

# **BRAT Marathon Training Advice and Plans**

## **Introduction**

This document is targeted at those out there who are thinking of running a marathon, either for the first time or a repeat performance. The advice contained in here is for runners looking to get round their first marathon or train to complete the distance in a good time.

For the beginner, the content beneath will go through the reasons about why you choose to run a marathon, the training basis, some suggested training plans and some tips to get you through the day.

For those out there that have run a few marathons, you might not get all that much from this in terms of advice. There are, however, some suggested plans that could be of use and tips toward training that could help you toward that ever elusive personal best.

## **So why run a marathon?**

First of all, a statement of the obvious: a marathon is a long way (26 miles and 385 yards or 42.185km). Marathons, arguably the most famous running distance, are not to be underestimated. Marathons are surrounded in myth and stories of heroic success (and failure). So why do it?

Well, first of all, it's a good challenge. In running terms, it's the gold standard of distance running, short enough to race and long enough to be a real test of mental, physical and emotional strength.

Secondly, it's a real, tangible goal for any runner. Marathon training takes time and dedication, but the payback from completion of a marathon, especially for the beginner, is fantastic. Marathon running is a solid goal for any runner of any ability. While the beginner runner may be pleased with simply getting round the marathon course (an achievement in itself), the experienced runner will be challenged in every way as he/she tries to manage the fine blend of speed and endurance required to race over 26.2 miles.

## **So what does marathon training involve?**

Marathon training is hard work; most training programmes last for between 12 and 16 weeks. During peak marathon training weeks a runner can expect to be running anything between 40 and 70 miles a week, training up to 6 days a week (depending on ability). Long runs can get to as long as 23 miles and a programme will include up to 5 of these long runs. Marathon training requires a level of dedication and focus in order to pay off.

That doesn't mean that it shouldn't be fun though, marathon training sessions in groups are recommended, as are interval sessions and fartlek (speed play) sessions.

# General Advice for the Marathon Runner

## Diet:

Marathon running will increase your energy expenditure. Marathon training is a licence to eat food and lots of it. It's important when training to maintain a balanced diet and to eat well.

Your diet should be carbohydrate heavy especially in heavy training weeks. Carbohydrate will stop you getting tired and allow effective recovery. Protein should be consumed to allow muscles to build and repair. Vegetables and fresh fruits are the best source of vitamins and minerals; they allow the immune system to cope with the stress of heavy training and will help to prevent illness.

After running (especially long runs) try to eat within 30 minutes of the run. This will help your body rebuild its energy stores quickly, allowing recovery to start sooner and help getting you ready for the next day or session. However, after a hard session (intensity or/and duration) you may not feel hungry. This sensation will pass and then you will be able to refuel.

## Conditioning:

Marathon running is hard on the body. At the end of your marathon your body will probably not be happy with your mind. To lessen the affects of the distance on your body it's a good idea to do some conditioning work.

The action of running is controlled from the middle (or core) of the body. The lower back and stomach keep you upright, preventing you from stooping as you run and giving lateral stability. Elite runners use gym sessions as part of their regular training to help build strength and improve their running form, this is something that is often overlooked by the club runner. Fortunately, triathletes tend to have good core strength from swimming and have a good starting point.

Try to build one conditioning session a week into your programme, this will help to prevent injury and allow good running form to be maintained during the marathon.

## Injuries

Running four to six times a week, and including long distance runs in a programme increases the chances of picking up injuries. Very few people are perfectly balanced, and even with the help of good core strength injuries can occur.

The following tips will help you avoid injury:

- Get two pairs of good, preferably the same, running shoes to train in and alternate between them. This shares the load between the shoes and allows the shoes to recover between runs (even shoes need to rest!).
- Change you running shoes regularly, they should be changed every 6 months or 500 miles, depending on which comes first.
- Buy your running shoes from a reputable shop, good running shops will be able to put you in the right kind of running shoe, helping to prevent injury.

