



FREE TRAINING PLAN

Sub 4 Hour Marathon Training Plan

Build the endurance to hold your pace: 18 weeks, five runs a week, planned recovery and a proper taper.

GOAL

Sub 4 hours

Race rhythm: 5:38/km / 9:04/mile.

DURATION

18 weeks

A complete build ending on race day.

TRAINING WEEK

5 runs

Two rest days; four runs in race week.

PEAK MILEAGE

44 miles / 71 km

Longest run: up to 20 miles / 32 km.

IS THIS PLAN RIGHT FOR YOU?

Established runners consistently covering around 25 miles / 40 km a week, comfortable with a 10-mile / 16-km long run and able to sustain five running days. A recent half marathon around 1:50 is a useful speed indicator, but endurance, recovery and training history matter too.



YOUR COMPLETE PLAN ONLINE

Scan to view the marathon schedule

Website, PDF and email copy available.

<https://www.runningfastr.com/marathon-training-plan/sub-4-hour-marathon-training-plan/>

Week 1: Settle into the routine

Weekly total: 24 miles / 38.6 km. Build consistency while keeping easy days easy.

Monday	REST / RECOVERY Rest day Rest after the long run. Gentle walking or mobility is optional.
Tuesday	EASY RUN / BREAKEVEN 3 miles / 4.8 km easy Conversational effort. Pace: Effort first; typically 6:20-7:00/km / 10:12-11:16/mile
Wednesday	EASY RUN / BREAKEVEN 4 miles / 6.4 km easy Conversational effort. Optional 15-20 minutes of familiar strength work afterwards; reduce this during the taper. Pace: Effort first; typically 6:20-7:00/km / 10:12-11:16/mile
Thursday	EASY RUN / BREAKEVEN 4 miles / 6.4 km easy All easy. Finish relaxed; this week is about settling into five running days. Pace: Conversational effort
Friday	REST / RECOVERY Rest day Rest. Avoid tiring cross-training or heavy strength work before the weekend.
Saturday	EASY RUN / BREAKEVEN 3 miles / 4.8 km easy Conversational effort. Keep this genuinely easy before Sunday. Pace: Effort first; typically 6:20-7:00/km / 10:12-11:16/mile
Sunday	LONG RUN / BREAKEVEN 10 miles / 16.1 km easy long run Run at conversational effort and practise the breakfast, drinks and fuel you intend to use on race day. Shorten to around 3 hours if the prescribed distance would take substantially longer; do not speed up to fit it in. Pace: Conversational effort; walk briefly for fuel if helpful

Week 2: Build easy endurance

Weekly total: 26 miles / 41.8 km. Build consistency while keeping easy days easy.

Monday	REST / RECOVERY Rest day Rest after the long run. Gentle walking or mobility is optional.
Tuesday	EASY RUN / BREAKEVEN 3 miles / 4.8 km easy Conversational effort. Pace: Effort first; typically 6:20-7:00/km / 10:12-11:16/mile
Wednesday	EASY RUN / BREAKEVEN 5 miles / 8 km easy Conversational effort. Optional 15-20 minutes of familiar strength work afterwards; reduce this during the taper. Pace: Effort first; typically 6:20-7:00/km / 10:12-11:16/mile
Thursday	EASY RUN / BREAKEVEN 4 miles / 6.4 km easy All easy. If feeling fresh, include 4 x 20-second relaxed strides with at least 60 seconds easy between them. Pace: Conversational effort
Friday	REST / RECOVERY Rest day Rest. Avoid tiring cross-training or heavy strength work before the weekend.
Saturday	EASY RUN / BREAKEVEN 3 miles / 4.8 km easy Conversational effort. Keep this genuinely easy before Sunday. Pace: Effort first; typically 6:20-7:00/km / 10:12-11:16/mile
Sunday	LONG RUN / BREAKEVEN 11 miles / 17.7 km easy long run Run at conversational effort and practise the breakfast, drinks and fuel you intend to use on race day. Shorten to around 3 hours if the prescribed distance would take substantially longer; do not speed up to fit it in. Pace: Conversational effort; walk briefly for fuel if helpful

Week 3: Find marathon rhythm

Weekly total: 28 miles / 45.1 km. Build consistency while keeping easy days easy.

