RW

BREAK 20 MINUTES · 5K TRAINING PLAN

This eight-week plan is designed for runners who want to finish a 5K in 20 minutes, or an average pace of 6:26 per mile.

The plan features fives days of running per week, including easy runs, tempo runs, intervals, and long runs of 10 to 12 miles. Weekly mileage starts at 30 miles per week and peaks at 40 miles per week a few weeks before the race. You'll find suggested paces for workouts throughout the plan.

8-WEEK

BREAK 20 MINUTES · 5K TRAINING PLAN

	DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3	DAY 4	DAY 5	DAY 6	DAY 7
WEEK 1	Rest or Cross-Train	4 miles Easy Run	6 miles with 3 miles at Tempo	3 miles Easy Run or Cross-Train	6 miles Easy Run	Rest or Cross-Train	10 miles LSD
	DAY 8	DAY 9	DAY 10	DAY 11	DAY 12	DAY 13	DAY 14
WEEK 2	Rest or Cross-Train	4 miles Easy Run	6 miles with 4 miles at Tempo	3-4 miles Easy Run	6 miles Easy Run	Rest or Cross-Train	12 miles LSD
	DAY 15	DAY 16	DAY 17	DAY 18	DAY 19	DAY 20	DAY 21
WEEK 3	Rest or Cross-Train	7 miles Easy Run	7 miles with Intervals	5 miles Easy Run	4 miles Easy Run	Rest or Cross-Train	10 miles LSD
	DAY 22	DAY 23	DAY 24	DAY 25	DAY 26	DAY 27	DAY 28
WEEK 4	Rest or Cross-Train	6 miles Easy Run	7 miles with Intervals	4 miles Easy Run	5 miles Easy Run	Rest or Cross-Train	12 miles LSD
	DAY 29	DAY 30	DAY 31	DAY 32	DAY 33	DAY 34	DAY 35
WEEK 5	Rest or Cross-Train	8 miles Easy Run	Mile Repeats	6 miles Easy Run	6 miles Easy Run	Rest or Cross-Train	10 miles LSD
	DAY 36	DAY 37	DAY 38	DAY 39	DAY 40	DAY 41	DAY 42
WEEK 6	Rest or Cross-Train	8 miles Easy Run	Mile Repeats	6 miles Easy Run	6 miles Easy Run	Rest or Cross-Train	12 miles LSD
	DAY 43	DAY 44	DAY 45	DAY 46	DAY 47	DAY 48	DAY 49
WEEK 7	Rest or Cross-Train	6 miles Easy Run	Half-Mile Repeats	4 miles Easy Run	5 miles Easy Run	Rest	6-8 miles LSD
	DAY 50	DAY 51	DAY 52	DAY 53	DAY 54	DAY 55	DAY 56
WEEK 8	Rest or Cross-Train	3-5 miles Easy Run	5 miles with Intervals	3 miles Easy Run	Rest	2 miles Easy Run	RACE DAY!

THE WORKOUTS

▶ **Rest**

Take the day off! You can use this time to relax on the couch, do some meditation, or incorporate light mobility work or an easy yoga class. These days give your body a chance to recover from the hard work you put in, which allows you to progress, and they get you ready for the next run.

▶ **Cross-Train**

Cross-training can include strength workouts, cycling, swimming, yoga, exercise class, the elliptical trainer, rowing machine, or any physical activity you love that isn't running or walking. These workouts give the muscles you use in walking and running a chance to recover, while strengthening other parts of your body, boosting all-around fitness and preventing injuries. Plus, it helps prevent burnout to keep you running strong and injury-free.

▶ **Easy Run**

These workouts should feel just as they sound: easy. You want to run at an effort that allows you to have a conversation. If you're huffing and puffing, you're going too fast. Try to start them extra slow and light so you can finish strong. These allow you to increase your time on feet and weekly mileage, building endurance while lowering risk of injury. They'll also strengthen your lungs and your legs.

▶ **Tempo**

Tempo runs help train your body to run faster over a longer distance. After a one-mile warmup, run the prescribed miles at your tempo pace (6:53/mile), then cool down with one mile of easy running. Your tempo pace should feel hard but controlled. You won't be able to talk comfortably at your tempo pace, but it should not feel as if you're racing. It's a tough pace to stick out, but you can keep going. On a rate of perceived exertion scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being all-out, tempo hits around 6 or 7.

