

# BEGINNER TRAINING PLAN

Your guide to running a  
half marathon in 16 weeks

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# **RUNNING A HALF MARATHON IS NO SMALL FEAT.**

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**This beginner training plan is designed for someone who is new to running half marathons.**

**In this training programme, you'll find tips, tricks, and a 16 week running plan to get you half marathon ready. We combine speed, endurance, and recovery runs with mobility and strength training to give you the best chance at smashing your goals.**



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# YOUR COACH

**Ian Scarrott**



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**This plan has been written by Ian Scarrott, qualified England Athletics Running Coach and PureGym Personal Trainer.**

Ian has over 20 years' experience in running at club level, and over 10 years' experience in run coaching, and is now the owner of Your Run Coach.

"Taking on longer distances like the half and full marathon can seem like a mountain to climb, but know this, all things are definitely possible.

Be prepared to take responsibility for your own training, and put in the consistent work required. If you can hit at least 80% of the runs in the plan, I would say you've given yourself the best chance to be successful whatever that means for you. Whether it's to finish your first race, or hit a personal best.

Outside of this it's quite simple, to Find Your Victory, get enough sleep, eat healthily, maintain hydration levels, be kind to yourself, and above all remember it is simply 'just a race' so relax and above all enjoy the process."

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# HALF MARATHON TRAINING TOP TIPS

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- 1 ENJOY THE PROCESS**

This training programme is 16 weeks of training, for 1 race day. The race is such a small part of the total time spent, so make sure to enjoy the process and celebrate your progress.
- 2 PRIORITISE REST**

Rest is the most important part of any training programme – it's when your body repairs itself and gets stronger. Aim for 7-8 hours sleep every night, and keep your bed and waking times consistent where possible.
- 3 IT'S OKAY TO MISS A RUN**

Running is one part of your everyday life. There may be times during your training when other aspects of your life need to take priority, and that's okay. Take a break and move on to the next session when you can. If you miss more than one week or two, you may need to adapt your plan to hit your goal within the 16 weeks.
- 4 OPTIMISE YOUR DIET**

A healthy diet can maximise your physical performance. Make sure you get enough calories and carbohydrates to fuel your training, protein to help repair and recover, and vitamins and minerals to support your overall health.
- 5 ADAPTATION IS KEY**

This plan is designed to get you half marathon ready in 20 weeks, but it can be adapted to suit your current running level. You may want to modify the plan to be completed in less time, or do it over a longer period.



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# HALF MARATHON TRAINING REQUIRES A MIX OF VOLUME AND INTENSITY

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**When training for a half marathon, there are two components which must be progressed to help you run faster and strong:**

## **VOLUME**

The number of miles you do on a given day, week, month and even over the whole training plan. It's important to increase volume at a rate which does not cause injury.

## **INTENSITY**

How hard a session is likely to be on the muscles. Speedwork, tempo sessions, short slow runs, and long slow runs all affect the muscles differently, and may have different recovery times. Take note which types of runs you need more recovery from and use this to adapt your plan if needed.

*This beginner training plan is designed for someone who is new to running half marathons. It is important to remember that if the volume is too high for you, or the intensity is too much then you may need to tweak the plan yourself as you go.*



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# RUNNING TERMS / RUNNING GLOSSARY

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## WARM UP

Warming up before a run is extremely important. It allows your muscles, tendons, and joints to become more pliable and ready for exercise. This helps to improve performance and prevent injuries.

## COOL DOWN

It's tempting after a run to sit down and relax, but cooling down properly helps your muscles, tendons, and joints help to prevent injuries by allowing the muscles to be stretched. It also helps to slowly lower your heart rate post workout, which can prevent you from experiencing dizziness.

## BUILD

In faster sessions, you will normally build the pace before you complete the main set. The idea behind this is to elevate the heart rate, and prepare the muscles for faster or more intense efforts. Ideally you will be doing this gradually over the time period/ mileage allocated.

## MAIN SET

This is the main portion of the session which follows the warm up and build portion of the run.

## FARTLEK

Fartlek means 'speedplay' in Swedish and is a session that is used to quite literally play with different speeds to stimulate different energy systems: aerobic, lactate, and creatine.

## HILLS

Hills help you to work on your form and build strength. Reduce your stride length but try and keep up the same intensity as you had on flat ground. When you run down hills, lean into it to maintain your reduced stride length.

## INTERVALS

Intervals are similar to fartleks. The main difference is intervals have more structured sessions, for example 4 x 1•mile repeats/ repetitions with 2 minutes break where the speed in each repetition may stay the same. It depends on the types of intervals session included.

