GoalTodo

Half marathon training plan: 16 weeks from 5K, 26 from scratch

Half marathon

12 weeks · Mon, Nov 30 → Sun, Feb 21

Week by week

Tick a box each time you do a session.

Nov 30–Dec 6
Week 1

Three easy runs

Base

- [ ] [ ] Easy run — 25 min
- [ ] Long run — 5 km

Done when: You run all three sessions at a pace where you can talk in full sentences

Sticking point: Easy means slower than you think. If you can't talk, slow down or walk for a minute.

Dec 7–13
Week 2

A longer long run

Base

- [ ] [ ] Easy run — 30 min
- [ ] Long run — 6 km

Done when: You run 6 km at a pace where you can talk

Dec 14–20
Week 3

Eight kilometres

Build

- [ ] [ ] Easy run — 35 min
- [ ] Long run — 8 km

Done when: You run 8 km at a pace where you can talk

Dec 21–27
Week 4

Double figures

Build

- [ ] [ ] Easy run — 40 min
- [ ] Long run — 10 km

Done when: You run 10 km, nearly half the race distance

Sticking point: Longer runs need water. Carry some, and practise drinking the way you will on race day.

Dec 28–Jan 3
Week 5

Ease off and recover

Lighter week

- [ ] Easy run — 30 min
- [ ] Long run — 7 km

Done when: You run all three sessions, with a long run of 7 km

Sticking point: Lighter weeks feel too easy. Run them anyway: this is when your body catches up with the training.

Jan 4–10
Week 6

Eleven kilometres

Build

- [ ] Easy run — 40 min
- [ ] Long run — 11 km

Done when: You run 11 km, more than half the race distance

Sticking point: If something hurts or doesn't feel right, stop. Take an extra rest day rather than run through it.

Jan 11–17
Week 7

Thirteen kilometres

Build

- [ ] Easy run — 45 min
- [ ] Long run — 13 km

Done when: You run 13 km at a pace where you can talk

Jan 18–24
Week 8

Ease off and recover

Lighter week

- [ ] Easy run — 35 min
- [ ] Long run — 9 km

Done when: You run all three sessions, with a long run of 9 km

Jan 25–31
Week 9

Fourteen kilometres

Peak

- [ ] [ ] Easy run — 45 min
- [ ] Long run — 14 km

Done when: You run 14 km at a pace where you can talk

Sticking point: Practise race morning on this run: the same breakfast, kit and shoes you'll race in.

Feb 1–7
Week 10

The longest run: 16 km

Peak

- [ ] [ ] Easy run — 45 min
- [ ] Long run — 16 km

Done when: You run 16 km at a pace where you can talk

Feb 8–14
Week 11

Less running, same easy pace

Taper

- [ ] [ ] Easy run — 35 min
- [ ] Long run — 10 km

Done when: You run all three sessions, with a long run of 10 km at a pace where you can talk

Sticking point: Less running can feel like losing fitness. It isn't: your legs are recovering for race day.

Feb 15–21
Week 12

Two short runs, then the race

Race week

- [ ] [ ] Easy run — 20 min
- [ ] Half marathon — 21.1 km

Done when: You cross the finish line

Sticking point: Nerves make people start too fast. Run the first 5 km slower than feels right.

How the plan works

You run three times a week: two easy runs on Tuesday and Thursday, and a long run on Sunday. Keep a rest day between runs. You can move the days, as long as the long run stays on its own day with rest either side.

Easy means you can talk. Run every session, the long run too, at a pace where you could hold a conversation. Walking for a minute is always allowed.

The long run grows by a kilometre or two at a time, to a longest run of 16 km two weeks before the race. You don't need to run 21.1 km before race day: the taper and the crowd do the rest.

Once you're running 5 km, every third or fourth week is lighter. The runs get shorter so your body can catch up. Don't skip these weeks or turn them into hard ones.

The last two weeks are the taper. You run less, at the same easy pace, so you start the race rested.

If you don't run yet, the plan starts with run-walk sessions, building up to 20 minutes without stopping. The full plan repeats a few of these weeks so each step feels smaller; a shorter plan leaves the repeats out.

