

SUB 4:00 HOUR MARATHON PLAN

The Sub 4-Hour Marathon training plan is designed for runners aiming to complete the 42.195 kilometers in under 4 hours. This program is structured to improve your endurance, speed, and mental strength, enabling you to finish the marathon at an average pace of around 5:40 minutes per kilometer. The plan combines long runs, tempo sessions, interval training, and recovery phases to gradually prepare you for this goal.

Goal and Strategy

To run a marathon in under 4 hours, systematic preparation is essential. In addition to improving your physical fitness, mental strength plays a crucial role. The long runs are designed to build your endurance and help you adapt to the demands of a marathon, while the tempo and interval sessions work to enhance your speed and efficiency.

The 12-week plan assumes that you are already running regularly and can comfortably complete a 10-kilometer run without significant difficulty.

Weeks 1-4: Base Training and Endurance Building

Goal: This phase focuses on building a solid endurance foundation and getting accustomed to longer runs. Speed is not the primary focus at this stage—what's more important is getting your body used to the increasing demands.

Exercise	Details	Breaks / Cool Down	Execution Tips
Week 1			
Monday			
Interval training + core training	1 km run-in, 6x400 meters at 10 km pace (90 seconds rest), 1 km run-out	Cool down and stretching	Run the intervals at 10 km pace. Make sure you have a consistent speed.
Planks	3x45 second planks		Keep your core stable and pull your belly button in.
Russian Twists	3x30 per page		Control trunk rotation and ensure stable posture.
Tuesday			

Easy running + mobility	8 km easy run (6:00-6:30 min/km)	Mobility: 20 minutes of stretching (hips, calves, thighs)	Run at a relaxed pace, paying attention to deep breathing.
Wednesday			
Tempo running + core training	5 km at marathon pace (5:40 min/km)	Cool Down: 10 minutes of easy running	Run with even breathing, pay attention to fluid movements.
Side planks	3x45 seconds per side		Keep your body stable and your hips level.
Bicycle crunches	3x20 per page		Carry out the movement slowly and in a controlled manner.
Thursday			
Cross training + mobility	30 minutes of easy cycling or swimming	Mobility: 15 minutes of yoga	Keep the intensity low to loosen the muscles.
Friday			
Long run	14 km easy run (6:15-6:30 min/km)	Cool Down: Stretching and foam rolling for the legs	Run at an easy pace, focus on endurance.
Saturday			
Recovery run + mobility	6 km slow run (6:30-6:45 min/km)	Mobility: 15 minutes of stretching and foam rolling	Run slowly to loosen your legs and maintain a relaxed posture.
Sunday			
Rest day			Use the day to fully recover.
Week 2			
Monday			
Interval training + core training	1 km run-in, 5x800 meters at 10 km pace (90 seconds rest), 1 km run-out	Cool down and stretching	Run the intervals at 10 km pace. Make sure you have a consistent speed.

Planks with leg raises	3x45 second planks		Keep your core stable, pull your belly button in, and perform slow leg movements.
Mountain Climbers	3x20 per page		Execute the movement dynamically but controlled.
Tuesday			
Easy running + mobility	9 km easy run (6:00-6:30 min/km)	Mobility: 20 minutes of stretching and joint mobilization (hips, thighs)	Run at a relaxed pace, focusing on even breathing.
Wednesday			
Tempo running + core training	6 km at marathon pace (5:40 min/km)	Cool Down: 10 minutes of easy running	Run evenly and keep your shoulders relaxed.
Side planks with rotation	3x30 seconds per side		Keep your body stable and perform slow, controlled rotations.
Russian Twists	3x20 per page		Maintain stable trunk rotation.
Thursday			
Cross training + mobility	30 minutes of swimming or light cycling	Mobility: 15 minutes of yoga for flexibility and mobility	Keep the intensity low to loosen the muscles.
Friday			
Long run	16 km easy run (6:15-6:30 min/km)	Cool Down: Stretching and foam rolling for the legs	Run at an easy pace, focus on endurance.
Saturday			
Recovery run + mobility	7 km slow run (6:30-6:45 min/km)	Mobility: 15 minutes of stretching and foam rolling	Run slowly to loosen your legs and maintain a relaxed posture.
Sunday			

