

# Your 20-week intermediate training guide



*Looking to take on a new marathon or beat your personal best? This guide has everything you need to know to get you prepared and ready for race day.*

*First and foremost, set your goals and make sure you have everything you need ahead of training.*

## 1. Be prepared

Although this might not be your first marathon, be sure to leave yourself at least 5 months for training. This will give you plenty of time to achieve your goals and be ready for race day.

## 2. Record your training

Using an app or GPS tracker is a great way to track your progress and monitor your pace. Set yourself a realistic pace throughout your training to make you consistent.

## 3. Get your running kit sorted

If you're a regular runner, you need to change your running shoes every 300-500 miles. It's always a good idea to get your gait read by an expert and get some fresh running shoes that will support you. Remember, never wear new shoes on race day!

## 4. Warm up and stretch before running

Develop a stretching regime before each run. Stretching running-specific muscles can prevent many injuries – e.g. calves, hamstrings, Achilles, quadriceps, adductors, abductors and back. Cool down, including a 5-10 min walk, after each run. If you do get an injury, ensure you consult a professional and pause your training immediately.

## 5. Training intensity

**Marathon pace:** This is the pace that you aim to run your marathon at. If your target marathon time is sub 3 hrs 30, then aim to complete every mile in 8 minutes. Amend this to suit your own marathon time.

**Easy pace – long run:** To improve endurance, oxygen intake and utilisation. Easy pace also conditions the body to use fat as an energy source, which is likely to reduce your weight. Easy pace is about 30-60 secs slower than your intended marathon pace.

**Hill run:** To enhance run-specific strength and running efficiency. Find a hill that takes about 3-5 mins to climb to the top, not too steep, 7-8% gradient. You should be breathing quite hard at the top. Jog or walk down hill to recover.

# Your 20-week training plan

## Warm up and cool down

All sessions should include a 5min warm up / cool down to help prevent injury

Week 1-4								
Base fitness - low intensity								
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	TOTAL MILEAGE
<b>Week 1</b>	REST DAY	3 mi / 5 km low Intensity	Weight training & core stability	REST DAY	3 mi / 5 km med. Intensity	REST DAY	5 mi / 8 km low intensity	11 mi / 18 km
<b>Week 2</b>	REST DAY	3 mi / 5 km low Intensity	Weight training & core stability	REST DAY	3 mi / 5 km med. Intensity	REST DAY	5 mi / 8 km low intensity	11 mi / 18 km
<b>Week 3</b>	REST DAY	4.4 mi / 7 km low Intensity	Weight training & core stability	REST DAY	3 mi / 5 km med. Intensity	REST DAY	6.1 mi / 10 km low intensity	13.5 mi / 21 km
<b>Week 4</b>	REST DAY	5 mi / 8 km low Intensity	Weight training & core stability	REST DAY	3 mi / 5 km med. Intensity	REST DAY	6.1 mi / 10 km low intensity	14.1 mi / 23 km

If you're finding sessions too easy in the early stages of the plan, remove a rest day and add another cardio session.

## Intensity levels

**Low, medium, high** (low intensity for longer runs, high intensity for intervals / speed)

Week 5-8								
Base fitness - low intensity								
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	TOTAL MILEAGE
<b>Week 5</b>	REST DAY	3 mi / 5 km med. Intensity	Weight training & core stability	REST DAY	Interval (1:2) high intensity	REST DAY	6.1 mi / 10 km low intensity	9.1 mi / 15 km + intervals
<b>Week 6</b>	REST DAY	3 mi / 5 km med. Intensity	Weight training & core stability	REST DAY	Interval (1:2) high intensity	REST DAY	7.5 mi / 12 km low intensity	10.5 mi / 17 km + intervals
<b>Week 7 - recovery week (reduced)</b>	REST DAY	3 mi / 5 km med. Intensity	Weight training & core stability	REST DAY	Interval (2:2) high intensity	REST DAY	8.7 mi / 14 km low intensity	11.7 mi / 19 km + intervals
<b>Week 8</b>	REST DAY	5 mi / 8 km med. Intensity	Weight training & core stability	REST DAY	Interval (2:2) high intensity	REST DAY	9.9 mi / 16 km low intensity	14.9 mi / 24 km + intervals

## Stretching

Make sure to give yourself 5mins after experience to stretch, this will help prevent injury.