## PROGRESSION RUN

This is where you progressively build the pace through a run to tire the body out. This prepares you to deal with the final miles in the half marathon, where your body is extremely fatigued. They often say the last 10k is the real second half of the race.

## S&C

S&C stands for strength and conditioning, an area of training which is often neglected until it's too late. St&C helps to improve endurance and speed, and protect your muscles, joints, and tendons against injuries. We cover this later in the guide.

## RPE

Rate of Perceived Exertion. We cover this later in the guide.



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# STRETCHES

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**Stretching helps your muscles to prepare for, and recover from, running. There are two types of stretches:**

## DYNAMIC

Dynamic stretches involve moving your muscles and joints through their full range of motion to create a stretch. Incorporating dynamic stretches after warm up and build sets helps to loosen tight muscles and prepare your body for harder efforts.

Common areas of tightness and appropriate stretches that you might want to focus on are:

- Adductors – side to side leg swings
- Quads and hamstrings – forward to back leg swings, hamstring sweeps
- Hip flexors – lunges combined with a rocking forward and back motion in the hips
- Lower back – child's pose walkouts, walk backs

## STATIC

Static stretches involve holding your muscles in a stretch for a period of time, and can help to reduce and prevent muscle stiffness. These stretches must only be done at the end of a workout when the muscles are warm and pliable.

After a workout, start at the bottom of your body and work your way up to the top to make sure no muscles get missed:

- Calves
- Quads
- Hamstrings
- Hip flexors
- Adductors
- Glutes
- Lower back
- Upper back

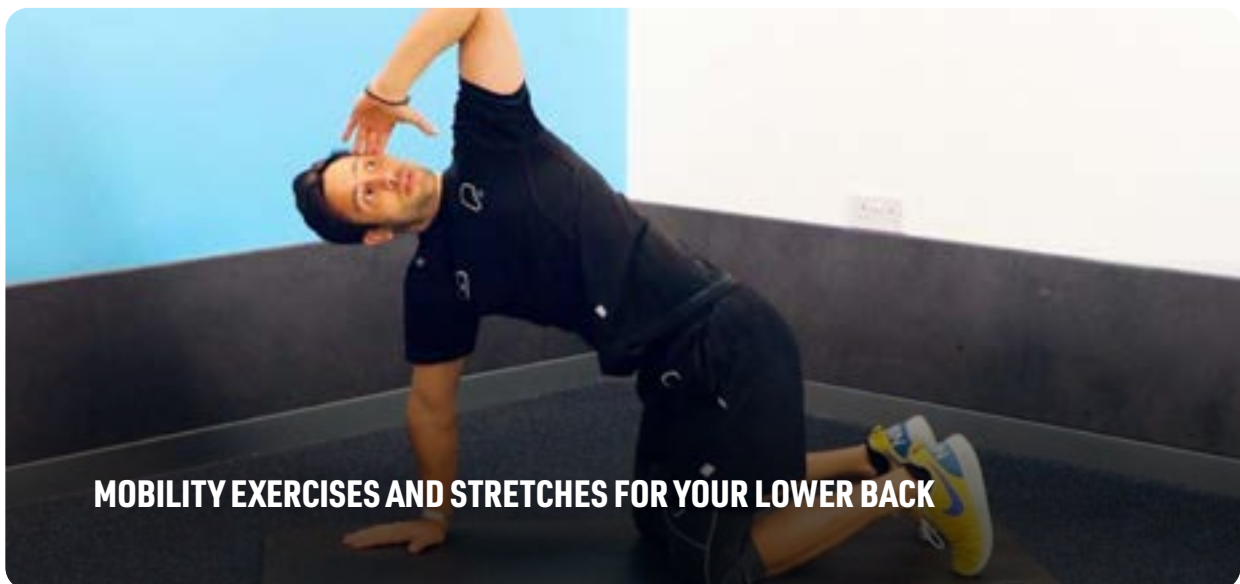
Check out the [PureGym blog](#) and social channels for static stretching ideas.