▶ **LSD: Long Slow Distance**

Long, slow distance runs build your endurance, improve aerobic capacity, develop your strength, and get you accustomed to spending a longer time on your feet. While you'll see prescribed paces, don't stress about hitting that exact speed; focus more on the distance you want to cover for the day. Start at an effort that feels conservative (you should be able to have a conversation), so you have the energy to finish feeling good.

▶ **Intervals**

Intervals get your fast-twitch muscle fibers firing and your legs feeling race ready. After an easy run warmup, you'll run 400 or 800 meter repeats at a fast pace, recovering with a walk or jog between reps. Then cool down with easy running. You'll see prescribed paces for these intervals. Stick to them. These workouts get you used to running faster so you can hit your time goal. Do intervals on a track, flat stretch of road, or a treadmill.

▶ **Mile Repeats / Half-Mile Repeats**

These workouts help build your speed endurance, or your ability to hold a faster pace over a longer distance. You'll run slightly faster than race pace, but practice holding that pace for a mile or 800 meters, depending on the workout. Ideally you'll do this workout on a track, where it's flat and the distance is measured. But it's okay to do it on a flat stretch of road or a treadmill if necessary.

| WEEK 1 | WEEK 2 | WEEK 3 | WEEK 4 | WEEK 5 | WEEK 6 | WEEK 7 | WEEK 8 |

Day 1: Rest or Cross-Train

Welcome to the Runner's World Break 20 Minutes 5K Plan! This eight-week plan is designed to help you cross the finish line of a 5K in 20 minutes.

Today, your training kicks off with a day of rest. Ideally, on rest days you should do no exercise at all. But it's okay to cross-train with a no-impact activity like stretching, yoga, or swimming. This week you'll have one more rest day, three short runs, and a longer run of 10 miles. On Thursday you'll do a tempo run.

Day 2: 4 miles Easy Run

When you head out today, focus on maintaining a comfortable, conversational rhythm. These easy days are meant to strengthen muscles and build endurance, but the key is to keep the effort conservative so you're not worn out for the hard workouts ahead. (Pace: 8:15/mile)

Day 3: 6 miles with 3 miles at Tempo

- 2-mile warmup
- 3 miles at tempo pace (6:53/mile)
- 1-mile cooldown

Day 4: 3 miles Easy Run or Cross-Train

Today is all about an easy effort. You also have the option to cross-train, which should involve a sustained aerobic effort with an activity like cycling or using an elliptical trainer, for the same amount of time you'd spend on the day's mileage. If you plan to incorporate cross-training into your preparation and want to try a new activity, be sure to do it in this early stage of training. (Pace: 8:15/mile)

Day 5: 6 miles Easy Run

You'll take that easy pace farther today, covering 6 miles. (Pace: 8:15/mile)

Day 6: Rest or Cross-Train

Today you have the choice of resting or cross-training. Don't worry about losing your fitness on rest days. Rest builds strength, reduces fatigue, and prevents injuries.

Day 7: 10 miles LSD

Reminder: Don't worry too much about your pace on long runs; just focus on the distance you want to cover for the day. You have 10 miles on the schedule. (Pace: 8:15/mile)

WEEK 1	**WEEK 2**	WEEK 3	WEEK 4	WEEK 5	WEEK 6	WEEK 7	WEEK 8

Day 8:   Rest or Cross-Train

This is week 2 of training! Your training will be nearly identical to last week, with three short runs, a tempo run, and two days of rest. Your long run will increase to 12 miles.

Day 9:   4 miles Easy Run

If you're an early morning runner, prep for your run the night before. And make sure to eat well. (Pace: 8:15/mile)

▶ For what to eat before a run, <u>check out our guide.</u>

Day 10:   6 miles with 4 miles at Tempo

- 1-mile warmup
- 4 miles at tempo pace (6:53/mile)
- 1-mile cooldown

Day 11:   3-4 miles Easy Run

As much as possible, try to incorporate hills into the early stages of your training. Hills build leg and lung power. You won't feel fast going up hills, but you'll feel strong. Pick a variety of short and long hills to keep your mind and muscles engaged. And focus on sustaining an even, steady effort. (Pace: 8:15/mile)

Day 12:   6 miles Easy Run

Keep that conversational pace today for 6 miles. (Pace: 8:15/mile)

Day 13:   Rest or Cross-Train

When you first start training, it's easy to think that more is better. But whenever you run instead of resting, or go harder than you should, you raise your risk of exhaustion, burnout, and injury. Stay focused on your bigger objective of getting to the starting line healthy, and staying energized for your quality workouts.