### Interval training variations

**1:2:** (1min at high pace, 90% effort, 2mins light jog)

**2:2:** (2 mins at high pace, 80% effort, 2mins light jog)

**3:1:** (3mins at high pace 75% effort, 1min light jog),

**4:1** and so on. Repeat 4-8 times.

### Week 9-12

#### Base level - increase aerobic

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	TOTAL MILEAGE
<b>Week 9</b>	REST DAY	3 mi / 5 km med. Intensity	Weight training & core stability	REST DAY	Interval (3:1) high intensity	3 mi / 5 km run (low)	12.4 mi / 20 km low intensity	18.4 mi / 30 km + intervals
<b>Week 10</b>	REST DAY	5 mi / 8 km med. Intensity	Weight training & core stability	REST DAY	1,2,3,4 pyramid run	3 mi / 5 km run (low)	13.1 / 21 km Half Marathon low intensity	21.1 mi / 34 km + intervals
<b>Week 11</b> <i>recovery week (reduced)</i>	REST DAY	3 mi / 5 km med. Intensity	REST DAY	REST DAY	Interval (1:2) high intensity	REST DAY	7.5 mi / 12 km low intensity (reduced week)	10.5 mi / 17 km + intervals
<b>Week 12</b>	REST DAY	5 mi / 8 km med. Intensity	Weight training & core stability	REST DAY	Interval (4:1) high intensity	3 mi / 5 km run (low)	15.5 mi / 25 km low intensity	23.5 mi / 38 km + intervals

### Weight training and core stability

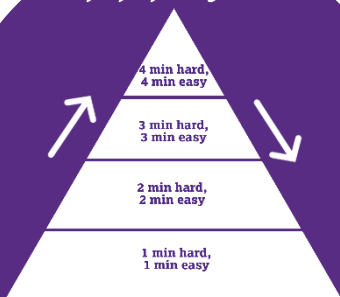
Giving time to work on weight and core training will really compliment your running training and help build muscle as well as help prevent injury. [Check out this article for some exercise ideas.](#)

### Week 13-15

#### Power - increase speed and interval training

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	TOTAL MILEAGE
<b>Week 13</b>	REST DAY	6.1 mi / 10 km med. Intensity	Weight training & core stability	REST DAY	1,2,3,4 pyramid run	REST DAY	18.6 mi / 30 km low intensity	24.7 mi / 40 km + intervals
<b>Week 14</b>	REST DAY	6.1 mi / 10 km med. Intensity	Weight training & core stability	REST DAY	Interval (4:1) high intensity	3 mi / 5 km run (low)	17.4 mi / 28 km low intensity	16.5 mi / 43 km + intervals
<b>Week 15</b> <i>recovery week (reduced)</i>	REST DAY	3 mi / 5 km med. Intensity	REST DAY	REST DAY	Interval (1:2) high intensity	REST DAY	12.4 mi / 20 km low intensity (reduced week)	15.4 mi / 25km + intervals

### 1, 2, 3, 4 Pyramid



1 mile warm up.

Start at the bottom of the pyramid. Work your way up to the top and back down to the bottom.

1 mile cool down.

**Alternative sessions could include:**

**Cross training** - using another form of aerobic experience to support your cardio training.

**Swimming or cycling** - a low-impact alternative to cardio.

**HIIT class** - a great alternative to high impact training.

**Yoga/Pilates** - great for a rest day stretch.

**Be sure to reduce your weight training in your last couple of weeks.**

Week 16								
<b>Peak - longest run week</b>								
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	TOTAL MILEAGE
<b>Week 16</b>	REST DAY	6.1 mi / 10 km med. Intensity	Weight training & core stability	REST DAY	2, 4, 6, 8 pyramid run	REST DAY	21 mi / 34 km low intensity	27.1 mi / 44km + intervals

Week 17-19								
<b>Taper - reducing intensity before race day</b>								
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	TOTAL MILEAGE
<b>Week 17</b>	REST DAY	6.1 mi / 10 km med. Intensity	Weight training & core stability	REST DAY	2, 4, 6, 8 pyramid run	3 mi / 5 km run (low)	12.4 mi / 20 km low intensity	21.5 mi / 35 km + intervals
<b>Week 18</b>	REST DAY	6.1 mi / 10 km med. Intensity	REST DAY	REST DAY	Interval (3:1) high intensity	REST DAY	9.9 mi / 16 km low intensity	16 mi / 26km + intervals
<b>Week 19</b>	REST DAY	3 mi / 5 km med. Intensity	REST DAY	REST DAY	Interval (2:2) high intensity	REST DAY	6 mi / 10 km low intensity	9 mi / 15 km + intervals

**Final week**

Don't stop exercising completely otherwise your legs will feel sluggish and heavy for race day but keep it light.

Race week								
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	TOTAL MILEAGE
<b>Week 20</b>	REST DAY	3 mi / 5 km run (low)	REST DAY / stretch	1.7 mi / 3 km run (low)	REST DAY / stretch	Gentle 20-minute light jog	RACE DAY	Week 20

**Massage**

If you decide to book in a massage before race day, try and schedule it at least 4 days out from race day, to give your legs time to recover.

