

# Training To Run Your First 5K

HOW MUCH DO YOU NEED TO TRAIN to be able to run your first 5-K race? Some individuals who possess a reasonably good level of fitness (because they bicycle or swim or participate in other sports) could probably go out and run 3 miles on very little training. They might be sore the week after the race, but they still could finish.

But if you've made the decision to run a 5-K race, you might as well do it right. Below is an eight-week training schedule to help get you to the finish line. It assumes that you have no major health problems, are in reasonably good shape, and have done at least some jogging or walking.

[It is always important to consult your physician before starting an exercise program]

Week	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
1	Rest or run/walk	1.5 m run	Rest or run/walk	1.5 m run	Rest	1.5 m run	30- 60 min walk
2	Rest or run/walk	1.75 m run	Rest or run/walk	1.5 m run	Rest	1.75 m run	35-60 min walk
3	Rest or run/walk	2 m run	Rest or run/walk	1.5 m run	Rest	2 m run	40-60 min walk
4	Rest or run/walk	2.25 m run	Rest or run/walk	1.5 m run	Rest	2.25 m run	45-60 min walk
5	Rest or run/walk	2.5 m run	Rest or run/walk	2 m run	Rest	2.5 m run	50-60 min walk
6	Rest or run/walk	2.75 m run	Rest or run/walk	2 m run	Rest	2.75 m run	55-60 min walk
7	Rest or run/walk	3 m run	Rest or run/walk	2 m run	Rest	3 m run	60 min walk
8	Rest or run/walk	3 m run	Rest or run/walk	2 m run	Rest	Rest	5-K Race

The above schedule is only a guide. Feel free to make modifications to suit your work and family schedule. The progression below suggests adding a quarter-mile to most runs each week. That's one lap on most outdoor tracks. If you train on the roads, or on trails, it's more difficult to measure precisely how far you run. So don't worry about it. Approximate the distance.

The terms used in the training schedule are somewhat obvious, but below are explanations anyway.

**Rest:** The most important day in any beginning or intermediate running program is rest. Rest days are as vital as training days. They give your muscles time to recover so you can run again. Actually, your muscles will build in strength as you rest. Without recovery days, you will not improve.

**Run:** Put one foot in front of the other and run. It sounds pretty simple, and it is. Don't worry about how fast you run; just cover the distance--or approximately the distance suggested. Ideally, you should be able to run at a pace that allows you to converse comfortably while you do so. This isn't always easy for beginners, so don't push too hard or too fast.

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**Walk/Run:** This is a combination of running and walking, suggested for those in-between days when you want to do some running, but only some. There's nothing in the rules that suggests you have to run continuously, either in training or in the 5-K race itself. Use your own judgment. Run until you begin to feel fatigued, and then walk until recovered. Run. Walk. Run. Walk. You get a little exercise, but not so much that you are fatigued for the next day's running workout.

**Walk:** Walking is an excellent exercise that a lot of runners overlook in their training. Don't worry about how fast you walk, or how much distance you cover. Take time to stop and sniff the flowers or enjoy a scenic view. Not all training should be difficult. If a 60-minute walk seems too much at first, begin with about 30 minutes and add 5 minutes a week until you reach 60 minutes.

### How to Avoid Injuries:

**Avoid the "terrible too's".** Many running injuries are a result of overtraining: too much intensity, too many miles, too soon. It's important to go easy when adding mileage or intensity to your training. You shouldn't increase your weekly mileage by more than 10% each week. You can still push your limits, but you'll have to take a gradual and patient approach. By building up slowly, you can save yourself pain and frustration, and still reach your goals.

**Treat your feet right.** Be sure that your shoes aren't worn out and that you have the right model for your feet and running style. The wrong shoe can actually aggravate existing problems, causing pain in your feet, legs, knees or hips. Wearing shoes that have lost their cushioning may also lead to injury.

**Find the right surface.** Once you have the right shoes, you want to make sure you're using them on the best surface. Ideally, you want the ground to absorb shock, rather than passing it along to your legs. Avoid concrete as much as possible: It's about 10 times as hard as asphalt, and is a terrible surface for running. Try to find grass or dirt trails to run on, especially for your higher mileage runs. Consistency is important, too, because a sudden change to a new running surface can cause injuries. You'll also want to avoid tight turns, so look for slow curves and straight paths.

**Stay loose.** A regular stretching program can go a long way toward injury prevention. Be diligent about stretching after your runs -- your body will make you pay if you get lazy about it.

**Keep your balance.** Injuries sometimes pop up when you're paying too much attention to your running muscles and forgetting about the others. For example, knee injuries sometimes occur because running strengthens the back of your legs more than the front of your legs. Your relatively weak quads aren't strong enough to keep your kneecap moving in its proper groove, which causes pain. However, once you strengthen your quads, the pain will often go away.

**Make sure you're ready to return.** To prevent re-injury, ease back into training with water running, cycling, or using an elliptical trainer. Overtraining is the number one cause of injuries, so try to remember that progress takes time.

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## Additional tips for your first race day.

**Don't Overdress.** A good rule of thumb: Dress as if the weather is 15 degrees warmer than it is. That's how much you'll warm up once you start running. If it's cold, you can always wear warmer

clothes while you're waiting for the race to start. Many races offer a gear check where you can store your bag with extra clothes for before and after the race.

**Choose Your Pre-Race Food Wisely.** Eat a meal at least one hour prior to the start of the race. Running on an empty stomach may cause you to run out of energy. Choose something high in carbohydrates and lower in fat, fiber, and protein. Stay away from rich, fatty, or high-fiber foods, as they may cause gastrointestinal distress. Some examples of good pre-workout fuel include: a bagel with peanut butter; a banana and an energy bar; or a bowl of cold cereal with a cup of milk.

**Get There Early.** Arrive at the race site early to make sure you get a parking spot. Regardless of whether you're driving there or not, you'll also need time to pick up your number (if you haven't already) and use the bathroom (the lines may be long).

**Use the Water Stops.** Take advantage of the water stations on the course. If you've never done it before, here are some tips on how to take water from a hydration stop. And don't forget to thank the volunteers for handing out water!

**Bring Your Support Team.** Invite your friends and family members to support you. Ask them to stand near the finish line so they can cheer you on at the end.

**Aim to Finish.** Don't put pressure on yourself to achieve a really fast time for your first race. Finishing the race and enjoying the experience are excellent goals for a first-timer.

**We look forward to seeing you on Saturday!!**