Day 14:   12 miles LSD

On any run of 75 minutes or less, you'll likely be fine with just water or sports drink. But any time you're running longer, you'll want to refuel while you're on the road. Aim for 30 to 60 grams of carbs per hour. You can get those carbs from sports drinks, energy gels, or other snacks. (Pace: 8:15/mile)

▶ For tips on how to fine-tune your midrun fueling, <u>follow these tips on using gels and more.</u>

| WEEK 1 | WEEK 2 | **WEEK 3** | WEEK 4 | WEEK 5 | WEEK 6 | WEEK 7 | WEEK 8 |

Day 15: Rest or Cross-Train

Welcome to week 3 of training. This week you'll have three short runs and two days of rest. On Sunday your long run will drop to 10 miles. On Wednesday you'll do some interval training. This will help you develop the speed endurance you'll need for the race.

Day 16: 7 miles Easy Run

Keep today easy for 7 miles to improve your endurance and kick up your weekly mileage. (Pace: 8:15/mile)

Day 17: 7 miles with Intervals

- 2-mile warmup
- 8-10 x 400 meters at 1:33 with 200 meters easy run recovery
- 1-mile cooldown

Run 2 miles easy and then (on a track or measured path) run 400 meters (0.25 miles) in 1 minute and 33 seconds (about a 6:15/mile pace), followed by a very easy jog for 200 meters (0.12 miles). Repeat that sequence 7 to 9 more times before you cool down with an easy 1-mile run.

Day 18: 5 miles Easy Run

Good running form can help prevent injuries and make running feel easier, especially on these longer runs. Try to run tall and avoid hunching over. Keep your chin up and look straight ahead. Relax your shoulders, and shake out your arms to stay loose. (Pace: 8:15/mile)

Day 19: 4 miles Easy Run

Be sure to keep some runs in your routine that you do purely just for fun. While certain workouts are important to meet training goals, you must balance those with ones you look forward to, or risk losing the desire to run at all. (Pace: 8:15/mile)

Day 20: Rest or Cross-Train

Check in with how you feel to determine if you should rest or cross-train today. If you're looking for a good cross-training activity, jump in the pool. Swimming builds strength in the upper body and core, which will help you maintain good form during races and hard workouts.

Day 21: 10 miles LSD

Today is a slow and steady 10 miles. Hook up with a buddy or a running club when you're running longer than usual—you'll be surprised how easily the miles roll by when you're in good company. (Pace: 8:15/mile)

| WEEK 1 | WEEK 2 | WEEK 3 | **WEEK 4** | WEEK 5 | WEEK 6 | WEEK 7 | WEEK 8 |

Day 22: Rest or Cross-Train

This is week 4 of training! You'll have three easy runs, and your long run will return to 12 miles. On Wednesday you'll head to the track for intervals.

Day 23: 6 miles Easy Run

Run 6 miles at a conversational pace today. If you feel any aches and pains lingering, take it easy and check your log. You may need to back off a bit. (Pace: 8:15/mile)

Day 24: 7 miles with Intervals

- 2-mile warmup
- 1x400 meters at 1:33 with 200 meters easy run recovery
- 3x800 meters at 3:12 with 400 meters easy run recovery
- 1x400 meters at 1:33 with 200 meters easy run recovery
- 1-mile cooldown

Run 2 miles easy and then (on a track or measured path) run 400 meters (0.25 miles) in 1 minute and 33 seconds (6:15/mile), followed by a very easy jog for 200 meters (0.12 miles). Then run 800 meters (0.5 miles) in 3 minutes and 6 seconds (6:15/mile), followed by a very easy jog for 400 meters (0.25 miles). Do 2 more 800-meter intervals and then one more 400-meter interval before you cool down with an easy 1-mile run.

Day 25: 4 miles Easy Run

If you're feeling energetic on an easy day, you may have a tough time holding back. Resist the temptation to speed up; it's better to save your energy for the hard workouts. To keep your easy runs relaxed, hook up with a friend who runs at a slower pace or take along the dog. You'll be more likely to take it easy and enjoy the run more. (Pace: 8:15/mile)

Day 26: 5 miles Easy Run

Just like yesterday, keep the pace easy today, but up it to 5 miles. (Pace: 8:15/mile)

Day 27: Rest or Cross-Train

Check in with your body to determine if you need a rest day today. Otherwise, turn to your favorite cross-training activity.