- If you feel an injury coming on, it probably is. Aching muscles aside, if your tendons start to hurt STOP TRAINING and rest. Missing one or two sessions for your legs to recover will give far more benefit in the long run.
- Rest days are just that. On a rest day, do nothing more taxing than watching the TV or cooking dinner.

## **Timing:**

A large part of marathon running is about routine. Getting your body into the idea of running a long way at regular intervals is very important. Find the day of your marathon, and do all of your long runs on that day of the week. If your target marathon is on a Sunday, starting at 10:30am, then arrange your long runs to be completed on a Sunday starting at around 10:30am.

## **Long Runs:**

The most important part of marathon training is the long run. Long runs are not to be underestimated and are the hallowed weekend tradition of the marathon runner. The long run is essential and should not be confused with high weekly mileage. Training weeks with long runs at the weekend will be preceded by a series of much shorter runs, so that you are almost tapering into the long run, much as you would on the race weekend.

So how long is a long training run? Marathon training runs should not be as long as the marathon itself. For a marathon runner, 18 to 20 miles is a long run, which translates into about 2/3rds or 3/4s of the marathon distance. Runners hoping for sub 3 hour marathon times will need to get up to runs as long as 24 miles.

Depending on how you choose to train, you will either run to a mileage plan or a “time on your feet” plan. If you are training to time, increase long run distance gradually by no more than 15 to 25 minutes a week. Try to estimate the time it will take you to run a chosen distance for a long run and make this your goal for the training run. If you are training to time, don’t run for longer than three and a half to four hours.

The last long run should be two weeks before the marathon. This will enable your body to recover fully before the marathon itself.

## **Focus:**

Don't be afraid to be selfish with your training time. A marathon is a big undertaking, especially if it's your first one and as a result it might mean that your friends will have to meet you a bit later for lunch on Sunday afternoon (and then be amazed as you eat everything you can see). Marathon training requires focus, the biggest cause of disappointment over marathons is under training, and the second is probably over training. Stick to your programme, record your runs in a diary and don't be afraid to be antisocial for a few weeks while you get your training done. Once your marathon is complete, the glory that it brings will be worth all of the sacrifice.

It's important to tell your friends and family what you are taking part in and training for. You'll be amazed at how supportive and understanding people can be.

## The Training Programmes:

The programmes shown here are specified at running only, they are not multisport or triathlon based. The programmes are only samples, if you have the time and freedom then follow them to the letter but don't be afraid to bend them around your life if needs be. The important sessions that shouldn't be moved are the long runs; try to keep these at the same intervals. All of the programmes assume that Sunday will be the event day.

First time marathon runners will need to work out an approximate time for their marathon of choice. A good guide to marathon time is to take your half marathon time, double it and add 10 or 15 percent.

There are three training programmes, each targeted at different target time schedules:

Time	Programme	Weekly mileage
3 hours 40 minutes and above	1	30 to 40
3 hours to 3 hours 40 minutes	2	40 to 50
Sub 3 hours	3	50 to 60

Each of the programmes includes build up races. Build up races are useful as they are an indication of running form and help to keep motivation through the training schedule. Pick races that suit you and that you will enjoy. Typically, marathon runners will take part in a 20 mile race and a half marathon in the lead up to a marathon.

The programme contains speed work on the Wednesdays. The suggested speed work session is contained in the brackets after the mileage or time for the session.

The layout of the speed sessions in the plans is as follows: 4 or 35 min (2 x 1 mile or 2 x 8 mins at 5 to 10K pace). This means a total distance of 4 miles running, with the inclusion of 2, 1 mile efforts or 2, 8 minute efforts within the total distance.

Definitions of other terms in plans:

- Long hill effort - 2 to 4 minute uphill effort
- Fartlek - steady run broken up with irregular 10K race pace efforts.
- Tempo - Running at a fast pace, within the bounds of comfort.