Monday	REST / RECOVERY Rest day Rest after the long run. Gentle walking or mobility is optional.
Tuesday	EASY RUN / BREAKEVEN 4 miles / 6.4 km easy Conversational effort. Pace: Effort first; typically 6:20-7:00/km / 10:12-11:16/mile
Wednesday	EASY RUN / BREAKEVEN 5 miles / 8 km easy Conversational effort. Optional 15-20 minutes of familiar strength work afterwards; reduce this during the taper. Pace: Effort first; typically 6:20-7:00/km / 10:12-11:16/mile
Thursday	MARATHON PACE / BREAKTHROUGH 4 miles / 6.4 km including marathon pace 1 mile easy, 2 miles at marathon pace, 1 mile easy. Pace: Marathon sections: 5:38/km / 9:04/mile; warm-up and cool-down easy
Friday	REST / RECOVERY Rest day Rest. Avoid tiring cross-training or heavy strength work before the weekend.
Saturday	EASY RUN / BREAKEVEN 3 miles / 4.8 km easy Conversational effort. Keep this genuinely easy before Sunday. Pace: Effort first; typically 6:20-7:00/km / 10:12-11:16/mile
Sunday	LONG RUN / BREAKEVEN 12 miles / 19.3 km easy long run Run at conversational effort and practise the breakfast, drinks and fuel you intend to use on race day. Shorten to around 3 hours if the prescribed distance would take substantially longer; do not speed up to fit it in. Pace: Conversational effort; walk briefly for fuel if helpful

Week 4: Recover and absorb

Weekly total: 23 miles / 37 km. Recovery week: let the previous training settle.

Monday	REST / RECOVERY Rest day Rest after the long run. Gentle walking or mobility is optional.
Tuesday	EASY RUN / BREAKEVEN 3 miles / 4.8 km easy Conversational effort. Pace: Effort first; typically 6:20-7:00/km / 10:12-11:16/mile
Wednesday	EASY RUN / BREAKEVEN 4 miles / 6.4 km easy Conversational effort. Optional 15-20 minutes of familiar strength work afterwards; reduce this during the taper. Pace: Effort first; typically 6:20-7:00/km / 10:12-11:16/mile
Thursday	EASY RUN / BREAKEVEN 4 miles / 6.4 km easy All easy. Reduce effort as well as mileage this week. Pace: Conversational effort
Friday	REST / RECOVERY Rest day Rest. Avoid tiring cross-training or heavy strength work before the weekend.
Saturday	EASY RUN / BREAKEVEN 3 miles / 4.8 km easy Conversational effort. Keep this genuinely easy before Sunday. Pace: Effort first; typically 6:20-7:00/km / 10:12-11:16/mile
Sunday	LONG RUN / BREAKEVEN 9 miles / 14.5 km easy long run Run at conversational effort and practise the breakfast, drinks and fuel you intend to use on race day. Shorten to around 3 hours if the prescribed distance would take substantially longer; do not speed up to fit it in. Pace: Conversational effort; walk briefly for fuel if helpful

Week 5: Extend the long run

Weekly total: 30 miles / 48.3 km. Build consistency while keeping easy days easy.

Monday	REST / RECOVERY Rest day Rest after the long run. Gentle walking or mobility is optional.
Tuesday	EASY RUN / BREAKEVEN 4 miles / 6.4 km easy Conversational effort. Pace: Effort first; typically 6:20-7:00/km / 10:12-11:16/mile
Wednesday	EASY RUN / BREAKEVEN 5 miles / 8 km easy Conversational effort. Optional 15-20 minutes of familiar strength work afterwards; reduce this during the taper. Pace: Effort first; typically 6:20-7:00/km / 10:12-11:16/mile
Thursday	EASY RUN / BREAKEVEN 5 miles / 8 km easy All easy. If feeling fresh, include 4 x 20-second relaxed strides with full easy recovery. Pace: Conversational effort
Friday	REST / RECOVERY Rest day Rest. Avoid tiring cross-training or heavy strength work before the weekend.
Saturday	EASY RUN / BREAKEVEN 3 miles / 4.8 km easy Conversational effort. Keep this genuinely easy before Sunday. Pace: Effort first; typically 6:20-7:00/km / 10:12-11:16/mile
Sunday	LONG RUN / BREAKEVEN 13 miles / 20.9 km easy long run Run at conversational effort and practise the breakfast, drinks and fuel you intend to use on race day. Shorten to around 3 hours if the prescribed distance would take substantially longer; do not speed up to fit it in. Pace: Conversational effort; walk briefly for fuel if helpful

Week 6: Add controlled pace work

Weekly total: 32 miles / 51.5 km. Build consistency while keeping easy days easy.

