Marathon training guide

The Royal MARSDEN Cancer Charity

Get started

Comfort

Buy some quality running shoes to help with your training – never try to break in a new pair near to race day!

Motivation

Make yourself a good playlist to help keep you motivated along the way. Comfortable headphones are a must.

Warming up

Make sure you warm up with some dynamic stretches for at least 5 minutes before each run.

Cooling down

Make sure you allow at least 5 minutes to cool down and another 5 minutes to stretch out after each run.

Be flexible

Life often gets in the way. Be prepared to be flexible with your training plan, especially if you become ill, fatigued or injured. Rest is vital for recovery.

Understanding the terms

The Rate of Perceived Exertion (RPE) goes from 1–10, where 1 is barely any effort and 10 is absolute maximum effort.

Easy run

Low effort, 5 RPE, at which you can easily hold a conversation.

Steady run

More challenging, 6–7 RPE, at which you can hold a conversation but with some difficulty.

Tempo run

Fast paced, 8 RPE, which you can sustain for around 15–20 minutes at a time.

Resistance training

Helps to strengthen muscles, improve performance and prevent injury. This can include exercises that use your own body weight, such as push-ups, sit-ups and holding a plank.

Interval runs

Involves high RPE levels for short bursts, mixed in with easy run paces.

Speed intervals – vary your intensity with speed.

Hill intervals – a type of workout where you run up a hill or slope for a short time, then rest or run downhill, and repeat.

Fartlek intervals – can be thought of as speed-play. It's an unstructured session that alternates between easy, moderate and hard efforts throughout the run, instead of running at a uniform pace.