Before you start

If you have a health condition, or you're worried about your health, speak to a GP before you start.

Start every run with a 5-minute warm-up walk, and end it with a 5-minute cool-down walk.

Listen to your body. Take things at your own pace, and stop if something doesn't feel right.

If you need to repeat a week, repeat it. The NHS Couch to 5K plan (https://www.nhs.uk/better-health/get-active/get-running-with-couch-to-5k/couch-to-5k-running-plan/) says the same for its run-walk weeks.

Gear

- Running shoes that support your feet. A running shop can help you choose. Wear them in on easy runs, and don't race in a new pair.
- Clothes you can move in, and a supportive sports bra if you need one. Anti-chafe balm helps on long runs.
- A watch or phone to time your runs and walks.
- Water on longer runs, carried in a hand bottle or a belt. Practise drinking on your long runs the way you will on race day.
- Something reflective if you run in the dark, and routes that are well lit.

Common mistakes

- Running the easy runs too fast. If you can't talk, you're running too fast. Slow down, or walk.
- Catching up on missed runs. Don't squeeze two runs into one day or add the missed kilometres to the long run. See "If you fall behind" below.
- Skipping the lighter weeks. They are part of the plan, not a break from it.
- Adding more. Building up gradually is what keeps you running. Extra runs and faster long runs make injury more likely, not the race easier.
- Trying something new on race day: new shoes, a new breakfast or a new energy gel. Try everything on a long run first.

Race week

- Run the two short easy runs and nothing else. No long run this week.
- Sleep well all week, not only the night before.
- The night before, lay out your kit, pin on your number and charge your watch.
- Eat a light breakfast you've tried before, about three hours before the start.
- Start slower than you think you should. Run the first 5 km at your easy pace, then decide.

▪ Walking at the drinks stations is fine. Many runners do it.

If you fall behind

Missed 1 week: Carry on with the current week, but don't make your long run or running blocks longer than in the last week you finished. If this week's are already shorter, keep the shorter ones. Don't add the missed runs on top.

Missed 2 weeks: Repeat the last week you finished in full, then carry on from there. If that runs past race day, leave out a week before the peak, never the two taper weeks.

Missed 3 weeks: Go back three weeks from where you stopped and build up again. If there are no longer enough weeks, enter your race date on the plan page to see if it's still realistic, or pick a later race.

Missed 4 or more weeks: Your fitness has dropped. Choose the level that matches what you can run today, and enter a new race date on the plan page to see if it's realistic.

Sources

NHS Better Health
`https://www.nhs.uk/better-health/get-active/get-running-with-couch-to-5k/couch-to-5k-running-plan/`
“Over the next 9 weeks, you’ll run 3 times a week, alternating between walking and running. You will run further and for longer as you go through the plan.”

Hal Higdon
`https://www.halhigdon.com/training-programs/half-marathon-training/novice-1-half-marathon/`
“The key to half marathon training is the long run, progressively increasing in distance each weekend. Over a period of 12 weeks, your longest run will increase from 3 to 10 miles. Then, after a brief taper, you jump to 13.1.”

Healthline
`https://www.healthline.com/health/fitness-exercise/half-marathon-training`
“He says runners should stick with four-week training blocks, upping the mileage each week for three weeks, followed by a lower mileage recovery week.”

Nuffield Health
`https://www.nuffieldhealth.com/articles/fitness/12-week-half-marathon-training-plan`
“If you’re not currently able to complete the 10km distance, a longer 16-week plan may be a better option to ensure you build up distance comfortably and avoid the risk of injury.”

Great Run
`https://www.greatrun.org/training/a-runners-guide-to-tapering/`
“Tapering – reducing the number of miles you’re running in the last two weeks-ish before your half event – gives your body even more opportunity to finish off this repair process and builds your muscles back to full strength.”

This plan online	`https://goaltodo.com/half-marathon?level=5k&weeks=12`
Reach it with others on Welang	`https://welang.com/goals`
Reach it on your own in HourLife	`https://www.hourlife.com`

This plan is a guide, not medical advice. See a doctor before starting if you have a health condition, are pregnant, or haven't exercised in a long time.