## Programme 1:

Weeks to go	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Total Mileage
Base	Off	4 or 35 mins	4 or 35 mins (Fartlek)	4 or 35 mins	Off	6 or 50 mins	6 or 45 mins	20
16	Off	3 or 25 mins	4 or 35 mins (2 x 1 mile or 8 mins at 5 to 10K pace)	4 or 35 mins	Off	3 or 30 mins	8 or 60 mins	22
15	Off	6 or 50 mins	4 or 35 mins (include 5 x long hill efforts)	4 or 35 mins	Off	4 or 35 mins	10 or 1.5 hours	28
14	Off	4 or 35 mins	6 or 50 mins (3 x 1 mile)	4 or 35 mins	Off	3 or 30 mins	12 or 1.75 hours	29
13	Off	3 or 20 mins	5 or 40 mins (include 6 x long hill efforts)	4 or 35 mins	2 or 15 mins	Off	Race 10K	20
12	Off	6 or 50 mins	5 or 40 mins (fartlek)	6 or 50 mins	Off	2 or 20 mins	13 or 2 hours	32
11	Off	4 or 35 mins	5 or 40 mins (6 x ½ mile intervals at 5K race pace)	6 or 50 mins	Off	3 or 30 mins	15 or 3 hours	33
10	Off	5 or 40 mins	5 or 40 mins (2 or 15 mins at 5k race pace)	6 or 50 mins	Off	2 or 20 mins	18 or 3.25 hours	36
9	Off	3 or 20 mins	6 or 50 mins (3 x 1 mile or 8 mins intervals)	4 or 35 mins	2 or 15 mins	Off	Race 10 miles	25
8	Off	6 or 50 mins	4 or 35 mins (include 4 long hill repeats)	6 or 50 mins	Off	3 or 30 mins	18 or 3.25 hours	37
7	Off	4 or 35 mins	5 or 40 mins (3 or 20 mins at half marathon pace)	6 or 50 mins	Off	4 or 35 mins	20 or 3.5 hours	40
6	Off	6 or 50 mins	6 or 50 mins (6 x ½ mile or 4 min intervals at 5K pace)	3 or 30 mins	Off	3 or 30 mins	22 or 3.75 hours	40
5	Off	4 or 35 mins	4 or 35 mins (2 x 1 mile or 8 mins at 5 to 10K pace)	4 or 35 mins	2 or 15 mins	Off	Race half-marathon	27
4	Off	5 or 40 mins	4 or 35 mins (include 4 long hill repeats)	6 or 50 mins	Off	3 or 30 mins	18 or 3.25 hours	36
3	Off	4 or 35 mins	6 or 50 mins	6 or 50 mins	Off	3 or 30 mins	20 or 3.5 hours	39
2	Off	5 or 40 mins	5 or 40 mins (3 or 20 mins at half marathon pace)	5 or 40 mins	Off	4 or 35 mins	10 or 1.5 hours	29
1	Off	2 or 15 mins	4 or 35 mins (3 or 25 mins at marathon pace)	3 or 30 mins	2 or 15 mins	Off	Marathon	37

