

Sub 4 Hour Marathon Training Plan

Distances in kilometres.

Week	Phase	Long run	Key session	Week total
1	Base	16 km	4 × 8 min at 5:19–5:34 /km (8:33–8:58 /mi), 2 min jog	40 km
2	Base	18 km	10 km with 6 km at 5:41 /km (9:09 /mi)	44 km
3	Base	20 km	5 × 3 min at 4:48–5:00 /km (7:43–8:03 /mi), 2 min jog	48 km
4	Easier week	14 km	Easy runs + 6 × 20 s strides	36 km
5	Build	22 km	3 × 10 min at 5:19–5:34 /km, 2 min jog	52 km
6	Build	24 km	14 km with 9 km at 5:41 /km	56 km
7	Build	26 km	5 × 4 min at 4:48–5:00 /km, 2½ min jog	60 km
8	Easier week	18 km	10K tune-up race (target about 52 min) or easy + strides	45 km
9	Peak	28 km	2 × 15 min at 5:19–5:34 /km, 3 min jog	62 km
10	Peak	29 km	18 km with 12 km at 5:41 /km	65 km
11	Peak	30 km	4 × 10 min at 5:19–5:34 /km, 2 min jog	68 km
12	Easier week	21 km	Half marathon tune-up race (target about 1:55–1:56) as the long run	50 km
13	Peak	32 km	16 km with 10 km at 5:41 /km	70 km
14	Taper	24 km	14 km with 10 km at 5:41 /km	56 km
15	Taper	16 km	10 km with 6 km at 5:41 /km	40 km
16	Race week	—	4 short easy runs, 2 with 4 × 20 s strides + RACE	20 km

A typical week

Day	Session
Monday	Rest
Tuesday	Key session
Wednesday	Easy run
Thursday	Easy run with strides
Friday	Rest
Saturday	Easy run, short
Sunday	Long run

Your sub-4 training paces

Pace	Per km	Per mile	Used for
Easy	6:06–7:17	9:49–11:44	Most runs and all long runs
Marathon (goal)	5:41	9:09	Blocks inside steady runs
Threshold	5:19–5:34	8:33–8:58	"Comfortably hard" repeats
Interval	4:48–5:00	7:43–8:03	Short repeats of 3–4 minutes, about 5K effort

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

Sub 4 Hour Marathon Training Plan (continued)

- 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.