

Training for your first 5-K

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 mi run	Rest or run/walk	1.5 m run	Rest	2 MI 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

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. Above 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.

The terms used in the training schedule are somewhat obvious, but let me explain what I mean 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.

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. Another option for in-between days is to do some cross-training: biking, swimming or just plain walking. 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. In the training schedule below, we suggest that you go for an hour-long walk on the day after your longest run. 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.

The above schedule is only a guide. Feel free to make minor 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.

How to Improve Your 5-K Times

Week	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
1	Rest	3 m run	5 x 400	3 m run	Rest	3 m run	5 m run
2	Rest	3 m run	30 min tempo	3 m run	Rest	3 m fast	5 m run
3	Rest	3 m run	6 x 400	3 m run	Rest	4 m run	6 m run
4	Rest	3 m run	35 min tempo	3 m run	Rest	Rest	5-K Test
5	Rest	3 m run	7 x 400	3 m run	Rest	4 m fast	6 m run
6	Rest	3 m run	40 min tempo	3 m run	Rest	5 m run	7 m run
7	Rest	3 m run	8 x 400	3 m run	Rest	5 m fast	7 m run
8	Rest	2 m run	30 min tempo	2 m run	Rest	Rest	5-K Race

IF YOU HAVE RUN A NUMBER OF RACES AT THE 5-K DISTANCE, you probably are not going to be content to merely *finish* your 5-K race. You'd like to finish it with grace, in style and maybe improve your time (known as setting a Personal Record, or PR). The above training schedule will take you to PR Territory. This Intermediate Program is one step up from the novice program.

To set a PR, you need to improve your endurance and your speed. You can do this by (1) running more miles, (2) running faster, or (3) some combination of both. In order to achieve full benefit from this program, you probably need to have been running 3-4 days a week for the last year or two and averaging 15-20 miles weekly. It helps if you have an understanding of the concepts of speed work.

Here is the type of training you need to do, if you want to improve your 5-K time:

Run: When the schedule says "run," that suggests that you run at an easy pace. How fast is easy? You need to define your own comfort level. Don't worry about how fast you run; just cover the distance suggested--or approximately the distance. Ideally, you should be able to run at a pace that allows you to converse with a training partner without getting too much out of breath.

Fast: For several of the Saturday runs, I suggest that you run "fast." How fast is "fast?" Again, that depends on your comfort level. Go somewhat faster than you would on a "run" day. If you are doing this workout right, you probably do not want to converse with your training partner, assuming you have one. It's okay now to get out of breath.

Long Runs: Once a week, go for a long run. Run 5 to 7 miles at a comfortable pace, not worrying about speed or distance. You should be able to carry on a conversation while you run; if not, you're going to fast. Don't be afraid to stop to walk, or stop to drink. This should be an enjoyable workout, not one during which you punish yourself.

Interval Training: To improve speed, you sometimes need to train at a pace somewhat faster than your race pace for the 5-K, about the pace you would run in a 1500 meter or mile race. Run 400 meters hard, then recover by jogging and/or walking 400 meters. Before starting this workout, warm-up by jogging a mile or two, stretching, and doing a few sprints of 100 meters. Cool down afterwards with a short jog.

Tempo Runs: This is a continuous run with an easy beginning, a buildup in the middle to near 10-K race pace, then ease back and cruise to the finish. A typical tempo run would begin with 5-10 minutes easy running, continue with 10-15 faster running, and finish with 5-10 minutes cooling down. You can't figure out your pace on a watch doing this workout; you need to listen to your body. Tempo runs are very useful for developing anaerobic threshold, essential for fast 5-K racing.

Rest: You can't train hard unless you are well-rested. The schedule includes two designated days for rest: Mondays and Fridays. The easy 3-mile runs scheduled for Tuesdays and Thursdays are also to help you rest for hard workouts on other days. The final week before the 5-K also is a rest week. Taper your training so you can be ready for a peak performance on the weekend.

