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WALK MARATHON TRAINING GUIDE



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Introduction

This is a 16-week guide is aimed at conditioning a relative beginner to build up to walking a marathon (26.2miles /42km). The guide is broken down into four phases; Foundation, Preparation, Building and Final Push.

For someone that is already exercising and can comfortably walk 3 miles 3-4 times per week, then you can skip the Foundation phase and start from the Preparation phase. This will provide you with a 12- week training programme.

Safety first

To start with, it is vitally important to ensure that it is safe for you to begin an exercise program. Complete the safety checklist below and if you answer YES to one or more questions, or alternatively, if you are at all concerned about starting training, then make an appointment with your Doctor for a check-up before you start.



Health-status safety checklist

- 1 Are you aged over 30 and/or have not exercised for some time?
- 2 Do you suffer from any medical conditions?
- 3 Are you a smoker or have recently given up smoking?
- 4 Have you undergone any surgery in the past two years?
- 5 Are you suffering from any injuries?
- 6 Are you currently on any prescribed medication?
- 7 Are you unsure about beginning an exercise program?

Y	N
Y	N
Y	N
Y	N
Y	N
Y	N
Y	N

Once you have the all-clear from your doctor then you're ready to start training.

Guide structure

The programme includes different types of training walk, including 'Slow', 'Steady', 'Tempo', and 'Interval' sessions. It will mostly consist of 4 training walks per week, gradually increasing in distance and intensity, some gym work, cross-training, and regular maintenance work.

There are also enforced rest periods, as with any form of training programme, overtraining needs to be avoided.

Gym work

This depends on your previous experience within a gym. If you are comfortable, and know your way around, then total body work incorporating squats, lunges, planks, and glute activation work is going to help you. If you are unsure then speak with a member of staff and ask them to put a programme together for you.

Flexibility work

This is geared towards body maintenance, and ensuring the health of your muscles and joints. Regular stretching and foam rolling will be highly beneficial for you throughout your training. Not only will it help with your recovery and performance, but it will also reduce the chances of picking up an overuse injury.

Again if you are unsure about how to go about a regular flexibility workout, speak with a member of staff at your local gym/health club and ask them to put a programme together for you.



Walking technique

Another very important area to focus on is good technique whilst walking. Whilst technique can be a huge topic, here are some simple tips to get you started:

1. Walk with good posture: stand tall, with your shoulders pulled back. Your head, neck and spine, should all be in alignment.
2. Use your arms: keep your arms by your side, elbows bent at 90 degrees, and swing from your shoulders.
3. Avoid over striding: this can lead to unnecessary load through the body. Just start by increasing the number of steps you take per minute.

If you want to learn more, then there are a large number of walking groups, which have experienced coaches that can advise you further.

Pace guide

To get an indication of your pace and how that will result in an anticipated completion time for your marathon walk, here are some examples:

- 14min mile (8min 43sec km) = 6hrs 8mins
- 15min mile (9min 19sec km) = 6hrs 33mins
- 16min mile (9min 57sec km) = 7hrs
- 17min mile (10min 33sec km) = 7hrs 25mins
- 18min mile (11mins 10secs km) = 7hrs 51mins



Food and fuelling

As your mileage picks up, you will need to start looking at how you are fuelling and hydrating during your training. As a general rule, you should be eating well throughout the week. Ensure you eat plenty of fruit and vegetables, good quality fat and protein, and not overdoing the starchy carbohydrates. If you are eating well then you shouldn't need any additional fuel prior to your mid-week training sessions, your energy stores should be perfectly adequate to handle the maximum distance of 6 miles that you will be doing.



During longer sessions of over 6-8miles and upwards, you may want to look at introducing some fuel. What should you eat? Popular choices include, gels, jelly babies, flapjacks, energy drinks, etc. The key is to find something that works for you, as it's purely individual.

You should research what will be available for you on the day, as races will provide fuelling stations. If you can get used to taking what will be available for you on the day, then it reduces the amount you will need to carry around with you.

Hydration

Hydration is also a very important area. There are a number of factors that will influence the amount you will need to drink, such as how quickly you are walking, how much you are sweating, and the temperature.

When you are on your training walks, or when you are walking on race day, a general guideline is that you should drink little and often, but do listen to your body. Start to practice on your training walks with 300-500ml per hour, and see how that works for you.

