

The 8-Week Beginner's Program

Follow this plan to get your running off to the right start.

By

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The training plan that follows is designed to get you to the point where you can run 30 minutes (about 2 miles) at a slow, relaxed pace. It's a simple, progressive program that begins with more walking than running, and gradually evolves into more running than walking. Each week's plan also includes a motivational quote and a training tip.

Once you are able to run 2 miles nonstop, you can decide on your next goal. You might simply want to continue running 2 miles at a time, three or four days per week. Research has shown that this is enough to help you lose or maintain weight, and improve many other important health markers, i.e., your cholesterol, blood pressure, and insulin response.

Or you might decide that you want to do more, in which case you can consult the many training programs offered by our online [SmartCoach](#) tool. Don't be intimidated by these programs. The first 2 miles are the hardest 2 miles you will ever run. Once you have reached this level of fitness, it's relatively easy to do more. You simply have to budget the time, and be patient and disciplined in your training.

Here are 4 key points to consider before you begin the 8-Week Program.

- 1.** If you are over 40, not accustomed to any exercise, or more than 20 pounds overweight, consult with your physician. Unless you have a known health risk, your doctor will probably encourage you to begin a run-walk program, but it's always wise to check.
- 2.** Schedule your workouts. You won't find time for them unless you make time for them. Put them in your PDA, computer, daily appointment planner, on the front of your refrigerator, or wherever else you keep your schedule.
- 3.** Expect bad days. Everyone has them, but they pass quickly, and the next workout is often better than the previous one. So stick with the program.
- 4.** Don't rush. In the fitness world, rushing leads to injuries and discouragement. Be patient, and go slow. The goal is to reach 30 minutes of continuous running, not to set any records getting there.

Week 1

"Sit as little as possible. Give no credence to any thought that was not born outdoors while moving about freely."

--Friedrich Nietzsche

Wk	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
1	Run & Walk Run 1 min Walk 2 min Repeat 10X	Walk Walk easy 30 min	Run & Walk Run 1 min Walk 2 min Repeat 10X	Walk Walk easy 30 min	Run & Walk Run 1 min Walk 2 min Repeat 10X	Run & Walk Run 1 min Walk 2 min Repeat 10X	Rest

Training tip:

To fuel up for your workout, have a piece of fruit or an energy bar about 2 hours before you lace up your shoes. An hour later, drink 8 ounces of a sports drink. The drink will ensure that you are fully hydrated, and also that you have sufficient sodium and potassium for a healthy workout.

Week 2

"Don't bother just to be better than your contemporaries or predecessors. Try to be better than yourself."

--William Faulkner

Week	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
Week 2	Run & Walk Run 2 min Walk 1 min Repeat 10X	Walk Walk easy 30 min	Run & Walk Run 3 min Walk 1 min Repeat 7X Run 2 min	Walk Walk easy 30 min	Run & Walk Run 4 min Walk 1 min Repeat 6X	Run & Walk Run 4 min Walk 1 min Repeat 6X	Rest

Training tip:

Always walk 2 to 3 minutes for a warmup before you begin your workout, and walk another 2 to 3 minutes as a cooldown afterward. Don't stretch before running. Save it for after your workout or in the evening while you're watching TV.

Week 3

"Obstacles are those frightening things that become visible when we take our eyes off our goals."

--Henry Ford

Week	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
3	Run & Walk Run 5 min Walk 1 min Repeat 5X	Walk Walk easy 30 min	Run & Walk Run 5 min Walk 1 min Repeat 5X	Walk Walk easy 30 min	Run & Walk Run 6 min Walk 1 min Repeat 4X Run 2 min	Run & Walk Run 6 min Walk 1 min Repeat 4X Run 2 min	Rest

Training tip:

Hold your arms comfortably at your sides while running, aiming for maximum relaxation. Bend them 90 degrees at the elbows, and move them forward and back at your waist. Bend your fingers into a relaxed grasp, and don't let your hands sway back and forth across the middle of your torso.