Rest day			Use the day to fully recover.
Week 3			
Monday			
Interval training + core training	1 km run-in, 6x400 meters at 5 km pace (90 seconds rest), 1 km run-out	Cool down and stretching	Run the intervals at 5 km pace, paying attention to clean running technique.
Planks	3x45 second planks		Keep your core stable and pull your belly button in.
Leg raises	3x20		Carry out the movement slowly, making sure your legs are controlled.
Tuesday			
Easy running + mobility	10 km easy run (6:00-6:30 min/km)	Mobility: 20 minutes stretching (hips, calves, thighs)	Run relaxed and concentrate on your breathing.
Wednesday			
Tempo running + core training	7 km at marathon pace (5:40 min/km)	Cool Down: 10 minutes of easy running	Run with even breathing and keep your upper body in a relaxed position.
Side planks	3x45 seconds per side		Keep your body stable and your hips level.
Bicycle crunches	3x20 per page		Carry out the movement slowly and in a controlled manner.
Thursday			
Cross training + mobility	30 minutes of easy swimming or cycling	Mobility: 15 minutes of yoga for flexibility	When cross-training, make sure your movements are consistent and stretch thoroughly.
Friday			
Long run	18 km easy run (6:15-6:30 min/km)	Cool Down: Stretching and foam rolling for the legs	Run relaxed and pay attention to your endurance performance.

Saturday			
Recovery run + mobility	8 km slow run (6:30-6:45 min/km)	Mobility: 15 minutes of stretching and foam rolling	Run slowly to loosen your legs and focus on a relaxed posture.
Sunday			
Rest day			Use the day to fully recover.
Week 4			
Monday			
Interval training + core training	1 km run-in, 6x400 meters at 5 km pace (90 seconds rest), 1 km run-out	Cool down and stretching	Run the intervals at 5 km pace, paying attention to clean technique and a steady pace.
Planks with leg raises	3x45 second planks		Keep your core stable as you lift your legs in a controlled manner.
Mountain Climbers	3x20 per page		Perform the movement in a controlled and dynamic manner without lifting your hips.
Tuesday			
Easy running + mobility	8 km easy run (6:00-6:30 min/km)	Mobility: 20 minutes of stretching and joint mobilization (focus on hips and legs)	Run at a relaxed pace, paying attention to your breathing.
Wednesday			
Tempo running + core training	7 km at marathon pace (5:40 min/km)	Cool Down: 10 minutes of easy running	Run evenly and keep your posture relaxed.
Side planks	3x30 seconds per side		Keep your body stable and your hips level.
Russian Twists	3x20 per page		Control trunk rotation and maintain a stable posture.
Thursday			

Cross training + mobility	30 minutes of easy swimming or cycling	Mobility: 15 minutes of yoga for flexibility	When cross-training, make sure your movements are consistent and stretch thoroughly.
Friday			
Long run	20 km easy run (6:15-6:30 min/km)	Cool Down: Stretching and foam rolling for the legs	Run at a relaxed pace, focus on endurance performance.
Saturday			
Recovery run + mobility	8 km slow run (6:30-6:45 min/km)	Mobility: 15 minutes of stretching and foam rolling	Run slowly to loosen your legs and focus on a relaxed posture.
Sunday			
Rest day			Use the day to fully recover.

Weeks 5-8: Performance Enhancement with Strength, Core, and Mobility Training

During weeks 5 to 8, we increase the intensity of training to further improve your speed, endurance, and strength. Core and strength training will be more specifically targeted to support your marathon performance, while mobility exercises will help maintain flexibility and prevent injuries.

Week 5			
Monday			
Interval training + core training	1 km run-in, 5x1000 meters at 10 km pace (2 minute break), 1 km run-out	Cool down and stretching	Run the intervals at 10 km pace, paying attention to even breathing and speed.
Planks	3x45 second planks		Keep your core stable and pull your belly button in.
Leg raises	3x20		Carry out the movement slowly and control the movement of the legs.