# A guide to good nutrition

*Proper nutrition is a vital part of your training programme. As a runner your energy requirements can be really high – you will typically burn an extra 100 calories for every mile that you run in training or in a race. So, it's important to eat the correct food, at the correct time and that each component is balanced. These nutrition tips will ensure that you're fuelling your body correctly to get the most out of your training and be ready for race day!*

## **Eat healthily**

Try to eat at least 6 combined portions of fruit and vegetables every day. Supplements? Not essential, but you might consider taking extra vitamin C.

## **Eat carbohydrates and fat**

When you run, the energy required comes from two main sources: Glycogen (stored in the muscles and other parts of the body) and fats (also stored in various parts of the body). Glycogen is produced from carbohydrates. You will use a small amount of carbs and a lot of fat when you run. There is a very limited supply of stored carbs and large stores of fats in the body. In order to utilise fats, you need a small amount of carbs to metabolise fat. If, during running, you use up ALL your carbs, your ability to use fats is severely affected, your energy source, therefore, dries up. This is usually referred to as 'hitting the wall'.

## **Store carbohydrates**

Proper training conditions the body to use more fat, thereby sparing the carbs so that they will last for the whole 26.2 miles. As you improve, you start to use more fat and less carbs. Structured training, as above, will also condition the body to store more carbs.

## **Eat a balanced diet**

A good diet should consist of about 50-60% carbs, 15% protein, 20-30% fat. The carbs should come from a mixture of complex (75%) slow energy release carbs (e.g. bread, potatoes, rice, pasta, cereal, etc) and simple (25%) quick energy release carbs (e.g. sugary drinks, jams, honey, chocolate, etc). It is better to have four or five small meals rather than three larger ones. The body can only store about 50-75g of carbs at a time. Two slices of bread weighing 60g contains about 27g of carbs. Try out different types of carbs during training runs and see which ones work best for you, but don't try anything new on race day or the evening before!

## **Time your meals**

Have a carb rich meal 2-3 hrs before training or racing. This time can be very individual, so determine what is best for you by trial and error. Do NOT take any sugary drinks or food within 60 mins of running as this sets off an 'insulin reaction' which is likely to use more carbs than normal. After you have been running for 30 mins or more, this reaction is suppressed, and you can take in sugary food – e.g. a gel bar. Try this on a training run: drink about 50-100ml of water immediately before you start running. For many people, this helps with preventing de-hydration.



### *Drink plenty of water*

To store 1g of carb the body requires about 4g of water, so drink plenty. Try to drink between meals, rather than during a meal to help with digestion.

### *Gel bars*

Try using gel bars (only after 30 mins of running). They will supplement your energy stores during long runs and races. During shorter runs, let the body get used to using stored energy sources. Always remember to consume one before a water station so that you can wash it down with approximately 250ml of water – this is to ensure the gel dilutes to the correct consistency and can be absorbed quickly.

### *Replace nutrients*

Have a carb rich meal about 30 mins after the end of a training run. This is the time when those hard-worked muscles are most receptive to nutrients. If you don't, it could affect your training the following day.

### *Snack attack*

When you run regularly, as well as your generally higher calorie requirements, you will find that your metabolic engine (the speed at which you burn calories whether you are exercising or not) increases. To avoid energy lows throughout the day, make sure you keep a selection of healthy snacks to hand so you can keep your energy levels topped up.

By avoiding energy lows resulting from low blood sugar, you will have more energy for everyday activities and will keep your muscles and liver primed for your next training session.

### *No alcohol*

If you get this wrong, you are likely to spoil your big day. Two days before the marathon, start taking in some extra carbohydrate and plenty of fluid. Stay off the alcohol and try to eat five to six small meals a day.

### *Marathon day*

Make sure you have the famous carb-load meal the day before race day and if you are too nervous to eat on the morning of your marathon, try to at least have a usual breakfast, even if this is just a couple of slices of toast. Your body will have approx. 2000 calories worth of energy to use on an empty stomach, so as long as you eat at least something, it will give you a head start. Be sure to drink sufficient fluid and don't eat any sugary food within 60 mins of the start. If you have tried your gel bar intake during long training runs start taking them after you have run a minimum of 30 mins. If you haven't tried carb gels or drinks, do not try these on marathon day, they might make you unwell, instead, just ensure you are sipping water to stay hydrated.

***This guide should have given you all the information you need to plan and ensure you achieve your goals. If you have any other questions whatsoever, please don't hesitate to get in touch via [info@supportgsth.org.uk](mailto:info@supportgsth.org.uk) or [info@supportevelina.org.uk](mailto:info@supportevelina.org.uk) – we're happy to help with any advice or tips you need!***

***Best of luck, we know you'll smash it!***