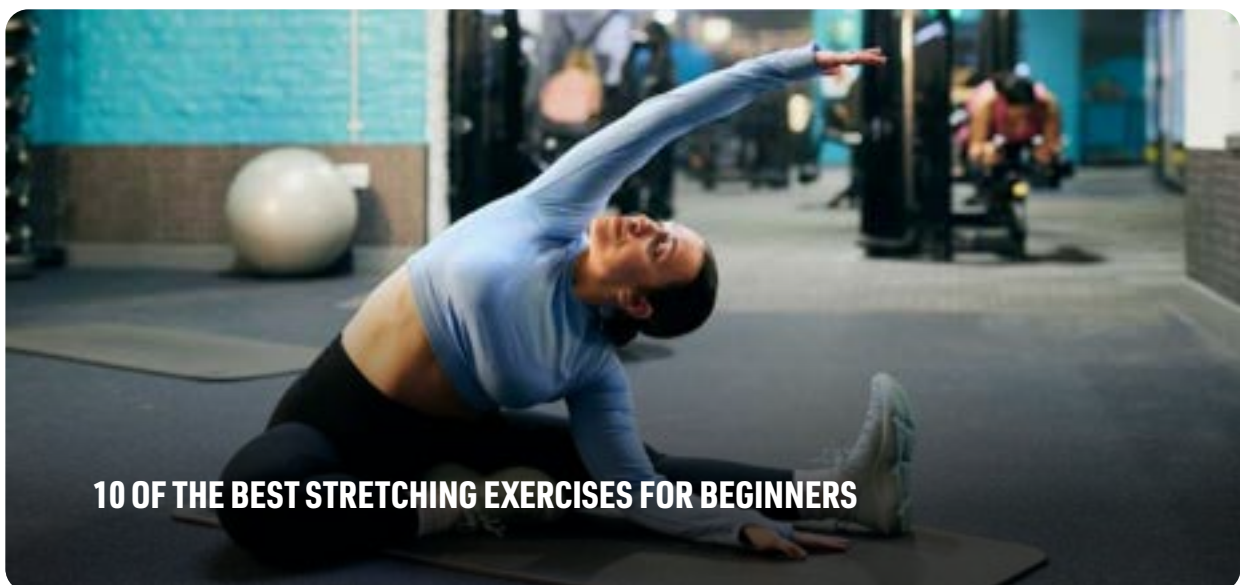




**6 OF THE BEST STRETCHES FOR TIGHT HAMSTRINGS**



**MOBILITY EXERCISES AND STRETCHES FOR YOUR LOWER BACK**



**10 OF THE BEST STRETCHING EXERCISES FOR BEGINNERS**



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# RPE

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## Your training plan includes target RPEs (Rate of Perceived Exhaustion) to aim for in each run.

### **EASY - 3/10 EFFORT**

At this level, you should be able to carry out a conversation the whole time you are running.

### **STEADY - 5/10 EFFORT**

You're able to speak comfortable but will feel a slight pinch on the lunge and legs. This may also be a beginner's half marathon pace.

### **HALF MARATHON PACE - 6/10**

You're able to speak in sentences but not carry out a full conversation. After running for a long period of time at this level, you'll feel a significant pinch on the legs and lungs but are able to continue.

### **TEMPO - 7/10 EFFORT**

You're able to say the odd word here and there while running at this level. These runs teach you how to be uncomfortable and stay in this place without giving up. For experienced runners, this is likely to be your half marathon pace.

### **HARD - 8/10 EFFORT**

At this level, it's unlikely you're able to speak and your run will feel uncomfortable. This is likely around or just below your 5km pace.



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# S&C

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**Strength and conditioning are an important part of a half marathon training plan as it helps to increase muscle strength and endurance which can help with performance, as well as prevent injuries.**

However, you need to be careful not to overdo this, as you'll already be placing your body under a significant amount of stress through the running element of your programme.

As you increase your mileage, you'll want to taper down your strength and conditioning. If you are following this marathon guide for the full 20 weeks, drop to bodyweight exercises or lower weights and higher reps from week 10 onwards, depending on your fitness levels.

We've included 4 sample strength sessions to follow, or you can access workouts on the free PureGym App. Depending on your level of confidence and experience, you may find it helpful to work with a Personal Trainer.

Many PureGym group fitness classes also offer S&C training, including:

- Body Pump – full body strength workout
- Legs, Bums, & Tums – lower body strength workout
- Strength 30/45 – functional strength workout
- Abs – core stability



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# SAMPLE S&C PROGRAMME

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## Schedule

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### WEEKS 1-4

For experienced runners/ lifters:  
3-4 strength sessions a week (max 1 hour)  
For new runners/ lifters: lower body strength  
workout (40 mins) + 10 mins core exercises

### WEEKS 5-9

2-3 strength sessions a week  
Effort level: 5-7/10

### WEEKS 10-14

Transition to bodyweight exercises or lower  
weights and higher reps depending on your  
fitness level

### WEEK 15-20

Drop strength sessions and focus on running,  
recovery, and stretches

## Core

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### CORE SESSION 1

Perform 3 sets of 30 seconds for each exercise,  
with 30 seconds recovery between each set.