Day 28: 12 miles LSD

If you need to recharge your training, map out a new route. Trying new courses will introduce your body to different elevations and can liven up your staid routine. Then head out for 12 easy miles today. (Pace: 8:15/mile)

▶ To find new routes near you, <u>check out our list of the best apps.</u>

| WEEK 1 | WEEK 2 | WEEK 3 | WEEK 4 | **WEEK 5** | WEEK 6 | WEEK 7 | WEEK 8 |

Day 29: Rest or Cross-Train

This is week 5 of training! This week you'll up the intensity of your runs. You'll have three easy but longer runs, and your long run will be 10 miles. On Wednesday you'll have mile repeats.

What you do when you're off the road has a big effect on your running, especially during weeks like these, when you're pushing your body farther and faster than it has gone before. Get plenty of sleep—eight hours is ideal—take the rest days on the schedule, and be sure to fuel up with at least 100 to 200 calories before your run. Stay hydrated, too.

Day 30: 8 miles Easy Run

Run easy today for 8 miles. Try running on a variety of surfaces, like soft trails, not just concrete. Varying the surfaces will help you prevent injuries by giving certain muscles and joints a rest while strengthening other muscles and joints. (Pace: 8:15/mile)

Day 31: Mile Repeats

- 1-mile warmup
- 4 x 1 mile at 6:25/mile with 800-meter recovery
- 1-mile cooldown

Start with 1 mile of easy running to warm up. Then run 1 mile in 6 minutes and 25 seconds. Recover for 800 meters (0.5 miles). Repeat 3 more times. Then cool down with another easy mile.

Day 32: 6 miles Easy Run

Don't avoid the hills—run for them. Running hills develops efficiency, endurance, and power. As you approach an incline, shorten your stride while maintaining the same cadence. Small, quick steps will help reduce the effort. Just make sure you keep the overall effort easy today for 6 miles. (Pace: 8:15/mile)

Day 33: 6 miles Easy Run

Like yesterday, make today light on effort with 6 easy miles. (Pace: 8:15/mile)

Day 34: Rest or Cross-Train

Don't underestimate the impact that the stress of work, deadlines, chores, bills, kids, and lack of sleep can have on your runs. All those factors can impact how much energy you bring to your training. Consider that when determining if you need to rest or cross-train today.

Day 35: 10 miles LSD

You have 10 easy miles for your long run today. If at all possible, do some of your training on the race course. Previewing the hills, turns, and narrow spaces will help you feel more confident and relaxed going into your big goal event. If you're not able to run on the course, look at the course map and elevation chart, which should be posted on the event website. Try to do some runs that simulate the same pattern of elevation change that you'll face in the race. (Pace: 8:15/mile)

Day 36: Rest or Cross-Train

Welcome to week 6 of training! This week you'll have three easy runs and head back to the track for mile repeats. Your long run will be 12 miles.

Day 37: 8 miles Easy Run

Like last week, you have 8 easy miles today. Always run facing traffic, so you can see cars approaching. When crossing an intersection, make sure you establish eye contact with the driver before proceeding. If it's dark out, wear reflective clothing, a headlamp, and/or carry a flashlight. (Pace: 8:15/mile)

Day 38: Mile Repeats

- 1-mile warmup
- 4 x 1 mile at 6:20 with 800-meter recovery
- 1-mile cooldown

Today you'll do the same speed session as last week, but faster. Start with 1 mile of easy running to warm up. Then run 1 mile in 6 minutes and 20 seconds. Recover for 800 meters (0.5 miles). Repeat 3 more times. Then cool down with another easy mile.

Day 39: 6 miles Easy Run

You're back to an easy effort today for 6 miles. (Pace: 8:15/mile)

Day 40: 6 miles Easy Run

Keep today slow with another 6 miles. (Pace: 8:15/mile)

Day 41: Rest or Cross-Train

Take the day off if you need more time to recover, or turn to your favorite cross-training activity.

Day 42: 12 miles LSD

When you're tired, especially on long runs, the natural tendency is to tighten up in the arms and hunch up the shoulders. When you notice this, drop your arms to your sides and gently shake them out as you exhale. This can help you maintain the easy effort you're chasing today for 12 miles. (Pace: 8:15/mile)

Day 43:   Rest or Cross-Train

This is week 7 of training. You'll have three shorter runs and your long run will relax to between 6 and 8 miles. On Wednesday you'll head to the track for 800s a.k.a. half-mile repeats.