Tuesday			
Easy running + mobility	9 km easy run (6:00-6:30 min/km)	Mobility: 20 minutes of stretching (hips, calves, thighs)	Run relaxed, concentrate on even breathing.
Wednesday			
Tempo running + core training	6 km at marathon pace (5:40 min/km)	Cool Down: 10 minutes of easy running	Run with even breathing and keep your posture relaxed.
Side planks with leg raises	3x30 seconds per side		Keep your body stable as you slowly lift your legs.
Russian Twists	3x20		Control trunk rotation and ensure stable posture.
Thursday			
Strength training + mobility	3x10 squats, 3x8 deadlifts, 3x12 lunges per leg	Mobility: 15 minutes of yoga or foam rolling	Perform the exercises with clean technique, paying attention to slow, controlled movements.
Friday			
Long run	18 km easy run (6:15-6:30 min/km)	Cool Down: Stretching and foam rolling for the legs	Run at an easy pace, focusing on endurance and steady breathing.
Saturday			
Recovery run + mobility	8 km slow run (6:30-6:45 min/km)	Mobility: 20 minutes of stretching and light yoga exercises	Run slowly to loosen your legs and maintain a relaxed posture.
Sunday			
Rest day			Use the day to fully recover.
Week 6			
Monday			
Interval training + core training	1 km run-in, 6x800 meters at 5 km pace (90 second rest), 1 km run-out	Cool down and stretching	Run the intervals at 5 km pace, paying attention to even breathing and speed.

Planks with rotation	3x45 seconds		Keep your torso stable and perform slow rotations.
Bicycle crunches	3x20 per page		Control the movement and do it slowly.
Tuesday			
Easy running + mobility	10 km easy run (6:00-6:30 min/km)	Mobility: 20 minutes stretching (hips and legs)	Run relaxed, concentrate on calm and even breathing.
Wednesday			
Tempo running + core training	7 km at marathon pace (5:40 min/km)	Cool Down: 10 minutes of easy running	Run evenly and keep your posture relaxed.
Side planks with leg raises	3x30 seconds per side		Keep your body stable and move your legs in a controlled manner.
Leg raises	3x20		Control the position of your legs and carry out the movement slowly.
Thursday			
Strength training + mobility	3x8 squats, 3x10 deadlifts, 3x12 Bulgarian split squats	Mobility: 15 minutes of yoga or stretching	When doing the exercises, pay attention to clean technique and perform each repetition slowly and in a controlled manner.
Friday			
Long run	20 km easy run (6:15-6:30 min/km)	Cool Down: Stretching and foam rolling for the legs	Run relaxed and focus on even breathing.
Saturday			
Recovery run + mobility	9 km slow run (6:30-6:45 min/km)	Mobility: 20 minutes of stretching and foam rolling	Run slowly to loosen your legs and focus on a relaxed posture.
Sunday			
Rest day			Use the day to fully recover.

Week 7			
Monday			
Interval training + core training	1 km run-in, 5x1200 meters at 10 km pace (2 minute break), 1 km run-out	Cool down and stretching	Run the intervals at 10 km pace, paying attention to even breathing and speed.
Planks	3x45 second planks		Keep your core stable and pull your belly button in.
Bicycle crunches	3x20		Execute the movement in a controlled manner, paying attention to the rotation of the hips.
Tuesday			
Easy running + mobility	10 km easy run (6:00-6:30 min/km)	Mobility: 20 minutes stretching (hips and legs)	Run relaxed, concentrate on calm and even breathing.
Wednesday			
Tempo running + core training	7 km at marathon pace (5:40 min/km)	Cool Down: 10 minutes of easy running	Run evenly and keep your posture relaxed.
Side planks	3x30 seconds per side		Keep your body stable and ensure consistent rotation.
Russian Twists	3x20		Perform the movement slowly, ensuring stable trunk rotation.
Thursday			
Strength training + mobility	3x10 squats, 3x8 deadlifts, 3x12 Bulgarian split squats	Mobility: 15 minutes of yoga or stretching	When doing the exercises, pay attention to clean technique and perform each repetition slowly and in a controlled manner.
Friday			
Long run	22 km easy run (6:15-6:30 min/km)	Cool Down: Stretching and foam rolling for the legs	Run relaxed and focus on even breathing.
Saturday			