Walk Marathon Training Guide

Foundation

Walk ('W'), Flexibility ('F'), Rest ('R')

All your walks will be steady and comfortable

Week (1-4)			
Day	Session Type	Training	Training notes
Mon	W	1.1miles / 1.7km / 20mins	It's time to lace up those training shoes, and get some mileage under you.
Tues	R		Even at this early stage, it's important not to overdo things. Rest is as important as the training you do.
Wed	W	1.1miles / 1.7km / 20mins	
Thurs	R & F		It is advisable to include some maintenance work on your rest days. Foam rolling, mobility work and stretching, will help with recovery, performance and injury prevention.
Fri	W	1.1miles / 1.7km / 20mins	
Sat	R		
Sun	W & F	2miles / 3.2km / 36mins	Make sure you time yourself. Get in the habit of timing your distance dependant sessions

Week (2-4)			
Day	Session Type	Training	Training notes
Mon	R		Get in the routine of Monday being your rest day; as you'll need a day off following your Sunday training sessions, which will be increasing in distance.
Tues	W	1.6miles / 2.6km / 30mins	
Wed	R		
Thurs	W	1.6miles / 2.6km / 30mins	
Fri	R		

Sat	W & F	1.1miles / 1.7km / 20mins	You will be doing back to back walks on consecutive days, so make sure you do a good amount of flexibility & maintenance work.
Sun	W & F	3miles / 4.8km / 54mins	

Week (3-4)			
Day	Session Type	Training	Training notes
Mon	R		Very gradual increase in distance this week.
Tues	W	2.2miles / 3.5km / 40mins	Vary your walks.
Wed	R		
Thurs	W	2.2miles / 3.5km / 40mins	
Fri	R		
Sat	W & F	2miles / 3.2km / 36mins	
Sun	W & F	3miles / 4.8km / 54mins	That's 5miles / 8km done this weekend, how are you feeling?

Week (4-4)			
Day	Session Type	Training	Training notes
Mon	R		Last week of Foundation stage, building up to your longest walk of 4miles.
Tues	W	2.5miles / 4km / 45mins	
Wed	R		
Thurs	W	2.5miles / 4km / 45mins	You could replace this walk with another form of activity, such as cross-training or swimming.
Fri	R		
Sat	W & F	2miles / 3.2km / 36mins	
Sun	W & F	4miles / 6.4km / 72mins	Congratulations on your first four weeks done.

Preparation

Walk ('W'), Flexibility ('F'), Gym ('G'), Rest ('R')

Walks will either be:

1. Steady (race pace) - Assumed average 16min mile / 9min 57sec km (7hr marathon pace)
2. Slow (for recovery and to get safe miles under you) - Assumed 18min mile / 11min 10 sec km
3. Tempo (at a quicker than race pace) - Assumed average 14min mile / 8min 43sec km
4. Interval (Varying your speed) - Assumed average 16min mile / 9min 56sec km

Week (1-12)			
Day	Session Type	Training	Training notes
Mon	W - Slow	1.6miles / 2.6km / 30mins	Start of 12 week training plan; easy intro or a recovery week for those who did the initial 4 week Foundation stage. The goal of this phase is to start introducing other forms of training to compliment your increasing Sunday walks
Tues	R		If you did the initial 4 week Foundation stage, then it would be a good idea to get a massage - keep your body healthy.
Wed	W - Slow	1.6miles / 2.6km / 30mins	
Thurs	R		It is advisable to include some maintenance work on your rest days. Foam rolling, mobility work, and stretching, will help with recovery, performance, and injury prevention.
Fri	W - Slow	1.6miles / 2.6km / 30mins	
Sat	R		
Sun	W - Steady & F	4miles / 6.4km / 64mins	Your 'Steady' walks need to be at a quicker pace than your slow walks. You'll be using this pace throughout your Sunday walks, other 'Steady' walks and, ultimately, when you do the 26.2miles/42km.