Day 44:   6 miles Easy Run

It's easy to mindlessly run the same routes, at the same speed, every day. Before long, you can get stuck in a training rut and become unmotivated. Mix things up by changing your running routes regularly, even if it's just running the same route in the opposite direction. (Pace: 8:15/mile)

▶ For ideas on how to switch up your runs, underline out our guide.

Day 45:   Half-Mile Repeats

- 2-mile warmup
- 4 x 800 meters at 3:06 with 400-meter recovery
- 2-mile cooldown

Run 2 miles at an easy effort to warm up. Then run 800 meters (0.5 miles) in 3 minutes and 6 seconds (6:15/mile pace). Recover for 400 meters (0.25 miles). Repeat 3 more times. Then cool down with another easy mile.

Day 46:   4 miles Easy Run

Make today truly easy to recover from your speedwork yesterday. (Pace: 8:15/mile)

Day 47:   5 miles Easy Run

Run 5 miles at an easy effort today. Now is a good time to make sure you're all set with gear for the race, too. (Pace: 8:15/mile)

Day 48:   Rest

Take the day off!

Day 49:   6-8 miles LSD

Today is your last long run before race day. Use it as a dress rehearsal. Try out the gear and shoes you plan to wear for the race. Practice mantras and mental strategies to stay focused and calm even when you start to feel fatigue. Visualize yourself giving the event all that you have, and finishing feeling strong. (Pace: 8:15/mile)

WEEK 1	WEEK 2	WEEK 3	WEEK 4	WEEK 5	WEEK 6	WEEK 7	**WEEK 8**

Day 50: Rest

This is the final week of training. Your race is this weekend! Your hard-core training may be done, but there's still plenty you can do to increase your chances of being your best on race day. Be sure to get plenty of sleep, and iron out all your race-day logistics as soon as possible, so you can enjoy your big weekend.

You'll have three short runs and two days of rest this week. You'll have a short session of intervals to get the fast-twitch muscle fibers firing, and your legs feeling race ready. Resist the temptation to run farther or faster this week. Save your energy for the race.

Day 51: 3-5 miles Easy Run

You've put in all the hard work of training, but have you made a goal for the race? To avoid getting too attached to a number on the clock, pick three goals: one you're confident you can accomplish, one you think you'll probably reach, and a best-possible finishing time that may be a stretch. Having multiple goals will ensure that you walk away from the finish line with a sense of accomplishment. (Pace: 8:15/mile)

Day 52: 4-5 miles with Intervals

- 1-mile warmup
- 6 x 400 meters at 1:33 with 200 meters easy run recovery
- 1-mile cooldown

Run 1 mile at an easy effort to warm up. Then run 400 meters (0.25 miles) in 1 minute and 33 seconds (6:15/mile pace). Recover for 200 meters (0.12 miles). Repeat 5 more times. Cool down with another easy mile.

Day 53: 3 miles Easy Run

Keep the effort easy today; don't push it! (Pace: 8:15/mile) You're close enough to race day to start checking the weather forecast and thinking about what to wear.

▶ If you need guidance, <u>check out our What to Wear tool</u>.

Day 54: Rest or Cross-Train

You may be nervous that you've rested too much, but relax—you've done enough. Just rest up for Sunday's race.

Day 55: 2 miles Easy Run

You have a 2-mile easy shakeout today! It's a good time to double-check all your race-day logistics. Do you know when you'll get your bib number? When you need to get to the starting line and where you're going to park? These may seem like little details, but if you leave them up in the air, they can cause a lot of unneeded stress just before the race, when you feel least equipped to handle it. (Pace: 8:15/mile)

Day 56: Race Day

It's race day. Good luck! It's best to start at the back and run more slowly than you think you should in the first few hundred meters and then ramp up to your 6:26-per-mile race pace. The biggest mistake runners make is going out too fast. Stop at aid stations as you need to. After you cross the finish line, walk to reduce soreness and stiffness in the days ahead.

And congratulations! The race lasts only a few minutes, but the pride of knowing you've completed the training and the race endures for much longer.

▶ After you've recovered, consider training with Runner's World again. <u>Check out the other plans we've designed for 5Ks, 10Ks, half marathons, and marathons.</u>