Recovery run + mobility	9 km slow run (6:30-6:45 min/km)	Mobility: 20 minutes of stretching and foam rolling	Run slowly to loosen your legs and focus on a relaxed posture.
Sunday			
Rest day			Use the day to fully recover.
Week 8			
Monday			
Interval training + core training	1 km run-in, 5x1000 meters at 5 km pace (2 minute break), 1 km run-out	Cool down and stretching	Run the intervals at 5 km pace, paying attention to even breathing and speed.
Planks with rotation	3x45 seconds		Keep your torso stable and perform slow rotations.
Mountain Climbers	3x20 per page		Control the movement, keeping your torso stable and your hips at the same height.
Tuesday			
Easy running + mobility	10 km easy run (6:00-6:30 min/km)	Mobility: 20 minutes of stretching (hips, calves, thighs)	Run relaxed, concentrate on calm and even breathing.
Wednesday			
Tempo running + core training	8 km at marathon pace (5:40 min/km)	Cool Down: 10 minutes of easy running	Run evenly and keep your posture relaxed.
Side planks with leg raises	3x30 seconds per side		Keep your body stable, pay attention to slow leg movements.
Russian Twists	3x20		Control trunk rotation and maintain a stable posture.
Thursday			
Strength training + mobility	3x10 squats, 3x8 deadlifts, 3x12 Bulgarian split squats	Mobility: 15 minutes of yoga or stretching	When doing the exercises, pay attention to clean technique and perform each repetition slowly and in a controlled manner.

Friday			
Long run	24 km easy run (6:15-6:30 min/km)	Cool Down: Stretching and foam rolling for the legs	Run relaxed and focus on even breathing.
Saturday			
Recovery run + mobility	10 km slow run (6:30-6:45 min/km)	Mobility: 20 minutes of stretching and foam rolling	Run slowly to loosen your legs and focus on a relaxed posture.
Sunday			
Rest day			Use the day to fully recover.

Weeks 5-8: Summary

During these weeks, you continue to develop both your endurance and strength as well as your mobility. Core and mobility training ensure you remain stable and help prevent injuries.

Weeks 9-12: Race Preparation and Tapering

In the final four weeks of the marathon training plan, the focus is on solidifying your hard work and preparing your body optimally for race day. The emphasis is on fine-tuning your form and reducing training intensity, ensuring you arrive at the start line fresh and recovered. Mobility and core exercises remain an essential part of the plan to keep you flexible and stable, while strength training is gradually reduced.

Week 9			
Monday			
Interval training + core training	1 km run-in, 4x1200 meters at 10 km pace (2 minute break), 1 km run-out	Cool down and stretching	Run the intervals at 10 km pace, paying attention to even breathing and speed.
Planks	3x45 second planks		Keep your core stable and pull your belly button in.

Leg raises	3x20		Control the position of your legs and ensure slow, even movement.
Tuesday			
Easy running + mobility	10 km easy run (6:00-6:30 min/km)	Mobility: 20 minutes of stretching (hips, calves, thighs)	Run relaxed, concentrate on calm and even breathing.
Wednesday			
Tempo running + core training	8 km at marathon pace (5:40 min/km)	Cool Down: 10 minutes of easy running	Run evenly and keep your posture relaxed.
Side planks with rotation	3x30 seconds per side		Keep the body stable, pay attention to slow rotations.
Bicycle crunches	3x20 per page		Perform the movement slowly and in a controlled manner without gaining momentum.
Thursday			
Strength training + mobility	3x10 squats, 3x8 deadlifts, 3x12 Bulgarian split squats	Mobility: 15 minutes of yoga or foam rolling	Perform the exercises with clean technique, paying attention to slow, controlled movements.
Friday			
Long run	26 km easy run (6:15-6:30 min/km)	Cool Down: Stretching and foam rolling for the legs	Run relaxed, focus on your endurance performance and even breathing.
Saturday			
Recovery run + mobility	10 km slow run (6:30-6:45 min/km)	Mobility: 20 minutes of stretching and light yoga exercises	Run slowly to loosen your legs and focus on a relaxed posture.
Sunday			
Rest day			Use the day to fully recover.
Week 10			
Monday			

Interval training + core training	1 km run-in, 4x1000 meters at 5 km pace (2 minute break), 1 km run-out	Cool down and stretching	Run the intervals at 5 km pace, paying attention to even breathing and speed.
Planks with rotation	3x45 seconds		Keep your torso stable and perform slow rotations.
Russian Twists	3x20 per page		Control trunk rotation and maintain a stable posture.
Tuesday			
Easy running + mobility	10 km easy run (6:00-6:30 min/km)	Mobility: 20 minutes of stretching (hips, calves, thighs)	Run relaxed, concentrate on calm and even breathing.
Wednesday			
Tempo running + core training	8 km at marathon pace (5:40 min/km)	Cool Down: 10 minutes of easy running	Run evenly and keep your posture relaxed.
Side planks with leg raises	3x30 seconds per side		Keep your body stable, pay attention to slow leg movements.
Bicycle crunches	3x20 per page		Perform the movement slowly and in a controlled manner without gaining momentum.
Thursday			
Strength training + mobility	3x10 squats, 3x8 deadlifts, 3x12 Bulgarian split squats	Mobility: 15 minutes of yoga or stretching	Perform the exercises with clean technique, paying attention to slow, controlled movements.
Friday			
Long run	28 km easy run (6:15-6:30 min/km)	Cool Down: Stretching and foam rolling for the legs	Run relaxed, focus on your endurance performance and even breathing.
Saturday			
Recovery run + mobility	10 km slow run (6:30-6:45 min/km)	Mobility: 20 minutes of stretching and foam rolling	Run slowly to loosen your legs and focus on a relaxed posture.
Sunday			