Beginner
Weekly planner

The ROYAL MARSDEN *Cancer Charity*

Week 1

Monday
20 min easy run ☐

Tuesday
Rest ☐

Wednesday
Rest ☐

Thursday
25 min easy run ☐

Friday
Rest ☐

Saturday
Rest or yoga ☐

Sunday
3 miles easy run ☐

Week 2

Monday
Rest ☐

Tuesday
25 min easy run ☐

Wednesday
Rest ☐

Thursday
30 min easy run ☐

Friday
Rest ☐

Saturday
Rest or yoga ☐

Sunday
4 miles easy run ☐

Week 3

Monday
Rest ☐

Tuesday
10 min easy run
10 min tempo run
20 min easy run ☐

Wednesday
Rest ☐

Thursday
10 min easy run
20 min speed intervals ☐

Friday
30 min resistance training ☐

Saturday
Rest or yoga ☐

Sunday
5 miles easy run ☐

Week 4

Monday
Rest ☐

Tuesday
20 min easy run
10 min tempo run
10 min steady run ☐

Wednesday
Rest ☐

Thursday
10 min easy run
20 min hill intervals
5 min easy run ☐

Friday
30 min resistance training ☐

Saturday
Rest or yoga ☐

Sunday
6 miles easy run ☐

Week 5

Monday
Rest ☐

Tuesday
20 min easy run
10 min tempo run
10 min steady run ☐

Wednesday
30 min resistance training ☐

Thursday
10 min easy run
20 min speed intervals
5 min easy run ☐

Friday
Rest or yoga ☐

Saturday
3 miles steady run
or parkrun ☐

Sunday
6 miles easy run ☐

Week 6

Monday
Rest ☐

Tuesday
10 min easy run
20 min steady run
10 min tempo run ☐

Wednesday
45 min resistance training ☐

Thursday
10 min easy run
20 min hill intervals ☐

Friday
Rest or yoga ☐

Saturday
3 miles steady run
or parkrun ☐

Sunday
7 miles easy run ☐

Beginner
Weekly planner

Week 7

Monday
Rest

Tuesday
20 min steady run
10 min easy run
10 min tempo run

Wednesday
60 min resistance training

Thursday
10 min easy run
25 min fartlek intervals
5 min easy run

Friday
Rest or yoga

Saturday
3 miles steady run
or parkrun

Sunday
8 miles easy run

Week 8

Monday
Rest

Tuesday
20 min steady run
10 min easy run
20 min steady run

Wednesday
60 min resistance training

Thursday
10 min easy run
20 min hill intervals

Friday
Rest or yoga

Saturday
3 miles steady run
or parkrun

Sunday
10 miles easy run

Week 9

Monday
Rest

Tuesday
10 min easy run
10 min tempo run
20 min steady run
10 min tempo run

Wednesday
60 min resistance training

Thursday
20 min hill intervals
20 min resistance training

Friday
40 min easy run

Saturday
Rest or yoga

Sunday
10km race or 6.2 miles
steady run

Week 10

Monday
3 miles easy run

Tuesday
10 min easy run
20 min steady run
10 min tempo run
20 min easy run

Wednesday
Rest

Thursday
20 min speed intervals
20 min resistance training

Friday
Rest or yoga

Saturday
3 miles steady run
or parkrun
30 min resistance training

Sunday
11 miles easy run

Week 11

Monday
Rest

Tuesday
20 min easy run
15 min tempo run
10 min easy run
15 min tempo run

Wednesday
60 min resistance training

Thursday
20 min easy run
20 min fartlek intervals
5 min easy run

Friday
Rest or yoga

Saturday
3 miles steady run
or parkrun
30 min resistance training

Sunday
12 miles easy run

Week 12

Monday
Rest

Tuesday
20 min steady run
15 min tempo run
10 min easy run
15 min tempo run

Wednesday
20 min hill intervals
20 min resistance training

Thursday
Rest

Friday
40 min easy run

Saturday
Rest or yoga

Sunday
Half marathon race or
13.1 miles steady run

Beginner
Weekly planner

The ROYAL MARSDEN *Cancer Charity*

Week 13

Monday
Rest ☐

Tuesday ☐
20 min steady run
15 min tempo run
10 min easy run
15 min tempo run

Wednesday ☐
60 min resistance training

Thursday ☐
20 min easy run
20 min hill intervals
20 min easy run

Friday ☐
Rest or yoga

Saturday ☐
3 miles steady run
or parkrun
30 min resistance training

Sunday ☐
14 miles easy run

Week 14

Monday ☐
Rest

Tuesday ☐
20 min easy run
15 min tempo run
20 min easy run
15 min tempo run

Wednesday ☐
60 min resistance training

Thursday ☐
20 min easy run
30 min fartlek intervals
10 min easy run

Friday ☐
Rest or yoga

Saturday ☐
3 miles steady run
or parkrun
30 min resistance training

Sunday ☐
16 miles easy run

Week 15

Monday ☐
Rest

Tuesday ☐
10 min easy run
15 min tempo run
20 min easy run
15 min tempo run

Wednesday ☐
60 min resistance training

Thursday ☐
10 min easy run
20 min speed intervals
20 min easy run

Friday ☐
Rest or yoga

Saturday ☐
3 miles steady run
or parkrun

Sunday ☐
20 miles easy run

Week 16

Monday ☐
Rest

Tuesday ☐
20 min steady run
10 min tempo run
10 min easy run
20 min steady run

Wednesday ☐
60 min resistance training

Thursday ☐
10 min easy run
20 min speed intervals
10 min easy run

Friday ☐
Rest or yoga

Saturday ☐
3 miles steady run
or parkrun
30 min resistance training

Sunday ☐
15 miles easy run

Week 17

Monday ☐
Rest

Tuesday ☐
20 min easy run
20 min steady run
20 min easy run

Wednesday ☐
Rest

Thursday ☐
20 min easy run
20 min hill intervals

Friday ☐
60 min resistance training

Saturday ☐
Rest or yoga

Sunday ☐
10 miles easy run

Week 18

Monday ☐
Rest

Tuesday ☐
30 min easy run

Wednesday ☐
Rest

Thursday ☐
Rest or yoga

Friday ☐
20 min easy run

Saturday ☐
Rest

Sunday ☐
Race day!

Intermediate
Weekly planner

The ROYAL MARSDEN *Cancer Charity*

Week 1

Monday
4 miles easy run ☐

Tuesday
Rest ☐

Wednesday
12 min tempo run
6 min easy run
12 min tempo run ☐

Thursday
Rest ☐

Friday
Rest or yoga ☐

Saturday
3 miles steady run
or parkrun
20 min resistance training ☐

Sunday
6 miles easy run ☐

Week 2

Monday
Rest ☐

Tuesday
40 min steady run
20 min resistance training ☐

Wednesday
Rest (optional
4 miles easy run) ☐

Thursday
20 min speed intervals
30 min resistance training ☐

Friday
Rest or yoga ☐

Saturday
12 min tempo run
6 min easy run
12 min tempo run ☐

Sunday
8 miles easy run ☐

Week 3

Monday
Rest ☐

Tuesday
15 min tempo run
10 min easy run
15 min tempo run ☐

Wednesday
5 miles easy run ☐

Thursday
30 min speed intervals
30 min resistance training ☐

Friday
Rest or yoga ☐

Saturday
3 miles steady run
or parkrun
20 min resistance training ☐

Sunday
8 miles easy run ☐

Week 4

Monday
Rest ☐

Tuesday
50 min steady run
20 min resistance training ☐

Wednesday
6 miles easy run ☐

Thursday
20 min speed intervals
40 min resistance training ☐

Friday
Rest or yoga ☐

Saturday
15 min tempo run
10 min easy run
15 min tempo run ☐

Sunday
10 miles easy run ☐

Week 5

Monday
Rest ☐

Tuesday
17 min tempo run
6 min easy run
17 min tempo run ☐

Wednesday
5 miles easy run or
60 min cycle/swim/gym ☐

Thursday
20 min hill intervals
40 min resistance training ☐

Friday
Rest or yoga ☐

Saturday
7 miles easy run
20 min resistance training ☐

Sunday
10km race or 6.2 miles
steady run ☐

Week 6

Monday
Rest ☐

Tuesday
50 min steady run
20 min resistance training ☐

Wednesday
5 miles easy run ☐

Thursday
30 min speed intervals
30 min resistance training ☐

Friday
Rest or yoga ☐

Saturday
3 miles steady run
or parkrun
30 min resistance training ☐

Sunday
12 miles easy run ☐

Intermediate
Weekly planner

Week 7

Monday
Rest ☐

Tuesday ☐
17 min tempo run
6 min easy run
17 min tempo run

Wednesday ☐
5 miles easy run or
60 min cycle/swim/gym

Thursday ☐
20 min hill intervals
40 min resistance training

Friday ☐
Rest or yoga

Saturday ☐
17 min tempo run
6 min easy run
17 min tempo run
20 min resistance training

