



DEAN KARNAZES

Marathon Training Program: 26 weeks



Finishing your first marathon is a life-changing moment. In doing so, you prove something to yourself that can never be taken away. You walk away with hard evidence that you are strong, resilient, and gutsy. It's one thing to suppose you have what it takes to run a marathon, but it's quite another to know it, because you've done it. First marathons are immensely challenging, even for the most naturally gifted runners. Any time you are able to take on and overcome that sort of challenge, you come away with benefits—in the form of confidence, self-respect, and fearlessness—that never fade.

Even if the process of training for a marathon were not extremely health-promoting, I would still encourage everyone to run at least one marathon because of its powerful effects on the mind and spirit. After all, don't we spend enough of our lives doubting ourselves, thinking we're not good enough, not strong enough, not made of the right stuff? The marathon gives you an opportunity to tackle these doubts head-on. It has a way of deconstructing your very essence, of stripping away all your protective barriers and exposing your inner soul. The marathon tells you it will hurt you, that it will leave you demoralized and defeated in a lifeless heap on the roadside. It says it can't be done—not by you. "Ha!" it torments you. "In your dreams!"

So you train hard. You dedicate yourself wholeheartedly, you sacrifice, and you overcome countless smaller challenges along the way. You pour everything you've got into it. But you know the marathon will ask for even more. In the dark recesses of your mind, a gloomy voice is saying, "You can't". You do your best to ignore this self-doubt, but the voice doesn't go away.

On the morning of your first marathon the voice of doubt multiplies, becoming a full chorus. By mile 20 this chorus is screaming so loudly, it's all you can hear. Your sore and weary muscles beg you to stop. You must stop. But you don't stop. This time, you ignore the voice of doubt, you tune out the naysayers who tell you you're not good enough, and you listen only to the passion in your heart. This burning desire tells you to keep moving forward, to continue putting one foot boldly in front of the other, and somehow you find yourself able to do so.

Courage comes in many forms. On the day of your marathon you discover the courage to keep trying, to not give up, no matter how dire things become. And they do become dire. At the 25-mile mark, you can barely see the course any longer, your vision faltering as your mind teeters on the edge of consciousness.

And then, suddenly, the finish line looms before you like a dream. A lump builds in your throat as you cover those final few steps. Now you are finally able to answer back to that nagging voice with a resounding Oh yes, I can!



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You burst across the finish line filled with pride, forever liberated from the prison of self-doubt and self-imposed limitations that have held you captive. You have learned more about yourself in the past 26.2 miles than you have learned in any other single day in your life. Even if you can't climb stairs for a week, you have never been so free. As you are being carried away from the finish line, wrapped in a flimsy Mylar blanket, barely able to raise your head, you are at peace. That daunting adversary that has haunted you for an entire lifetime is now your liberator, your fondest ally. You have done what few will ever do—what you thought you could never do—and it is the most glorious, unforgettable awakening ever. You are a marathoner, and you will wear this distinction not on your lapel, but in your heart, for the rest of your life.

With the right preparation, I believe almost any able-bodied person can finish a marathon. It won't necessarily be easy, but it can be done. The key is to allow enough time to increase your running very gradually and thereby build your fitness step by step from its current level to the level that will enable you to cross the finish line on race day. This 26-week training plan for first-time marathoners is appropriate for healthy individuals who are currently not running at all. If you're already running, you can still use the plan, but you will want to begin at some point after Week 1. I recommend that you begin with the first week in the schedule whose Sunday run is equal in distance to the longest run you've done in the past couple of weeks.