Monday	REST / RECOVERY Rest day Rest after the long run. Gentle walking or mobility is optional.
Tuesday	EASY RUN / BREAKEVEN 4 miles / 6.4 km easy Conversational effort. Pace: Effort first; typically 6:20-7:00/km / 10:12-11:16/mile
Wednesday	EASY RUN / BREAKEVEN 6 miles / 9.7 km easy Conversational effort. Optional 15-20 minutes of familiar strength work afterwards; reduce this during the taper. Pace: Effort first; typically 6:20-7:00/km / 10:12-11:16/mile
Thursday	MARATHON PACE / BREAKTHROUGH 5 miles / 8 km including marathon pace 1 mile easy, 3 miles at marathon pace, 1 mile easy. Pace: Marathon sections: 5:38/km / 9:04/mile; warm-up and cool-down easy
Friday	REST / RECOVERY Rest day Rest. Avoid tiring cross-training or heavy strength work before the weekend.
Saturday	EASY RUN / BREAKEVEN 3 miles / 4.8 km easy Conversational effort. Keep this genuinely easy before Sunday. Pace: Effort first; typically 6:20-7:00/km / 10:12-11:16/mile
Sunday	LONG RUN / BREAKEVEN 14 miles / 22.5 km easy long run Run at conversational effort and practise the breakfast, drinks and fuel you intend to use on race day. Shorten to around 3 hours if the prescribed distance would take substantially longer; do not speed up to fit it in. Pace: Conversational effort; walk briefly for fuel if helpful

Week 7: Practise fuelling

Weekly total: 34 miles / 54.7 km. Build consistency while keeping easy days easy.

Monday	REST / RECOVERY Rest day Rest after the long run. Gentle walking or mobility is optional.
Tuesday	EASY RUN / BREAKEVEN 4 miles / 6.4 km easy Conversational effort. Pace: Effort first; typically 6:20-7:00/km / 10:12-11:16/mile
Wednesday	EASY RUN / BREAKEVEN 6 miles / 9.7 km easy Conversational effort. Optional 15-20 minutes of familiar strength work afterwards; reduce this during the taper. Pace: Effort first; typically 6:20-7:00/km / 10:12-11:16/mile
Thursday	EASY RUN / BREAKEVEN 6 miles / 9.7 km easy All easy. Keep the energy for Sunday rather than adding a second demanding session. Pace: Conversational effort
Friday	REST / RECOVERY Rest day Rest. Avoid tiring cross-training or heavy strength work before the weekend.
Saturday	EASY RUN / BREAKEVEN 3 miles / 4.8 km easy Conversational effort. Keep this genuinely easy before Sunday. Pace: Effort first; typically 6:20-7:00/km / 10:12-11:16/mile
Sunday	LONG RUN / BREAKEVEN 15 miles / 24.1 km easy long run Run at conversational effort and practise the breakfast, drinks and fuel you intend to use on race day. Shorten to around 3 hours if the prescribed distance would take substantially longer; do not speed up to fit it in. Pace: Conversational effort; walk briefly for fuel if helpful

Week 8: Recover and reset

Weekly total: 27 miles / 43.5 km. Recovery week: let the previous training settle.

