

# 16 Week Marathon Training Plan for Beginners

Distances in kilometres.

| Week | Phase       | Long run | Key session                            | Week total |
|------|-------------|----------|----------------------------------------|------------|
| 1    | Base        | 6 km     | All runs easy; walk breaks are fine    | 18 km      |
| 2    | Base        | 7 km     | All runs easy; walk breaks are fine    | 20 km      |
| 3    | Base        | 9 km     | Easy run with 4 × 20 s strides         | 23 km      |
| 4    | Easier week | 6 km     | All runs easy                          | 18 km      |
| 5    | Build       | 11 km    | 6 km steady with 2 km at marathon pace | 26 km      |
| 6    | Build       | 13 km    | 7 km with 3 km at marathon pace        | 29 km      |
| 7    | Build       | 15 km    | 8 km with 3 km at marathon pace        | 32 km      |
| 8    | Easier week | 11 km    | Easy runs + 4 × 20 s strides           | 25 km      |
| 9    | Build       | 19 km    | 8 km with 4 km at marathon pace        | 36 km      |
| 10   | Build       | 22 km    | 10 km with 5 km at marathon pace       | 40 km      |
| 11   | Peak        | 26 km    | 10 km with 6 km at marathon pace       | 46 km      |
| 12   | Easier week | 18 km    | Easy runs + 4 × 20 s strides           | 34 km      |
| 13   | Peak        | 30 km    | 11 km with 6 km at marathon pace       | 52 km      |
| 14   | Taper       | 21 km    | 10 km with 5 km at marathon pace       | 42 km      |
| 15   | Taper       | 14 km    | 8 km with 4 km at marathon pace        | 30 km      |
| 16   | Race week   | —        | 3 short easy runs + RACE               | 14 km      |

## A typical week

| Day       | Session                               |
|-----------|---------------------------------------|
| Monday    | Rest                                  |
| Tuesday   | Key session (from week 5) or easy run |
| Wednesday | Easy run                              |
| Thursday  | Rest, or walk, bike or swim           |
| Friday    | Easy run                              |
| Saturday  | Rest                                  |
| Sunday    | Long run                              |

## The daily check: heart rate, sleep and recovery

A plan on paper does not know that you slept four hours or had a brutal week at work. Your body does. Before a key session or long run, take ten seconds for this check:

| Check                               | Green                                         | Amber                             | Red                                                |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| Sleep                               | About your usual, most nights 7 hours or more | One short night                   | Several short nights in a row                      |
| Morning resting heart rate (or HRV) | In your normal range                          | Clearly outside your normal range | Outside your normal range for several days         |
| Legs and mood                       | Fresh or normal                               | Heavy, flat, short-tempered       | Sore in one spot, or pain that changes how you run |
| Life stress                         | Normal                                        | A hard day                        | A hard week, travel, illness in the family         |

- All green: run the session as written.
- One amber: do the run, but make it easy. Move the key session to later in the week, or skip it.
- Two or more amber, or any red: rest, or walk, or jog very easily for a short time. Pain that changes how you run or signs of illness mean no running until it is sorted out.
- Amber most days for a week: turn that week into an easier week, even if the plan says build.

Health note. General plan, not medical advice. If you have a heart condition, chest pain, dizziness, an injury, are pregnant or are coming back after a long break, check with a doctor first. Stop and seek help if you feel unwell.