Sunday ☐
13 miles easy run

Week 8

Monday
Rest ☐

Tuesday ☐
50 min steady run
20 min resistance
training

Wednesday ☐
6 miles easy run

Thursday ☐
30 min speed intervals
30 min resistance training

Friday ☐
Rest or yoga

Saturday ☐
3 miles steady run
or parkrun
30 min resistance training

Sunday ☐
2 miles steady run
3 miles easy run
2 miles steady run
3 miles easy run

Week 9

Monday
Rest ☐

Tuesday ☐
18 min tempo run
4 min easy run
18 min tempo run

Wednesday ☐
5 miles easy run or
60 min cycle/swim/gym

Thursday ☐
40 min fartlek intervals
20 min resistance training

Friday ☐
Rest or yoga

Saturday ☐
18 min tempo run
4 min easy run
18 min tempo run
20 min resistance training

Sunday ☐
14 miles easy run

Week 10

Monday
Rest ☐

Tuesday ☐
50 min steady run
20 resistance training

Wednesday ☐
6 miles easy run

Thursday ☐
30 min speed intervals
30 min resistance training

Friday ☐
Rest or yoga

Saturday ☐
3 miles steady run
or parkrun
30 min resistance training

Sunday ☐
15 miles easy run

Week 11

Monday
Rest ☐

Tuesday ☐
19 min tempo run
2 min easy run
19 min tempo run

Wednesday ☐
5 miles easy run or
60 min cycle/swim/gym

Thursday ☐
20 min hill intervals
40 min resistance training

Friday ☐
Rest or yoga

Saturday ☐
18 min tempo run
4 min easy run
18 min tempo run
20 min resistance training

Sunday ☐
16 miles easy run

Week 12

Monday
Rest ☐

Tuesday ☐
50 min steady run
20 min resistance training

Wednesday ☐
5 miles rasy run

Thursday ☐
30 min speed intervals
30 min resistance training

Friday ☐
Rest or yoga

Saturday ☐
45 min cycle/swim/gym

Sunday ☐
Half marathon or
13.1 miles steady run

Intermediate
Weekly planner

The ROYAL MARSDEN *Cancer Charity*

Week 13

Monday
Rest ☐

Tuesday
19 min tempo run
2 min easy run
19 min tempo run ☐

Wednesday
5 miles easy run or
60 min cycle/swim/gym ☐

Thursday
40 min fartlek intervals
20 min resistance training ☐

Friday
Rest or yoga ☐

Saturday
19 min tempo run
2 min easy run
19 min tempo run
30 min resistance training ☐

Sunday
18 miles easy run ☐

Week 14

Monday
Rest ☐

Tuesday
50 min steady run
20 min resistance training ☐

Wednesday
6 miles easy run ☐

Thursday
40 min fartlek intervals
20 min resistance training ☐

Friday
Rest or yoga ☐

Saturday
3 miles steady run
or parkrun
30 min resistance training ☐

Sunday
2 miles steady run
3 miles easy run
2 miles steady run
3 miles easy run
2 miles steady run
3 miles easy run ☐

Week 15

Monday
Rest ☐

Tuesday
60 min steady run ☐

Wednesday
5 miles easy run ☐

Thursday
20 min hill intervals
40 min resistance training ☐

Friday
Rest or yoga ☐

Saturday
45 min cycle/swim/gym ☐

Sunday
Your longest run!
Aim for 20-22 miles –
every person is different
so do what feels most
comfortable for you. ☐

Week 16

Monday
Rest ☐

Tuesday
19 mins tempo run
2 mins easy run
19 mins tempo run ☐

Wednesday
5 miles easy run ☐

Thursday
20 min speed intervals
30 min resistance training ☐

Friday
Rest or yoga ☐

Saturday
3 miles steady run
or parkrun
30 min resistance training ☐

Sunday
14 miles easy run ☐

Week 17

Monday
Rest ☐

Tuesday
15 min tempo run
10 min easy run
15 min tempo run ☐

Wednesday
Rest ☐

Thursday
20 min hill intervals
30 min resistance training ☐

Friday
Rest or yoga ☐

Saturday
45 min cycle/swim/gym ☐

Sunday
10 miles easy run ☐

Week 18

Monday
Rest ☐

Tuesday
5 miles easy run ☐

Wednesday
Rest ☐

Thursday
3 miles easy run ☐

Friday
Rest or yoga ☐

Saturday
Rest ☐

Sunday
Race day! ☐

Thank you
for joining
Team Marsden

@royalmarsden to find out more

Registered Charity No. 1095197
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The
ROYAL
MARSDEN
Cancer Charity