Monday	REST / RECOVERY Rest day Rest after the long run. Gentle walking or mobility is optional.
Tuesday	EASY RUN / BREAKEVEN 3 miles / 4.8 km easy Conversational effort. Pace: Effort first; typically 6:20-7:00/km / 10:12-11:16/mile
Wednesday	EASY RUN / BREAKEVEN 5 miles / 8 km easy Conversational effort. Optional 15-20 minutes of familiar strength work afterwards; reduce this during the taper. Pace: Effort first; typically 6:20-7:00/km / 10:12-11:16/mile
Thursday	EASY RUN / BREAKEVEN 5 miles / 8 km easy All easy. Take the lighter week even if you feel you could do more. Pace: Conversational effort
Friday	REST / RECOVERY Rest day Rest. Avoid tiring cross-training or heavy strength work before the weekend.
Saturday	EASY RUN / BREAKEVEN 3 miles / 4.8 km easy Conversational effort. Keep this genuinely easy before Sunday. Pace: Effort first; typically 6:20-7:00/km / 10:12-11:16/mile
Sunday	LONG RUN / BREAKEVEN 11 miles / 17.7 km easy long run Run at conversational effort and practise the breakfast, drinks and fuel you intend to use on race day. Shorten to around 3 hours if the prescribed distance would take substantially longer; do not speed up to fit it in. Pace: Conversational effort; walk briefly for fuel if helpful

Week 9: Build marathon endurance

Weekly total: 36 miles / 57.9 km. Build consistency while keeping easy days easy.

Monday	REST / RECOVERY Rest day Rest after the long run. Gentle walking or mobility is optional.
Tuesday	EASY RUN / BREAKEVEN 4 miles / 6.4 km easy Conversational effort. Pace: Effort first; typically 6:20-7:00/km / 10:12-11:16/mile
Wednesday	EASY RUN / BREAKEVEN 7 miles / 11.3 km easy Conversational effort. Optional 15-20 minutes of familiar strength work afterwards; reduce this during the taper. Pace: Effort first; typically 6:20-7:00/km / 10:12-11:16/mile
Thursday	MARATHON PACE / BREAKTHROUGH 6 miles / 9.7 km including marathon pace 1 mile easy, 4 miles at marathon pace, 1 mile easy. Pace: Marathon sections: 5:38/km / 9:04/mile; warm-up and cool-down easy
Friday	REST / RECOVERY Rest day Rest. Avoid tiring cross-training or heavy strength work before the weekend.
Saturday	EASY RUN / BREAKEVEN 3 miles / 4.8 km easy Conversational effort. Keep this genuinely easy before Sunday. Pace: Effort first; typically 6:20-7:00/km / 10:12-11:16/mile
Sunday	LONG RUN / BREAKEVEN 16 miles / 25.7 km easy long run Run at conversational effort and practise the breakfast, drinks and fuel you intend to use on race day. Shorten to around 3 hours if the prescribed distance would take substantially longer; do not speed up to fit it in. Pace: Conversational effort; walk briefly for fuel if helpful

Week 10: Hold your rhythm

Weekly total: 38 miles / 61.2 km. Build consistency while keeping easy days easy.

Monday	REST / RECOVERY Rest day Rest after the long run. Gentle walking or mobility is optional.
Tuesday	EASY RUN / BREAKEVEN 5 miles / 8 km easy Conversational effort. Pace: Effort first; typically 6:20-7:00/km / 10:12-11:16/mile
Wednesday	EASY RUN / BREAKEVEN 7 miles / 11.3 km easy Conversational effort. Optional 15-20 minutes of familiar strength work afterwards; reduce this during the taper. Pace: Effort first; typically 6:20-7:00/km / 10:12-11:16/mile
Thursday	EASY RUN / BREAKEVEN 6 miles / 9.7 km easy All easy. Keep Sunday controlled and protect recovery. Pace: Conversational effort
Friday	REST / RECOVERY Rest day Rest. Avoid tiring cross-training or heavy strength work before the weekend.
Saturday	EASY RUN / BREAKEVEN 3 miles / 4.8 km easy Conversational effort. Keep this genuinely easy before Sunday. Pace: Effort first; typically 6:20-7:00/km / 10:12-11:16/mile
Sunday	LONG RUN / BREAKEVEN 17 miles / 27.4 km easy long run Run at conversational effort and practise the breakfast, drinks and fuel you intend to use on race day. Shorten to around 3 hours if the prescribed distance would take substantially longer; do not speed up to fit it in. Pace: Conversational effort; walk briefly for fuel if helpful

Week 11: Rehearse race pace

Weekly total: 40 miles / 64.4 km. Build consistency while keeping easy days easy.