- Crunch
- Reverse Crunch
- Dead Bugs
- Russian Twists
- Ankle Taps

### CORE SESSION 2

This is a circuit style session. Perform each  
exercise for 15 seconds, taking a 15 second rest  
before moving to the next exercise. Repeat for  
5-15 minutes.

- Plank
- Side Plank Left
- Side Plank Right
- Pendulums
- Standing Oblique Crunch



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# Lower Body

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## CARDIO WARM UP

Stationary bike

- 5 minutes at 3/10 effort
- 3 minutes build through 5-7/10 effort
- 2 minutes at 3/10 effort

## ACTIVATION

Perform 3 sets x 12, at effort level 5-6/10

- Glute Bridges
- Side Clams

## STRENGTH

Perform 3 sets x 12 with 60 second rest, effort level 5-7/10

- Leg Press
- Leg Extensions
- Prone Hamstring Curl
- Hip Adductor
- Hip Abductor
- Calf Raises, effort level 6
- Soleus Raises

## COOL DOWN

- 5 minutes easy cycle (effort level 3/10)

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# Upper Body

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## CARDIO WARM UP

cross trainer

- 5 minutes at 3/10 effort
- 3 minutes build through 5-7/10 effort
- 2 minutes at 3/10 effort

## ACTIVATION

- Scapula pinches
- Shoulder rolls & swings

## STRENGTH

Perform 3 sets x 12 with 60 second rest, effort level 6/10

- Face Pulls
- Lat Pull Downs
- Chest Press
- Back Extensions with or without Plate (not FRM)
- Reverse Flys Pec-Dec
- Bicep Curls
- Tricep Extensions



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# FINDING YOUR PACE

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If you're aiming to run the half marathon under a certain time, you'll need to know what pace to run. There are plenty of pace charts available online to help with this. We like Strava's pace calculator which estimates your finish time based on your ideal pace.

It's unlikely that your 6/10 effort half marathon pace at the beginning of the training plan will be the same as your target half marathon pace. As you progress through the training plan and build your endurance and speed, your 6/10 effort pace will increase.

## TRACKING YOUR RUNS

There are plenty of apps and smart devices that can be used to plan and track your runs. We've included a few to check out below, but there are lots of options to choose from!

- SportsTracks
- Map My Run
- Runkeeper
- Garmin Connect
- RUN interval

 **Strava pace calculator**



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# 16 WEEK HALF MARATHON TRAINING PLAN