Week 4

"When you get to the end of your rope, tie a knot and hang on."

--Theodore Roosevelt

Wk	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
4	Run & Walk Run 8 min Walk 1 min Repeat 3X Run 3 min	Walk Walk easy 30 min	Run & Walk Run 9 min Walk 1 min Repeat 3X	Walk Walk easy 30 min	Run & Walk Walk Run 10 min Walk 1 min Repeat 2X Run 8 min	Run & Walk Walk Run 11 min Walk 1 min Repeat 2X Run 6 min	Rest

Training tip:

In hot, sunny weather, wear sunscreen, sunglasses (to relax your facial muscles), and a visor or cap to keep the sun off your face. Expect to run slower in particularly hot, humid weather, and take more walking breaks as necessary. Run in the early morning or late evening if you can.

Week 5

"Sweat cleanses from the inside. It comes from places a shower will never reach."

--Dr. George Sheehan

Wk	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
5	Run & Walk Run 12 min Walk 1 min Repeat 2X Run 4 min	Walk Walk easy 30 min	Run & Walk Run 13 min Walk 1 min Repeat 2X Run 2 min	Walk Walk easy 30 min	Run & Walk Run 14 min Walk 1 min Repeat 2X	Run & Walk Run 15 min Walk 1 min Run 14 min	Rest

Training tip:

On occasion, skip your running and walking workout and do a cross-training workout instead. Bike for 30 to 40 minutes, try the elliptical trainer in a gym, or join a circuit weight-training class. The break from running will refresh you, and you'll learn new skills while developing new muscles.

Week 6

*"You can have anything you want, if you want it badly enough.
You can be anything you want to be, if you hold that desire with singleness
of purpose."*

--Abraham Lincoln

Wk	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
6	Run & Walk Run 16 min Walk 1 min Run 13 min	Walk Walk easy 30 min	Run & Walk Run 17 min Walk 1 min Run 12 min	Walk Walk easy 30 min	Run & Walk Run 18 min Walk 1 min Run 11 min	Run & Walk Run 19 min Walk 1 min Run 10 min	Rest

Training tip:

Running is a great way to build strong bones, but you also need plenty of calcium--1,000 milligrams a day, or 1,500 milligrams if you're over age 50. Drink a glass or two of low-fat milk per day, or enjoy a cup or two of low-fat yogurt or cottage cheese. Dark green, leafy vegetables are another great calcium source.

Week 7

"Only those who risk going too far can possibly find out how far they can go."

--T.S. Eliot

Wk	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
7	Run & Walk Run 20 min Walk 1 min Run 9 min	Run & Walk Run 20 min Walk 1 min Run 9 min	Run & Walk Run 22 min Walk 1 min Run 7 min	Walk Walk easy 30 min	Run & Walk Run 24 min Walk 1 min Run 5 min	Run & Walk Run 26 min Walk 1 min Run 3 min	Rest

Training tip:

Beginning runners often develop shin splints or sore knees. These pains should pass quickly if you treat them immediately with ice packs after your workouts. Put a bag of frozen peas on your shins or knees for 15 minutes. If the pain persists, take several days off before beginning your training program again.

Week 8

"One cannot consent to creep when one feels an impulse to soar."

--Helen Keller

Wk	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
8	Run & Walk Run 27 min Walk 1 min Run 2 min	Walk Run 20 min Walk 1 min Run 9 min	Run & Walk Run 28 min Walk 1 min Run 1 min	Walk Walk easy 30 min	Run & Walk Run 29 min Walk 1 min	Run & Walk Run 30 min	Rest

Training tip:

For clean air and healthy lungs, try not to do your workouts at the side of a busy street or during rush-hour traffic. Find low-traffic streets where any exhaust will be dispersed quickly. Even better, as often as possible, try to run in greenbelts--in parks, on bike trails, around reservoirs, and the like. Success may come quickly to you as a beginning runner, but the race is never won. Run for life.