

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

Sub 4 Hour Marathon Training Plan (continued)

Check	Green	Amber	Red
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.