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## WEEK 1

**Monday** 30-45 Minute Easy Run

**Tuesday** Strength Session: Lower Body + Core

**Wednesday** Rest Day

**Thursday** 10 Minute Easy Run, 10 Minute Steady Run, 10 Minute Easy Run

**Friday** Optional Strength Session: Upper Body + Core

**Saturday** Rest Day

**Sunday** 3 Mile Easy Run

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## WEEK 2

**Monday** 30-45 Minute Easy Run

**Tuesday** Strength Session: Lower Body + Core

**Wednesday** Rest Day

**Thursday** 10 Minute Easy Run, 15 Minute Steady Run, 10 Minute Easy Run

**Friday** Optional Strength Session: Upper Body + Core

**Saturday** Rest Day

**Sunday** 4 Mile Easy Run



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# WEEK 3

**Monday** 30-45 Minutes Easy Run

**Tuesday** Strength Session: Lower Body + Core

**Wednesday** Rest Day

**Thursday** 10 Minutes Easy Run, 20 Minutes Steady Run, 10 Minutes Easy Run

**Friday** Optional Strength Session: Upper Body + Core

**Saturday** Rest Day

**Sunday** 5 Mile Easy Run

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# WEEK 4

## RECOVERY (RACE)

**Monday** 30-50 Minute Easy Run

**Tuesday** Rest Day

**Wednesday** 10 Minutes Easy Run, 25 Minutes Steady Run, 10 Minutes Easy Run

**Thursday** Rest Day

**Friday** 1 Mile Easy Run with 5 x 15 seconds at half marathon pace (walk in between)

**Saturday** ParkRun/ 5km Time Trial

**Sunday** Rest Day

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# WEEK 5

**Monday** 35-55 Minute Easy Run

**Tuesday** Strength Session: Lower Body + Core

**Wednesday** Rest Day

**Thursday** 10 Minute Easy Run, 30 Minute Steady Run, 10 Minute Easy Run

**Friday** Optional Strength Session: Upper Body + Core

**Saturday** Rest Day

**Sunday** 10km Easy Run





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# WEEK 6

**Monday** 40-55 Minute Easy Run

**Tuesday** Strength Session: Lower Body + Core

**Wednesday** Rest Day

**Thursday** 10 Minute Easy Run, 35 Minute Steady Run, 10 Minute Easy Run

**Friday** Optional Strength Session: Upper Body + Core

**Saturday** Rest Day

**Sunday** 7 Mile Easy Run

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# WEEK 7

**Monday** 40-55 Minute Easy Run

**Tuesday** Strength Session: Lower Body + Core

**Wednesday** Rest Day

**Thursday** 10 Minute Easy Run, 40 Minute Steady Run, 10 Minute Easy Run

**Friday** Optional Strength Session: Upper Body + Core

**Saturday** Rest Day

**Sunday** 8 Mile Easy Run



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# WEEK 8

## RECOVERY WEEK

### (RACE)

**Monday** 30 Minute Easy Run

**Tuesday** Rest Day

**Wednesday** 30 Minute Steady Run

**Thursday** Rest Day

**Friday** Rest Day

**Saturday** 1 Mile Easy Run with 5 x 15 seconds at half marathon pace (walk in between)

**Sunday** 10km Race

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# WEEK 9

**Monday** 45-60 Minute Easy Run

**Tuesday** Strength Session: Lower Body + Core

**Wednesday** Rest Day

**Thursday** 50 Minute Steady Run

**Friday** Optional Strength Session: Upper Body + Core

**Saturday** Rest Day

**Sunday** 9 Mile Easy Run



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# WEEK 10

**Monday** 45-60 Minute Easy Run

**Tuesday** Strength Session: Lower Body + Core

**Wednesday** Rest Day

**Thursday** 55 Minute Steady Run

**Friday** Optional Strength Session: Upper Body + Core

**Saturday** Rest Day

**Sunday** 10 Mile Easy Run

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# WEEK 11

**Monday** 1 Hour Easy Run

**Tuesday** Strength Session: Lower Body + Core

**Wednesday** Rest Day

**Thursday** 1 Hour Steady Run

**Friday** Optional Strength Session: Upper Body + Core

**Saturday** Rest Day

**Sunday** 11 Mile Easy Run



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# WEEK 12

**Monday** 30 Minute Easy Run

**Tuesday** Rest Day

**Wednesday** Rest Day

**Thursday** 30 Minute Steady Run

**Friday** Rest Day

**Saturday** 1 Mile Easy Run With 5 X 15 Seconds At Half Marathon Pace  
(Walk In Between)

**Sunday** 10km Race (Start At Half Marathon Pace And If You Feel Ready At Half  
Way To Go Quicker, Feel Free)

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# WEEK 13

**Monday** 1 Hour Easy Run

**Tuesday** Strength Session: Lower Body + Core

**Wednesday** Rest Day

**Thursday** 1 Hour 5 Minute Steady Run

**Friday** Optional Strength Session: Upper Body + Core

**Saturday** 1 Mile Easy Run With 5 X 15 Seconds At Half Marathon Pace (Walk In  
Between)

**Sunday** 12 Mile Easy Run



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# WEEK 14

**Monday** 1 Hour Easy Run

**Tuesday** Strength Session: Lower Body + Core

**Wednesday** Rest Day

**Thursday** 1 Hour 10 Minute Steady Run

**Friday** Optional Strength Session: Upper Body + Core

**Saturday** 1 Mile Easy Run With 5 X 15 Seconds At Half Marathon Pace (Walk In Between)

**Sunday** 11 Mile Easy Run

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# WEEK 15

**Monday** 1 Hour Easy Run

**Tuesday** Rest Day

**Wednesday** Rest Day

**Thursday** 1 Hour 15 Minute Steady Run

**Friday** Optional Strength Session: Upper Body + Core

**Saturday** 1 Mile Easy Run With 5 X 15 Seconds At Half Marathon Pace (Walk In Between)

**Sunday** 5 Mile Easy Run



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# WEEK 16

## RACE WEEK

**Monday** 30 Minute Easy Run

**Tuesday** Rest Day

**Wednesday** 30 Minute Easy Run

**Thursday** Rest Day

**Friday** Rest Day

**Saturday** 1 Mile Easy Run With 5 X 15 Seconds At Half Marathon Pace (Walk In Between)

**Sunday** Half Marathon

**Day After:** 20 Mins Easy Cycle, Stretch

