

Start Running: A 4-Week Beginners Guide

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Fitness

Are you ready to get running but don't know how to get started? Use these running tips and training guide to start working toward your goals today.

Put a spring in your step and start training for a local race. Signing up for a race is a great way to get a jump start on a new fitness routine. Having a purpose and a deadline is ideal for keeping you accountable, motivated and dedicated to your overall health and fitness goals. In case you don't know how to get started with a training program, I've put together a simple 4-week plan for you to use.

Preparation

Before you start training, there are a few things you need to do to prepare. This way the only thing you have to think about each day is your running routine. Being prepared in advance will help you on those days when you have a busy schedule.

Flex your think muscle

The first step is not a running step, it's a mental one. Make a mental commitment to get started. If you've failed to stick with a plan in the past, put it behind you— today is a new day to get started with an "I can do it" attitude.

Find a training buddy

It's much easier to complete a training program when you have a partner who's going for it with you. Recruit an eager friend or family member so you can start the program together.

Find a race to set a date

Having a time-specific goal that you're working towards is incredibly helpful. It'll help to keep you on track with your fitness goals, and you'll know exactly how much time you have to get yourself prepared.

If the shoe fits...

Running in poorly fitting shoes will interfere with your progress and your success. And running with sore feet and blisters can really set you back. Make sure that you have a lightweight shoe that offers you both the comfort and support that you need.

Wear the right clothing

Invest in a few tops that have wicking and quick-drying properties. And make sure you have a visor or hat to keep the sun off your face. If the weather is cold, start by wearing a few layers which you can remove and tie around your waist as you go.

Go with a full tank

Once you start running for more than an hour, it's important to have easy access to fuel and hydration. A handheld water bottle or a running belt that holds your bottle is a great accessory to have.

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Be flexible and focused

In order to progress with your running fitness, you need to find time to run. But don't be too strict with your training and stress yourself out. Instead, have a flexible attitude, try your best to stick with your plan, move around the days and timing to suit what's happening in your life. And, finally, listen to your body. Tuning in to how your body feels each day, and adjusting your training accordingly, is an important part of the training process.

4-Week Training Program

Run on 3 days of the week—all steady pace runs.

Cross-train (x) on 2 days of the week.

Rest on 2 days of the week.

	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
Week 1	Rest	1 mi.	X	1 mi.	Rest	1.5 mi.	X
Week 2	Rest	1.5 mi.	X	2 mi.	Rest	2 mi.	X
Week 3	2.5 mi.	Rest	2.5 mi.	X	3 mi.	Rest	X
Week 4	3 mi.	X	3.5 mi.	Rest	X	3.5 mi.	Rest

Options for x (cross-training)

Work out 30-45 minutes doing any of the following:

Riding a bike, swimming, Pilates, yoga, boxing, dancing, low impact aerobics or any activity you enjoy. Rest days don't mean sitting on a couch all day. You can enjoy being generally active, but be sure that you rest from running to allow your body time to regenerate and recover.

If you're new to being active, you can simply start by doing the three running/walking days and slowly add in cross-training when you feel ready. If you prefer to use time as your guide, go with 10 minutes as the average time it takes to run one mile.

After Week 4 of this program, running a 5k race should be an achievable goal. If you want to run a 10k race, continue working with this chart to increase your running distance each week by a half-mile. This progression is nice and slow, which will give you time to adjust and get used to running longer distances.