Rest day			Use the day to fully recover.
Week 11			
Monday			
Interval training + core training	1 km run-in, 3x1000 meters at 10 km pace (2 minute break), 1 km run-out	Cool down and stretching	Run the intervals at 10 km pace, paying attention to even breathing and speed.
Planks	3x45 second planks		Keep your core stable and pull your belly button in.
Leg raises	3x20		Control the position of your legs and ensure slow, even movement.
Tuesday			
Easy running + mobility	10 km easy run (6:00-6:30 min/km)	Mobility: 20 minutes of stretching (hips, calves, thighs)	Run relaxed, concentrate on calm and even breathing.
Wednesday			
Tempo running + core training	7 km at marathon pace (5:40 min/km)	Cool Down: 10 minutes of easy running	Run evenly and keep your posture relaxed.
Side planks with rotation	3x30 seconds per side		Keep the body stable, pay attention to slow rotations.
Bicycle crunches	3x20 per page		Perform the movement slowly and in a controlled manner without gaining momentum.
Thursday			
Light strength training + mobility	2x8 squats, 2x8 deadlifts	Mobility: 15 minutes of light stretching or yoga	Pay attention to clean technique, perform the exercises with moderate weight and controlled movement.
Friday			
Long run	20 km easy run (6:15-6:30 min/km)	Cool Down: Stretching and foam rolling for the legs	Run relaxed, focus on your endurance performance and even breathing.

Saturday			
Recovery run + mobility	8 km slow run (6:30-6:45 min/km)	Mobility: 20 minutes of stretching and foam rolling	Run slowly to loosen your legs and focus on a relaxed posture.
Sunday			
Rest day			Use the day to fully recover.

Week 12: Tapering and Race Preparation

The final week is dedicated to the tapering phase, ensuring that you are rested and in peak form for race day. You will further reduce the volume of training to allow your body to fully recover while maintaining your fitness.

Week 12			
Monday			
Light interval training + core training	1 km run-in, 3x800 meters at a moderate pace (approx. 10 km pace), 2 minutes break, 1 km run-out	Cool down and stretching	Run the intervals at a moderate pace so as not to put too much strain on the body.
Planks	3x45 second planks		Keep your torso stable and ensure correct execution.
Bicycle crunches	3x20 per page		Control trunk rotation, perform the movement slowly and cleanly.
Tuesday			
Easy running + mobility	8 km easy run (6:00-6:30 min/km)	Mobility: 20 minutes of stretching (focus on relaxation and loosening)	Run relaxed, focus on breathing and maintaining an even posture.
Wednesday			

Tempo running + core training	5 km at marathon pace (5:40 min/km)	Cool Down: 10 minutes of easy running	Run evenly and keep your posture relaxed.
Side planks	2x30 seconds per side		Keep your body stable and make sure you move slowly.
Russian Twists	2x15 per page		Control the movement and do it slowly without rocking.
Thursday			
Light mobility training	20 minutes of light stretching or yoga		Focus on relaxing, gentle movements to loosen the muscles.
Friday			
Activation unit	5 km easy run (6:00-6:30 min/km)	Cool Down: 15 minutes of light stretching and loose movement exercises	Run in a relaxed manner to keep your body moving gently without putting any strain on it.
Saturday			
Rest day			Focus on relaxation, good carb loading and hydration.
Sunday			
Race day – marathon!	Do your best and put all your hard work into action		Start calmly and find your rhythm, stick to your racing tactics.

Summary

The final four weeks focus on solidifying your hard work and preparing your body optimally for the marathon. The tapering phase allows you to fully recover and ensures that you are in peak form on race day. Mobility and core exercises remain important until the end to maintain flexibility, stability, and good running economy.