Week (2-12)			
Day	Session Type	Training	Training notes
Mon	R		Make sure that you include some technique focused training in your weekly sessions.
Tues	W - Tempo & F	2miles / 3.2km / 28mins	Your first 'Tempo' walk. Push yourself, but not so much that you can't complete the distance at the pace you started at.
Wed	G & F	45min	Get to the gym for some cross-training, or total body conditioning. If unsure then ask for help, or start with bodyweight exercises.
Thurs	W - Tempo	2miles / 3.2km / 28mins	Ensure you are keeping track of your sessions. It's important to track your minute mile/km pace during different sessions as you can then measure progress and review performance.
Fri	R / G & F		Fridays will be your day of rest or gym circuits depending on how you feel. Focus on lightweight and higher rep ranges. Focus on legs & core, but don't neglect any part of your body.
Sat	W - Slow & F	3miles / 4.8km / 54mins	
Sun	W - Steady & F	6miles / 9.6km / 96mins	You should have a good idea of your paces. Your Sunday walks are quick, comfortable and steady. These are different to your other sessions, which will include faster tempo and interval sessions.

Week (3-12)			
Day	Session Type	Training	Training notes
Mon	R & F		Plan some routes - ensure you include some hill work in your training.
Tues	W - Tempo	3miles / 4.8km / 42mins	Start picking up the pace of your midweek walks. Aim to walk at your quickest pace during your first session of the week.
Wed	G	45mins	Total body circuit; include exercises such as glute bridges, squats, lunges, and planks, which will all compliment your training.
Thurs	W - Interval	3miles / 4.8km / 48mins	Your first 'Interval' session of your training. Alternate between your slow pace and your tempo pace (or slightly higher). If you are new to interval then make it more 'Fartlek', alternating depending on how you are feeling.
Fri	R / G & F		
Sat	W - Slow & F	4miles / 6.4km / 72mins	
Sun	W - Steady & F	8miles / 12.9km / 2hrs 8mins	

Week (4-12)			
Day	Session Type	Training	Training notes
Mon	R & F		
Tues	W - Tempo	3miles / 4.8km / 42mins	
Wed	G & F	60mins	Focus on a leg heavy session, increase the weight you have been using. Finish the session with some interval work on rower or exercise bike.
Thurs	W - Interval	3miles / 4.8km / 48mins	
Fri	R		
Sat	W - Slow & F	5miles / 8km / 90mins	Keep legs ticking over ready for your 10mile / 16.1km walk tomorrow.
Sun	W - Steady & F	10miles / 16.1km / 2hrs 40mins	

Building

Week (5-12)			
Day	Session Type	Training	Training notes
Mon	R & F		Would be great if you could get a regular massage booked in, ideally on a Monday. As your mileage increases during this phase of training, get to grips with your nutrition (pre & post training).
Tues	W - Tempo & F	4miles / 6.4km / 56mins	A little reminder to focus on good form and technique.
Wed	G & F	60mins - total body	
Thurs	W - Interval & F	4miles / 6.4km / 64mins	Push yourself - Interval training leads to significant crossover gains to your important 'Steady' walks.
Fri	R/G	45mins	Either use a rest day or bodyweight circuit, with light cross-training.
Sat	W - Steady & F	5miles / 8km / 80mins	
Sun	W - Steady & F	12miles / 19.3km / 3hrs 12mins	Are you able to maintain your 'Steady' pace throughout? If not, you may have to adjust your pacing.

Week (6-12)			
Day	Session Type	Training	Training notes
Mon	R & F		You can do a light recovery session on a Monday after your long walk. Not impact cardio, swimming, and a good foam rolling session can really help with recovery.
Tues	W - Tempo	5miles / 8km / 70mins	
Wed	G & F	60mins - Lower body	Focus on your legs and glutes.
Thurs	W - Interval	5miles / 8km / 80mins	If you've never tried hill intervals, then give it a go. Speed walking up a hill can do wonders for your fitness, and can also force you to walk with good technique.
Fri	R/G & F		Get yourself down to a Pilates or Yoga class - it will really help with your flexibility, core strength and breathing.
Sat	W - Steady & F	6miles / 9.6km / 1hr 36mins	This is a big weekend of training as you'll be hitting a combines 20miles / 32.2km.

