

Beginners Running Programme

are you fit enough to start training?

If you have had a serious illness or injury in the last six months, if you are seriously overweight, or if you have any history of heart trouble, you should take medical advice before starting training. For most people, however, the easiest way to prepare for a running programme is to walk regularly. This will strengthen your legs and get your muscles and joints used to carrying your weight. If you are carrying extra pounds, then a little dieting along with your walking will bring your weight down gradually and make the walking easier.

Regularity is the aim. Little and often is the best way. Start with 15-20 minutes a day, five or six days a week, and try to work it up half an hour on most days, with the occasional walk of over an hour. You need no special clothing and you can walk anywhere, as long as it is safe - you don't need to be on the road all the time - a park or a footpath is more interesting.

Once you have got used to getting out and walking for three or four hours a week, you should have no problem with the running, because it takes less time.

A brisk walk is four miles an hour, at least fifteen minutes per mile on a flat path. Jogging a mile slowly will take you about ten minutes, and when you get fitter it will be only eight minutes, so you are covering the ground and burning up the calories at almost twice the speed. Moreover, because the demand on the heart and lungs is greater, you are getting more fitness benefit from half an hour of running than from an hour of walking.

when to run

The best time is before meals - do not run on a full stomach. Many people find that before breakfast is the only time they can guarantee having to themselves, but it takes some getting used to, and most of us perform better later in the day. If you have somewhere to shower and change, a half-hour session before lunch is excellent.

when not to run

You should not run if you have a temperature more than 1°C above normal (do you know what your normal temperature is? Not everyone is 37°C). You should not run after an illness, until given clearance by your doctor.

You should not run if you are feeling sick (unless it's a race-day, when it is just nerves!) If you are just feeling very tired, or headachy, or a bit stiff, put your kit on and go for a walk. If you start to feel better, jog gently. Often running itself will clear up your symptoms. A slight cold in the head need not stop you, as long as you have proper clothing, but do not run if you have a chest cold, cough or sore throat.

where to run

The best places are parks, playing fields, footpaths and beaches, but any quiet stretch of road will do. If you want to find out how fast you are running, go to a public running track. They are all 400 metre tracks, which means 4 laps to the mile. Run with your mobile phone on you for security and ensure that someone knows where you are.

how fast should I go?

In the early stages - the first four weeks of running - don't run above 'talking pace'. If you start to feel very breathless, drop to a walk for thirty seconds or slow down the pace until it feels comfortable again. It takes time for your body to get used to continuous running, but it will adjust, believe me, as long as you give it time.

keeping records

To start with, the simplest thing is to copy this plan, pin it up somewhere and tick it off or write in what you actually do. When you get into running regularly, keep a training diary.

what about missed days?

It does not matter about doing the days in the correct order, as long as you put in the four days. If you miss a single day in a week, carry on as normal, but if you have missed two days, so that you have only run twice that week, repeat the week before moving up to the next.

beginners Running Programme

week 1

aim: to get out four times

day 1: 10 mins walking, 10 mins walk-jog, 10 mins walk

day 2: 5 mins walk, 15 mins walk-jog, 5 mins walk

day 3: as day 1

day 4: a three-mile circuit, jogging and walking as you feel

week 2

aim: to run four times

day 1: 5 mins walk, then six times one minute jog, one minute walk

day 2: 5 mins walk, 20 mins walk-jog

day 3: 5 mins walk, 10 mins continuous run, 5 mins walk

day 4: as week 1, but with less walking

week 3

aim: to run 6 miles in a week

day 1: 5 mins warm-up, then eight times one min.jog, 30secs walk

day 2: 5 mins walk, 15 mins jog-walk or 30 mins cycling

day 3: 5 mins walk, 5 mins jog, 2 mins walk, 5 mins jog

day 4: 5 mins warm-up, 2 mile jog with short walking breaks

week 4

aim: to run a mile non-stop

day 1: as week 3, but increase to 10 x 1 minute jog

day 2: 15 mins jog-walk or 30 mins cycling

day 3: 4 miles brisk walking, with occasional jogging

day 4: 5 mins walk, 2 mins stretch, then a timed jog of 1 mile

week 5

aim: to run 8 miles in a week

day 1: 5 mins warm-up, then 4 x 2mins jog, 1 min walk

day 2: 2 miles approx, jogging most of the way

day 3: 5 mins walk, 6 mins jog, 2 mins walk, 6 mins jog

day 4: 3 miles circuit, jogging most of the time

week 6

aim: to run 8 miles in a week

day 1: 5 mins warm-up, then 4 x 2 mins and 4 x 1 min jog, 1 min walk

day 2: 15 mins jog, walk when necessary

day 3: 5 mins walk, 2 mins stretch, one mile steady pace, untimed

day 4: go round your 4-mile circuit, running most of the time

week 7

aim: to run a timed mile

day 1: warm-up for 5 mins, then 4 x 3mins jog, 1 min walk

day 2: 5 mins easy, 2 mins stretching, 15 mins steady pace

day 3: 15 mins jog

day 4: 5 mins walk, 5 mins jog, 2 mins stretching, then run a mile as week 4 and time it, then jog-walk for 5 more minutes

week 8

aim: to run 10 miles in the week

day 1: 10mins out slowly, then run back faster

day 2: 5 mins easy, then 8-10 x 1 min fast, 1 min slow

day 3: 20 mins jog

day 4: a mile of warm-up, then go round your 4-mile circuit, as week 6

continuation

If you repeat weeks 7 and 8 you will build up your fitness and give yourself a better platform for moving on to level 1 of the Half Marathon or the 10K programme.