Stretch & Strengthen: An important addendum to any training program is stretching. Don't overlook it--particularly on days when you plan to run fast. Strength training is important too: push-ups, pull-ups, use of free weights or working out with various machines at a Health Club. Runners generally benefit if they combine light weights with a high number of repetitions, rather than pumping very heavy iron. Tuesdays and Thursdays would be good days to combine stretching and strengthening with your easy run, however, you can schedule these workouts on any day that is convenient for your business and personal schedule.

Racing: Some racing is useful in helping you to peak. Consider doing some other races at 5-K to 10-K distances to test your fitness. The following schedule includes a test 5-K race halfway through the program. You could race more frequently (once every two weeks), but too much racing is not a good idea.

The schedule above is only a guide. If you want to do long runs on Saturday rather than Sunday, simply flip-flop the days. If you have an important appointment on a day when you have a hard workout planned, do a similar flip-flop with a rest day. Feel free to make minor

modifications to suit your work and family schedule. It's less important what you do in any one workout than what you do over the full eight weeks leading up to your 5-K.

How to Avoid Injuries.

1. **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. Let common sense and a smart training schedule determine how much you should be running.
2. **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. Go to a specialty running shop where you can be properly fitted for running shoes, and replace them every 350-500 miles. If you have a biomechanical problem with your feet, you may also look into getting fitted for heel lifts or orthotics.
3. **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.
4. **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.
5. **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.
6. **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.

5K Training Schedule for Beginners

Week	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
1	Rest	1.5 m run	CT or Rest	1.5 m run	Rest	1.5 m run	20-30 min EZ
2	Rest	1.75 m run	CT or Rest	1.5 m run	Rest	1.75 m run	20-30 min EZ
3	Rest	2 mi run	CT or Rest	1.5 m run	Rest	2 m run	20-30 min EZ
4	Rest	2.25 m run	CT or Rest	1.5 m run	Rest	2.25 m run	25-35 min EZ
5	Rest	2.5 m run	CT or Rest	2 m run	Rest	2.5 m run	25-35 min EZ
6	Rest	2.75 m run	CT	2 m run	Rest	2.75 m run	35-40 min EZ
7	Rest	3 m run	CT	2 m run	Rest	3 m run	40 min EZ
8	Rest	3 m run	CT or Rest	2 m run	Rest	Rest	5K Race!

If you're fairly new to running, here are some tips for your first race day.

1. Pick Up Your Race Packet Early

Pick up your bib, timing chip (if the race is using them) and goody bag the day before the race, if possible. This way, you won't have to worry about rushing to get it on the morning of the race. Also, you're more likely to get your desired race T-shirt size if you pick it up early.

2. 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.

3. Choose Your Pre-Race Food Wisely

Eat a meal at least one hour prior to the start of the race. 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.

4. Pin Your Bib

Your race bib goes on the front of your shirt, not the back. You can use safety pins on all four corners of the bib to keep it in place.

5. 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), check your bag, take a warm-up jog, and use the bathroom (the lines may be long).

6. Line Up Properly

Don't line up near the front of the starting line. Faster, more seasoned runners don't like to weave around newbie (and likely slower) runners at the start of the race. Some races have corrals based on estimated pace or post pace signs. If not, ask runners nearby their anticipated pace. If it's faster than yours, move further back. It will be easier to fall into your pace if you're around people that are the same speed as you.

7. 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!

8. 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.

9. 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.

10. Don't Wear the Race T-Shirt

Lastly, you'll most likely get a race T-shirt when you sign up for the race. Don't wear it until after you've completed the race. Not only are there superstitions associated with wearing it in the race, but it also makes you look like a rookie!

Question: Should I Eat Before a Run?

Answer: When you begin a run, you should feel neither starved nor stuffed. You don't want to eat immediately before running because it may lead to cramping. Running on an empty stomach may cause you to run out of energy. Your best bet is to eat a light snack or meal about 1 1/2 to 2 hours before you start running.

Choose something high in carbohydrates and lower in fat, fiber, and protein. 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. Stay away from rich, very fatty, or high-fiber foods, as they may cause intestinal distress .