

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.

16 Week Marathon Training Plan for Beginners (continued)

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.