Monday	REST / RECOVERY Rest day Rest after the long run. Gentle walking or mobility is optional.
Tuesday	EASY RUN / BREAKEVEN 5 miles / 8 km easy Conversational effort. Pace: Effort first; typically 6:20-7:00/km / 10:12-11:16/mile
Wednesday	EASY RUN / BREAKEVEN 7 miles / 11.3 km easy Conversational effort. Optional 15-20 minutes of familiar strength work afterwards; reduce this during the taper. Pace: Effort first; typically 6:20-7:00/km / 10:12-11:16/mile
Thursday	EASY RUN / BREAKEVEN 7 miles / 11.3 km easy All easy. Sunday contains this week's marathon-pace work. Pace: Conversational effort
Friday	REST / RECOVERY Rest day Rest. Avoid tiring cross-training or heavy strength work before the weekend.
Saturday	EASY RUN / BREAKEVEN 3 miles / 4.8 km easy Conversational effort. Keep this genuinely easy before Sunday. Pace: Effort first; typically 6:20-7:00/km / 10:12-11:16/mile
Sunday	LONG RUN / BREAKTHROUGH 18 miles / 29 km including marathon pace 12 miles easy, 4 miles at marathon pace, 2 miles easy. Practise race-day fuelling. If effort drifts or fatigue is high, run the whole session easy or shorten it. Pace: Marathon sections: 5:38/km / 9:04/mile; remainder easy

Week 12: Freshen up

Weekly total: 31 miles / 49.9 km. Recovery week: let the previous training settle.

Monday	REST / RECOVERY Rest day Rest after the long run. Gentle walking or mobility is optional.
Tuesday	EASY RUN / BREAKEVEN 4 miles / 6.4 km easy Conversational effort. Pace: Effort first; typically 6:20-7:00/km / 10:12-11:16/mile
Wednesday	EASY RUN / BREAKEVEN 6 miles / 9.7 km easy Conversational effort. Optional 15-20 minutes of familiar strength work afterwards; reduce this during the taper. Pace: Effort first; typically 6:20-7:00/km / 10:12-11:16/mile
Thursday	EASY RUN / BREAKEVEN 5 miles / 8 km easy All easy. Finish fresher than you started. Pace: Conversational effort
Friday	REST / RECOVERY Rest day Rest. Avoid tiring cross-training or heavy strength work before the weekend.
Saturday	EASY RUN / BREAKEVEN 3 miles / 4.8 km easy Conversational effort. Keep this genuinely easy before Sunday. Pace: Effort first; typically 6:20-7:00/km / 10:12-11:16/mile
Sunday	LONG RUN / BREAKEVEN 13 miles / 20.9 km easy long run Run at conversational effort and practise the breakfast, drinks and fuel you intend to use on race day. Shorten to around 3 hours if the prescribed distance would take substantially longer; do not speed up to fit it in. Pace: Conversational effort; walk briefly for fuel if helpful

Week 13: Build the final endurance

Weekly total: 42 miles / 67.6 km. Build consistency while keeping easy days easy.

Monday	REST / RECOVERY Rest day Rest after the long run. Gentle walking or mobility is optional.
Tuesday	EASY RUN / BREAKEVEN 5 miles / 8 km easy Conversational effort. Pace: Effort first; typically 6:20-7:00/km / 10:12-11:16/mile
Wednesday	EASY RUN / BREAKEVEN 7 miles / 11.3 km easy Conversational effort. Optional 15-20 minutes of familiar strength work afterwards; reduce this during the taper. Pace: Effort first; typically 6:20-7:00/km / 10:12-11:16/mile
Thursday	MARATHON PACE / BREAKTHROUGH 7 miles / 11.3 km including marathon pace 1 mile easy, 5 miles at marathon pace, 1 mile easy. Pace: Marathon sections: 5:38/km / 9:04/mile; warm-up and cool-down easy
Friday	REST / RECOVERY Rest day Rest. Avoid tiring cross-training or heavy strength work before the weekend.
Saturday	EASY RUN / BREAKEVEN 4 miles / 6.4 km easy Conversational effort. Keep this genuinely easy before Sunday. Pace: Effort first; typically 6:20-7:00/km / 10:12-11:16/mile
Sunday	LONG RUN / BREAKEVEN 19 miles / 30.6 km easy long run Run at conversational effort and practise the breakfast, drinks and fuel you intend to use on race day. Shorten to around 3 hours if the prescribed distance would take substantially longer; do not speed up to fit it in. Pace: Conversational effort; walk briefly for fuel if helpful

Week 14: Peak with control

Weekly total: 44 miles / 70.8 km. Build consistency while keeping easy days easy.