Sun	W - Steady & F	14miles / 22.5km / 3hrs 44mins	Are you fuelling during these longer walks, and getting enough fluid on board?
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Week (7-12)			
Day	Session Type	Training	Training notes
Mon	R & F		If you haven't got time for a massage, then make sure you at least have an Epsom Salt bath.
Tues	W - Tempo	5miles / 8km / 70mins	
Wed	G & F	45mins - Upper & Lower body	Keep lifting the weight, and keep getting stronger!
Thurs	W - Interval	5miles / 8km / 80mins	
Fri	R / G & F	45mins	Core work, and a good foam rolling session.
Sat	W - Steady & F	6miles / 9.6km / 1hr 36mins	
Sun	W - Steady & F	16miles / 25.7km / 4hrs 16mins	Practice your fuelling and hydration strategy.

Week (8-12)			
Day	Session Type	Training	Training notes
Mon	R & F		
Tues	W - Tempo & F	6miles / 9.6km / 1hr 24mins	Keep working hard, keep consistent with your minute mile / km splits.
Wed	G & F	60mins - total body	Follow it up with some hard interval training.
Thurs	W - Interval & F	6miles / 9.6km / 1hr 36mins	
Fri	R / G & F	45mins	More of a relaxed session, incorporate plenty of stretching and/or some Pilates or yoga.
Sat	W - Steady & F	4miles / 6.4km / 64mins	
Sun	W - Steady & F	18miles / 29km / 4hrs 48mins	Practice your fuelling and hydration strategy.

Final Push & Finishing Touches

Week (9-12)			
Day	Session Type	Training	Training notes
Mon	R		This is your final 4 weeks of training. You build up to your longest training walk, before tapering down to get ready for the big day.
Tues	W - Slow & F	6miles / 9.6km / 108mins	A slight recovery week after some significant building over the last 4 weeks.
Wed	G & F	60mins - total body	Focus on bodyweight circuit and light cardio for recovery.
Thurs	W - Slow	6miles / 9.6km / 1hr 48mins	
Fri	G & F	45min	Glutes & core, followed by some light cardio.
Sat	W - Steady & F	8miles / 12.9km / 2hrs 8mins	This weekend pay particular attention to good form and technique.
Sun	W - Steady & F	10miles / 16.1km / 2hrs 40mins	A drop down in mileage this week to ensure a quality session next weekend.

Week (10-12)			
Day	Session Type	Training	Training notes
Mon	R		
Tues	W - Tempo	4miles / 6.4km / 56mins	
Wed	G & F	30mins	Bodyweight circuit, followed by some light cardio.
Thurs	W - Slow & F	4miles / 6.4km / 72mins	Take it easy in preparation for this weekends training.
Fri	R & G	30mins	Gym session is definitely optional, a light swim and stretch will be sufficient.
Sat	W - Slow & F	4miles / 6.4km / 72mins	Slow and steady recovery session, ready for tomorrow's big one.
Sun	W - Steady & F	20miles / 32.2km / 5hrs 20mins	This is your longest walk in your training. Follow it up with good quality nutrition.

Week (11-12)			
Day	Session Type	Training	Training notes
Mon	R & F		Get a well deserved massage as you start you taper for the big day.
Tues	G & F	45mins	Cross-training session focused on non weight bearing activity. Some exercise & stretching in a pool would be recommended.
Wed	W - Slow	4miles / 6.4km / 72mins	
Thurs	G	60mins	Light cross-training session, ideally include some yoga or Pilates.
Fri	R		Friday is normally an optional gym day, but too close to the big day so enforce the rest!
Sat	W - Steady & F	5miles / 8km / 1hr 20mins	
Sun	W - Steady & F	5miles / 8km / 1hr 20mins	

Week (12-12)			
Day	Session Type	Training	Training notes
Mon	R & F		If you do go for a massage, do remind the therapist you'll be walking 26.2miles on Sunday, so to go a little easier on you!
Tues	W - Steady & F	1.6miles / 2.6km / 30mins	All the training walks this week are geared around keeping everything ticking over.
Wed	W - Slow	1.1miles / 1.7km/ 20mins	
Thurs	R & F		
Fri	W - Slow & F	1.1miles / 1.7km/ 20mins	Get a good night's sleep tonight, in case any nerves affect you sleep tomorrow.
Sat	R & F		Don't do too much at all today
Sun	W - Steady	26.2miles / 42km / 7hrs	Enjoy the whole experience. You've already done the hard work!

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