASE BUILDING & STRUCTURAL ADAPTATION

Weeks 1 – 4

Focus on aerobic volume, connective tissue strength, and establishing consistent mid-week discipline.

WEEK	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT (LONG RUN)
Wk 1	*Rest*	4 mi 6.5 km Easy Run	5 mi 8 km Easy / Strides	4 mi 6.5 km Easy Run	*Rest*	8 mi 13 km Easy Conversational
Wk 2	*Rest*	4.5 mi 7 km Easy Run	6 mi 9.5 km w/ 2m MP	4.5 mi 7 km Easy Run	*Rest*	9.5 mi 15 km Easy Conversational
Wk 3	*Rest*	5 mi 8 km Easy Run	6 mi 9.5 km w/ 3m MP	5 mi 8 km Easy Run	*Rest*	11 mi 17.5 km Steady Aerobic
Wk 4	*Rest*	4 mi 6.5 km Easy Recovery	5 mi 8 km Easy Run	4 mi 6.5 km Easy Recovery	*Rest*	8 mi 13 km Step-Back Recovery Wk

Marathon Pace (MP) Discipline

During workouts with Marathon Pace (MP) segments, resist going faster. Marathon training is about metabolic efficiency—teaching your body to burn fat cleanly at your precise target speed.

PHASE 2: STAMINA & LACTATE THRESHOLD EXPANSION

Weeks 5 – 8

Build fatigue resistance by stretching mid-week distance and extending long runs up to 16 miles (26 km).

WEEK	MON	TUE (QUALITY)	WED	THU	FRI	SAT (LONG RUN)
Wk 5	*Rest*	5 mi 8 km Tempo Intervals	7 mi 11 km Medium Long Run	5 mi 8 km Easy Run	*Rest*	12.5 mi 20 km Easy Aerobic
Wk 6	*Rest*	6 mi 9.5 km w/ 3m Tempo	7 mi 11 km w/ 4m MP	5 mi 8 km Easy Run	*Rest*	14 mi 22.5 km Progressive Finish
Wk 7	*Rest*	6 mi 9.5 km 5x1000m Int.	8 mi 13 km Medium Long Run	5.5 mi 9 km Easy Run	*Rest*	16 mi 26 km Steady Pace
Wk 8	*Rest*	5 mi 8 km Easy Recovery	6 mi 9.5 km Easy Run	*Cross-Train*	*Rest*	10 mi 16 km Step-Back Recovery Wk

NUTRITION & FUEL PRACTICE

Fuel Strategy

Carbohydrate Intake

During long runs over 90 minutes, consume 30–60 grams of carbohydrates per hour (gels, chews, or high-carb fluids) starting at minute 30 to preserve muscle glycogen.

Hydration & Electrolytes

Take in 400–700 mL of fluid per hour depending on sweat rate and temperature. Include sodium (300–600 mg/L) on warm days to prevent hyponatremia and cramping.

Medium-Long Runs (Wednesdays)

Mid-week 7–8 mile (11–13 km) runs are a cornerstone of marathon success. They simulate late-race fatigue on accumulated weekly mileage without the extreme stress of a 20-miler.

PHASE 3: PEAK VOLUME & 20-MILE ENDURANCE

Weeks 9 – 12

The most crucial phase of marathon prep. Reaches peak long-run mileage and practice race simulations.

WEEK	MON	TUE (QUALITY)	WED	THU	FRI	SAT (LONG RUN)
Wk 9	*Rest*	6 mi 9.5 km w/ 4m MP	8.5 mi 13.5 km Medium Long Run	5.5 mi 9 km Easy Run	*Rest*	17.5 mi 28 km Steady Aerobic
Wk 10	*Rest*	7 mi 11 km w/ 5m MP	9 mi 14.5 km Medium Long Run	6 mi 9.5 km Easy Run	*Rest*	PEAK RUN 1: 19 mi 30.5 km
Wk 11	*Rest*	6 mi 9.5 km Tempo Effort	7 mi 11 km Easy Run	5 mi 8 km Easy Recovery	*Rest*	12 mi 19 km Step-Back Recovery Wk
Wk 12	*Rest*	7 mi 11 km w/ 5m MP	9 mi 14.5 km Medium Long Run	6 mi 9.5 km Easy Run	*Rest*	MAX PEAK RUN: 20 mi 32 km

PEAK LONG RUN EXECUTION RULES

Milestone Strategy

Pacing standard

Run 20-milers 30 to 60 seconds per mile SLOWER than target marathon pace. The objective is time on feet (2.5 to 3.5 hours) rather than speed.

Dress Rehearsal

Wear your complete race-day uniform, shoes, socks, and hydration belt during Week 12. Eliminate any friction or chafing points before race day.

Post-Run Recovery Protocol

Within 30 minutes of finishing your 20-mile (32 km) peak run, consume a 4:1 carbohydrate-to-protein recovery drink or meal to kickstart muscle repair.

PHASE 4: SHARPENING, 3-WEEK TAPER & RACE DAY

Weeks 13 – 16

Systematically drop mileage while maintaining short intensity intervals to restore glycogen and repair tissue.

WEEK	MON	TUE (QUALITY)	WED	THU	FRI	SAT / SUN (LONG RUN)
Wk 13	*Rest*	6 mi 9.5 km w/ 3m MP	7 mi 11 km Easy Run	5 mi 8 km Easy Run	*Rest*	13 mi 21 km Taper Long Run
Wk 14	*Rest*	5 mi 8 km w/ 2m MP	5.5 mi 9 km Easy Run	4 mi 6.5 km Easy Recovery	*Rest*	8 mi 13 km Taper Long Run
Wk 15	*Rest*	4 mi 6.5 km Easy + 4x Strides	4 mi 6.5 km Easy Run	3 mi 5 km Easy Recovery	*Rest*	5 mi 8 km Final Shakeout
Wk 16	*Rest*	3 mi 5 km Easy Run	*Rest*	2 mi 3 km Light Shakeout	*Rest*	MARATHON DAY! 26.2 mi 42.2 km

26.2 MILE PACING & WALL PREVENTION STRATEGY

Race Strategy

Miles 1–10 (1–16 km)

Bank Energy, Not Time: Stay 10–15 seconds/mile slower than goal pace. Fighting crowd congestion uses vital glycogen.

Miles 11–20 (17–32 km)

Lock into Cruise Control: Execute steady target pace. Take gels every 30–45 mins regardless of whether you feel hungry.

Miles 21–26.2 (33–42.2 km)

The Real Race Begins: Focus on short, fast foot turnover. Break remaining miles into 1-mile mental targets and finish strong!

Carb-Loading (Days -3 to -1)

Shift meals to 70–80% carbohydrates (rice, potatoes, pasta, white bread). Reduce fat, fiber, and protein intake to prevent stomach distress.