Monday	REST / RECOVERY Rest day Rest after the long run. Gentle walking or mobility is optional.
Tuesday	EASY RUN / BREAKEVEN 5 miles / 8 km easy Conversational effort. Pace: Effort first; typically 6:20-7:00/km / 10:12-11:16/mile
Wednesday	EASY RUN / BREAKEVEN 8 miles / 12.9 km easy Conversational effort. Optional 15-20 minutes of familiar strength work afterwards; reduce this during the taper. Pace: Effort first; typically 6:20-7:00/km / 10:12-11:16/mile
Thursday	EASY RUN / BREAKEVEN 7 miles / 11.3 km easy All easy. The longest run is this week's main session. Pace: Conversational effort
Friday	REST / RECOVERY Rest day Rest. Avoid tiring cross-training or heavy strength work before the weekend.
Saturday	EASY RUN / BREAKEVEN 4 miles / 6.4 km easy Conversational effort. Keep this genuinely easy before Sunday. Pace: Effort first; typically 6:20-7:00/km / 10:12-11:16/mile
Sunday	LONG RUN / BREAKEVEN 20 miles / 32.2 km easy long run Run at conversational effort and practise the breakfast, drinks and fuel you intend to use on race day. Shorten to around 3 hours if the prescribed distance would take substantially longer; do not speed up to fit it in. Pace: Conversational effort; walk briefly for fuel if helpful

Week 15: Rehearse and consolidate

Weekly total: 35 miles / 56.3 km. Build consistency while keeping easy days easy.

Monday	REST / RECOVERY Rest day Rest after the long run. Gentle walking or mobility is optional.
Tuesday	EASY RUN / BREAKEVEN 4 miles / 6.4 km easy Conversational effort. Pace: Effort first; typically 6:20-7:00/km / 10:12-11:16/mile
Wednesday	EASY RUN / BREAKEVEN 6 miles / 9.7 km easy Conversational effort. Optional 15-20 minutes of familiar strength work afterwards; reduce this during the taper. Pace: Effort first; typically 6:20-7:00/km / 10:12-11:16/mile
Thursday	EASY RUN / BREAKEVEN 6 miles / 9.7 km easy All easy. Keep the legs fresh for the final race-pace rehearsal. Pace: Conversational effort
Friday	REST / RECOVERY Rest day Rest. Avoid tiring cross-training or heavy strength work before the weekend.
Saturday	EASY RUN / BREAKEVEN 3 miles / 4.8 km easy Conversational effort. Keep this genuinely easy before Sunday. Pace: Effort first; typically 6:20-7:00/km / 10:12-11:16/mile
Sunday	LONG RUN / BREAKTHROUGH 16 miles / 25.7 km including marathon pace 10 miles easy, 4 miles at marathon pace, 2 miles easy. This is a controlled rehearsal, not a time trial. Finish easy and begin freshening up. Pace: Marathon sections: 5:38/km / 9:04/mile; remainder easy

Week 16: Begin the taper

Weekly total: 28 miles / 45.1 km. Taper: reduce volume, keep a little race rhythm and arrive rested.

