

18 Week - Marathon Training Plan

Wk	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Additional		
1	28-Dec	10 slight hill reps x 1 min	EASY	Tempo (3 mile)	Off-feet		Long Run (14 mile)	Core & Strength	Strength	
2	04-Jan	10 slight hill reps x 1 min		Tempo (3 mile)			Long Run (14 mile)	Core & Strength		
3	11-Jan	10 slight hill reps x 1 min		Tempo (4 mile)		5k parkrun	Long Run (16 mile)	Core & Strength		
4	18-Jan	Technique Session - Drills		Tempo (4 mile)			Long Run (16 mile)	Core & Strength		
5	25-Jan	12 slight hill reps x 1 mins		Tempo (5 mile)			Long Run (18 mile)	Core & Strength		
6	01-Feb	12 slight hill reps x 1 mins		Tempo (5 mile)		Derry 10 Mile	Cycle or Easy 8 mile run	Core & Strength		
7	08-Feb	Long Steep Hill Reps (5-6mins x 3)		Tempo (6 mile)			Long Run (18 mile)	Core & Strength	Endurance & Mental Toughness	
8	15-Feb	Long Steep Hill Reps (5-6mins x 3)		Technique Session - Drills			Long Run (20 mile)	Core & Strength		
9	22-Feb	Long Steep Hill Reps (5-6mins x 3)		Progressive Tempo (6 + 1)		5k parkrun	Long Run (18 mile)	6 mile at race effort		Core & Strength
10	01-Mar	Long Steep Hill Reps (5-6mins x 3)		Progressive Tempo (6 + 1)			Long Run (20 mile)	8 mile at race effort		Core & Strength
11	08-Mar	2 x 800m; 3 x 1mile, 1 x 1.5 mile		Progressive Tempo (6 + 2)			Long Run (20 mile)	10 mile at race effort		Core & Pilates
12	15-Mar	2 x 800m; 3 x 1mile, 1 x 1.5 mile		Progressive Tempo (6 + 2)		Larne HM	Long Run (18 mile)			Core & Pilates
13	22-Mar	2 x 800m; 2 x 1mile, 2 x 1.5 mile		Technique Session - Drills		Omagh HM	Long Run (18 mile)			Core & Pilates
14	29-Mar	2 x 800m; 2 x 1mile, 2 x 1.5 mile		Fartlek (short & flat)			Cycle or Easy 10 mile run			Core & Pilates
15	05-Apr	Fartlek (long & hills)		Fartlek (short & flat)		5k parkrun	Long Run (21 mile)	15 mile at race effort	Core & Pilates	Race Specificity
16	12-Apr	Fartlek (long & hills)		Fartlek (short & flat)			Long Run (18 mile)	13 mile at race effort	Core & Pilates	
17	19-Apr	Technique Session - Drills		Fartlek (short & flat)			Long Run (13 mile)	6 mile at race effort	Core & Pilates	
18	26-Apr	Fartlek (long & hills)		Fartlek (short & flat)		easy 2-3 mile	Rest		Core & Pilates	
03-May Marathon		easy run - recovery			easy run - recovery					Race

Read accompanying notes. Assumes you run at least half-marathon distance. More for those who've ran 3:00-4:30 before but want to improve their speed and don't have much time. Follow entirely at your own risk

18-Week Marathon Training Plan - NOTES

- A** The goal is to be in good shape for the marathon, do not worry about other races, training plans, weekly miles or pace
- B** Plan is based around 3 quality sessions per week, Gold (Tue), Silver (Thur) and Bronze (Sun) in terms of importance
- C** The aim is to be totally recovered for Gold sessions, if that means reducing Sun or moving Gold & Silver sessions a day later that's ok
- D** Rest, sleep, recovery and nutrition are as important as training sessions. **Listen to your body**, and act on injuries
- E** Outside three main sessions, all other runs should be at least 2.5 mins per mile slower than race pace (should feel very easy)
- F** Swim, cycle and cross-fit as you like but take at least one full day off (no activity/sport at all) every two weeks & remember (D)
- G** Ideally aim to do 15-20 min stretching and core strength work each day or 2-3 sessions per week in the gym
- H** Visit a physio at the start to see any particular weaknesses you need to address (prevention is better than cure)
- I** Have a stop watch but do not use a Garmin. Use a car or bike to work mile (and half-mile) markers if you don't know any
- J** Run as much off-road as you can. The first 10 weeks, all long runs should be off-road and involve hills
- K** Strongly encourage you to gradually start walking, jogging or cycling to work. Will provide a huge benefit over 18 weeks
- L** Warm up should be about 10-15mins, especially for speed (see notes), with fartlek/tempo aim for about 75-80 min run in total
- M** Recovery: Hill reps, jog/run back to the start. For other reps/fartlek etc, use 33-50% rule i.e. if 4 min rep start with 2min and then try & reduce it

Timing Wise
Gold & Silver Sessions, should last a maximum of 90 mins and ideally closer to 75 mins
Long runs are max 3.5hrs, do not exceed 3.5hrs (even if you haven't hit target mileage)
In total: 6hrs per week

WEEK 1 Acclimatisation - During this week, you get used to intensity of training required. Test training venues, distance/rep markers, and gage tempo speed
 Also need to get use to the gym/core/strength sessions and list what stretches you need to do. Find what times of day suits you best to train/stretch
 Use treadmill or Garmin during this week only to gage pace/note mile markers. This week is an important transition week before going straight into training plan