## Programme 2:

Weeks to go	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Total Mileage
Base	5 or 35 mins	Off	5 or 35 mins (Fartlek)	4 or 30 mins	Off	6 or 45 mins	10 or 75 mins	30
16	6 or 45 mins	Off	7 or 50 mins (2 x 1 mile or 7 mins at 5 to 10K pace)	5 or 35 mins	Off	4 or 30 mins	10 or 75 mins	32
15	6 or 45 mins	Off	6 or 45 mins (8 x long hill efforts)	4 or 30 mins	Off	6 or 45 mins	12 or 1.5 hours	34
14	8 or 55 mins	Off	6 or 45 mins (4 x 6 mins at 5k pace)	5 or 35 mins	Off	6 or 45 mins	12 or 1.5 hours	35
13	7 or 50 mins	Off	7 or 50 mins (6 x long hill efforts)	4 or 35 mins	2 or 15 mins	Off	Race 10K	27
12	4 or 30 mins	4 or 30 mins	6 or 40 mins (fartlek)	6 or 50 mins	Off	3 or 25 mins	15 or 1.75 hours	37
11	5 or 35 mins	Off	6 or 45 mins (4 x 6 mins at 5k pace)	6 or 45 mins	Off	3 or 25 mins	18 or 2 hours	38
10	7 or 50 mins	Off	7 or 50 mins (2 x 1.5 or 10 minute intervals with 5 min jog recovery)	6 or 45 mins	Off	6 or 45 mins	12 or 1.5 hours	38
9	7 or 50 mins	4 or 30 mins	6 or 50 mins (3 x 1 mile or 8 mins intervals)	4 or 35 mins	2 or 15 mins	Off	Race 10 miles	33
8	Off	4 or 35 mins	6 or 40 mins (fartlek)	6 or 50 mins	Off	5 or 35 mins	20 or 2.75 hours	41
7	7 or 50 mins	Off	5 or 40 mins (3 or 20 mins at half marathon pace)	6 or 50 mins	Off	4 or 30 mins	24 or 3.5 hours	46
6	5 or 35 mins	4 or 30 mins	8 or 60 mins (8 x ½ mile or 4 min intervals at 5K pace)	6 or 50 mins	Off	5 or 35 mins	22 or 3.5 hours	50
5	4 or 35 mins	Off	4 or 35 mins (3 x 1 mile or 6 mins at 5 to 10K pace)	4 or 35 mins	2 or 15 mins	Off	Race ½ - marathon	25
4	Off	5 or 35 mins	6 or 40 mins (fartlek)	7 or 50 mins	5 or 40 mins	5 or 35 mins	22 or 3.25 hours	50
3	4 or 35 mins	5 or 35 mins	8 or 60 mins (8 x ½ mile or 4 min intervals at 5K pace)	6 or 50 mins	Off	6 or 45 mins	20 or 3.5 hours	49
2	5 or 40 mins	Off	5 or 40 mins (3 or 20 mins at half marathon pace)	5 or 35 mins	Off	4 or 30 mins	10 or 1.5 hours	29
1	2 or 15 mins	Off	4 or 35 mins (3 or 25 mins at marathon pace)	3 or 30 mins	2 or 15 mins	Off	Marathon	37

### Programme 3:

Weeks to go	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Total Mileage
Base	8	5	7 or speed session	7	Off	7	12	45
16	6	5	6 (3 mile tempo run)	7	Off	8	13	45
15	8	Off	7 (5 - 8 llong hill reps)	4	6	6	15	46
14	7	Off	6 (4 x 1 mile at 5-10K pace)	Off	8	3	18	42
13	6	Off	7 (5 x 6 min at 5K pace)	9	Off	3	Race - 10K	31
12	Off	7	7 (fartlek)	6	6	3	20	49
11	Off	8	8 (5 x 1 mile at 10k pace)	Off	7	7	17	47
10	6	7	7 (5 - 8 llong hill reps)	Off	7	3	20	50
9	8	5	6 (8 x 2 mins at 5K pace)	Off	6	3	Race - ½ marathon	38
8	Off	7	8 (5 x 1 mile at 10k pace)	6	6	4	24	57
7	Off	6	8 (2 x 1.5 miles at 10K pace)	7	Off	5	22	48
6	8	5	11 (8 to 9 miles at marathon pace)	5	Off	8	18	50
5	7	Off	6 (8 x 2 mins at 5K pace)	5	5	Off	Race - 20 miles	43
4	Off	5	8	8	7	Off	23	51
3	4	9	8 (10 x 2 mins at 5K pace)	7	Off	3	Race - 10K	37
2	Off	5	8 (5 x 1 mile at 10k pace)	8	5	5	12	43
1	Off	4	5 (3 miles at marathon pace)	3	Off	3	Marathon	41