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WEEK	MON	TUE	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT	SUN
1.	Rest	Walk 20 min.	Rest	Walk 20 min.	Rest	Walk 20 min.	Walk 20 min.
2.	Rest	10 x walk 1 min./run 1 min.	Optional Walk 20 min.	10 x walk 1 min./run 1 min.	Rest	10 x walk 1 min./run 1 min.	10 x walk 1 min./run 1 min.
3.	Rest	7 x walk 1 min./run 2 min.	Optional Walk 20 min.	7 x walk 1 min./run 2 min.	Optional Walk 20 min.	7 x walk 1 min./run 2 min.	7 x walk 1 min./run 2 min.
4.	Rest	5 x walk 1 min./run 3 min.	Optional 10 x walk 1 min./run 1 min.	5 x walk 1 min./run 3 min.	Optional 10 x walk 1 min./run 1 min.	5 x walk 1 min./run 3 min.	5 x walk 1 min./run 3 min.
5.	Rest	4 x walk 1 min./run 4 min.	Optional 10 x walk 1 min./run 1 min.	4 x walk 1 min./run 4 min.	Optional 10 x walk 1 min./run 1 min.	4 x walk 1 min./run 4 min.	4 x walk 1 min./run 4 min.
6.	Rest	Run 2 miles	Optional 7xwalk 1 min run 2	Run 2 miles	Run 2 miles	Rest	Run 3 miles
7.	Rest	Run 3 miles	Optional Run 2 miles	Run 2 miles	Run 3 miles	Optional Run 2 miles	Run 4 miles
8.	Rest	Run 3 miles	Optional Run 3 miles	Run 3 miles	Run 3 miles	Optional Run 3 miles	Run 5 miles
9.	Rest	Run 4 miles	Optional Run 3 miles	Run 4 miles	Run 3 miles	Optional Run 3 miles	Run 6 miles
10.	Rest	Run 3 miles	Optional Run 3 miles	Run 3 miles	Run 3 miles	Rest	Run 8 miles
11.	Rest	Run 4 miles	Optional Run 4 miles	Run 4 miles	Run 4 miles	Optional Run 4 miles	Run 9 miles
12.	Rest	Run 5 miles	Optional Run 4 miles	Run 4 miles	Run 5 miles	Optional Run 4 miles	Run 8 miles
13.	Rest	Run 5 miles	Optional Run 4 miles	Run 4 miles	Run 5 miles	Optional Run 4 miles	Run 10 miles

WEEK	MON	TUE	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT	SUN
14.	Rest	Run 4 miles	Optional Run 4 miles	Run 5 miles	Run 4 miles	Optional Run 4 miles	Run 11 miles
15.	Rest	Run 4 miles	Optional Run 4 miles	Run 4 miles	Run 4 miles	Optional Run 4 miles	Run 9 miles
16.	Rest	Run 4 miles	Optional Run 4 miles	Run 6 miles	Run 4 miles	Optional Run 4 miles	Run 12 miles
17.	Rest	Run 5 miles	Optional Run 4 miles	Run 4 miles	Run 5 miles	Optional Run 4 miles	Run 13 miles
18.	Rest	Run 5 miles	Optional Run 4 miles	Run 6 miles	Run 5 miles	Optional Run 4 miles	Run 14 miles
19.	Rest	Run 4 miles	Optional Run 4 miles	Run 5 miles	Run 5 miles	Optional Run 4 miles	Run 9 miles
20.	Rest	Run 5 miles	Optional Run 4 miles	Run 6 miles	Run 5 miles	Optional Run 4 miles	Run 15 miles
21.	Rest	Run 5 miles	Optional Run 4 miles	Run 6 miles	Run 6 miles	Optional Run 4 miles	Run 16 miles
22.	Rest	Run 4 miles	Optional Run 4 miles	Run 5 miles	Run 5 miles	Optional Run 4 miles	Run 10 miles
23.	Rest	Run 6 miles	Optional Run 4 miles	Run 6 miles	Run 6 miles	Optional Run 4 miles	Run 18 miles
24.	Rest	Run 6 miles	Optional Run 4 miles	Run 8 miles	Run 6 miles	Optional Run 4 miles	Run 20 miles
25.	Rest	Run 5 miles	Optional Run 4 miles	Run 6 miles	Run 6 miles	Optional Run 4 miles	Run 12 miles
26.	Rest	Run 7 miles	Optional Run 4 miles	Run 5 miles	Run 4 miles	Rest	Marathon!

Race-Day Tips for Your First Marathon

Arrive early. Get to the race an hour beforehand to allow time to park, make a pit stop, and make your way to the starting line comfortably.

Don't experiment. Don't do anything on race day that you haven't done on your long runs, whether it's wearing different shoes or eating a different breakfast beforehand.

Pace yourself. Before the race, choose a pace that you're confident you can maintain and stick to it no matter how good you feel. Remember, it's easy to go out hard when you're fresh, but you could pay a hefty toll at later stages of the run if you do.

Remember to smile when you cross that finish line. You are a hero!