TECHNIQUE Yellow highlighted cells are opportunities to work on technique and/or have easy session. Need to build in recovery with sessions too (rest day if needed)

On easy runs, you should focus on running form, 1-2 points at a time e.g. prioritising correct posture (back, head position, shoulders)
Speed work and hill work will help with technique. Running efficiency and form are important over a long distance race

- WARM UP** Each session needs a warm-up and cool down. Gold requires at least 15 mins (as speed session), with Silver & Bronze taking it easy on the first and last mile
Warming up properly and cooling down are important to reduce injury. Establish routine at the start and listen to your body, especially with speed
The first rep, should always be done about 3/4 pace to allow you to test injury and check out course (e.g. note potential safety issues and visual markers)
- GOLD** These are the most important session of the week and are probably more mental than physical training to be honest. Aim is consistency and hard effort
All these sessions are tough, and are done as hard as you can sustain. You need to be fresh and will feel wrecked the next day. You will need a 15 min warm-up
Weeks 1-6 are based on a slight steady hill (e.g. Malone Park), with 10 reps same time/distance. 1 min is enough, then jog back recovery in between
Weeks 7-10 are based on a long hill (e.g. Hannahstown, min 8% gradient) where you have to learn to pace and really push yourself. Needs to be at least 5 mins.
There is a huge difference between 1, 3 and 6 min hill reps. You should not be able to stand after each rep and are aiming for 3 about the same time (within 10 secs)
Weeks 11-14 are done on a flat (e.g. track or marked out path), with 1 min jog/run recovery for every 800m ran (i.e. 800m, 1 min recovery; 1 mile, 2min; 1.5 mile, 3 mins)
Weeks 15-18 are based on more continuous running at your normal speed, picking it for 5-6 mins x 5 (at 10k speed) with 2 mins running recovery.
Can be done off-road & ideally not on your own. Flexibility to add one rep or reduce recovery, if feeling good - but listen to body and DON'T RISK INJURY
The 'Gold' Fartlek should be enjoyable but tough, be flexible according to terrain (e.g. attack a hill if need be), add in 3-5 x 30 sec blasts near the end if feeling good
- SILVER** Tempo, this is approx your 10 mile speed, so you should not feel wrecked after this session. You shouldn't be able to have a conversation though while running
This may take 2-3 weeks to get used to the pace (and everyone is different), but it's a key part of building up aerobic capacity, essential for marathon running
Weeks 1-7 is gradually building it up to 6 mile (not forgetting warm-up etc), if you want you can have 90 sec break every 2-3 mile, remember quality is important
It's crucial that you don't go too fast during tempo, as you'll ruin the session. NB it's tempo effort not pace, so adjust according to terrain (No Garmin for Tempo)
Weeks 9-12 are about building up speed endurance (and mental toughness) by doing 6 mile at tempo and then adding 1-2 mile at faster than tempo effort
Weeks 14-18 are getting used to running on the road, running at your marathon race effort with 10 x 1-3 minute pick ups, with 33%-50% recovery - based on feel
The last few weeks are about getting used to marathon pace, (ideally you shouldn't look at a watch), be flexible, have fun and learn to listen to your body
- BRONZE** These long-runs gradually build up your endurance. These should be done at your normal running effort. For the first 12 weeks most should be done off-road and involve hills
These are not LONG SLOW RUNS. From week 9 we are introducing race effort, note a few mile markers or preferably a 3-4 mile stretch and glance at times (noting terrain)
Weeks 9-17, leave your race pace till the last miles bar one, so the last mile you are at normal pace (e.g. Week 9 (18 mile) start normal 1-11, race 11-17; and finish normal 18)
Be careful after Sat races (e.g. Larne & Omagh HM); whilst useful to run on tired legs, important to get recovery (NB C). Make sure Monday is a rest day or very easy swim/cycle
Mix up your long-run routes. Over the last few weeks try and covering similar topography (or ideally route) of the marathon. Max Long Run should be 3hr 30mins
Best to do them early in the morning (e.g. start 7 or 8, allows you to be back and showered etc by 11/12), don't let it take up your whole day. Test gear, nutrition & hydration
- RACES** The parkruns are included to let you get used to informal running and use as benchmarks for progress, you only need to do 1-2. Also should be fun and taken at any pace.
Derry 10m, Larne & Omagh HM are designed to get you used to the whole race experience. They're also enjoyable and good indicators of training progress (remember A)
- TAPER** Tapering is only really the 8 days before the Marathon. You don't drop the intensity of the Gold & Silver sessions but you will reduce the time (easy run for remainder)
- REST** Aims is 2-3 days with no running & 1-2 days completely off the feet. With one day a week just stretching (prob Wed). I will try to walk Sun evening to stretch the legs
- DESIGN** I've prioritised speed, strength & mental toughness within plan to boost speed endurance. With limited time & mindful of injuries, I've focused on a few quality sessions
Consider adjusting to your own circumstances; and try more easy runs, if you can. Plan is based on research and created by Liam McGarry (BelfastRunning.com)
- REMEMBER** Do not use a Garmin. Learn to listen to your body, and note rest, recovery and nutrition are as important as recovery. Don't forget stretching & strength
- PILATES** If you can do a few Pilates sessions or exercises, make sure you are doing them properly, but they will be of benefit. Also consider a monthly sports massage