Monday	REST / RECOVERY Rest day Rest after the long run. Gentle walking or mobility is optional.
Tuesday	EASY RUN / BREAKEVEN 4 miles / 6.4 km easy Conversational effort. Pace: Effort first; typically 6:20-7:00/km / 10:12-11:16/mile
Wednesday	EASY RUN / BREAKEVEN 5 miles / 8 km easy Conversational effort. Optional 15-20 minutes of familiar strength work afterwards; reduce this during the taper. Pace: Effort first; typically 6:20-7:00/km / 10:12-11:16/mile
Thursday	MARATHON PACE / BREAKTHROUGH 4 miles / 6.4 km including marathon pace 1 mile easy, 2 miles at marathon pace, 1 mile easy. Pace: Marathon sections: 5:38/km / 9:04/mile; warm-up and cool-down easy
Friday	REST / RECOVERY Rest day Rest. Avoid tiring cross-training or heavy strength work before the weekend.
Saturday	EASY RUN / BREAKEVEN 3 miles / 4.8 km easy Conversational effort. Keep this genuinely easy before Sunday. Pace: Effort first; typically 6:20-7:00/km / 10:12-11:16/mile
Sunday	LONG RUN / BREAKEVEN 12 miles / 19.3 km easy long run Run at conversational effort and practise the breakfast, drinks and fuel you intend to use on race day. Shorten to around 3 hours if the prescribed distance would take substantially longer; do not speed up to fit it in. Pace: Conversational effort; walk briefly for fuel if helpful

Week 17: Keep the legs moving

Weekly total: 20 miles / 32.2 km. Taper: reduce volume, keep a little race rhythm and arrive rested.

Monday	REST / RECOVERY Rest day Rest after the long run. Gentle walking or mobility is optional.
Tuesday	EASY RUN / BREAKEVEN 3 miles / 4.8 km easy Conversational effort. Pace: Effort first; typically 6:20-7:00/km / 10:12-11:16/mile
Wednesday	EASY RUN / BREAKEVEN 4 miles / 6.4 km easy Conversational effort. Optional 15-20 minutes of familiar strength work afterwards; reduce this during the taper. Pace: Effort first; typically 6:20-7:00/km / 10:12-11:16/mile
Thursday	MARATHON PACE / BREAKTHROUGH 3 miles / 4.8 km including marathon pace 1 mile easy, 1 mile at marathon pace, 1 mile easy. Pace: Marathon sections: 5:38/km / 9:04/mile; warm-up and cool-down easy
Friday	REST / RECOVERY Rest day Rest. Avoid tiring cross-training or heavy strength work before the weekend.
Saturday	EASY RUN / BREAKEVEN 2 miles / 3.2 km easy Conversational effort. Keep this genuinely easy before Sunday. Pace: Effort first; typically 6:20-7:00/km / 10:12-11:16/mile
Sunday	LONG RUN / BREAKEVEN 8 miles / 12.9 km easy long run Run at conversational effort and practise the breakfast, drinks and fuel you intend to use on race day. Shorten to around 3 hours if the prescribed distance would take substantially longer; do not speed up to fit it in. Pace: Conversational effort; walk briefly for fuel if helpful

Week 18: Race week

Weekly total: 35.2 miles / 56.7 km including the marathon. Taper: reduce volume, keep a little race rhythm and arrive rested.

Monday	REST / RECOVERY Rest day Rest. Prepare your travel and race kit.
Tuesday	EASY RUN / BREAKEVEN 3 miles / 4.8 km easy Conversational effort. Pace: Effort first; typically 6:20-7:00/km / 10:12-11:16/mile
Wednesday	REST / RECOVERY Rest day Rest. No extra run to make up for the reduced mileage.
Thursday	MARATHON PACE / BREAKTHROUGH 4 miles / 6.4 km including marathon pace 1 mile easy, 2 miles at marathon pace, 1 mile easy. Finish comfortable; no fitness tests. Pace: Marathon sections: 5:38/km / 9:04/mile; warm-up and cool-down easy
Friday	REST / RECOVERY Rest day Rest. Avoid tiring cross-training or heavy strength work before the weekend.
Saturday	EASY RUN / BREAKEVEN 2 miles / 3.2 km easy Conversational effort. Short shakeout only. Rest instead if that suits you better. Pace: Effort first; typically 6:20-7:00/km / 10:12-11:16/mile
Sunday	RACE / BREAKTHROUGH Marathon: 26.2 miles / 42.195 km Start controlled. Settle towards 5:38/km using official course markers rather than chasing GPS distance. Use your practised fuelling strategy and adjust the goal for conditions or how you feel. Pace: Target average: 5:38/km / 9:04/mile

Paces and session guide

RACE THRESHOLD

5:41/km / 9:09/mile

Rounded average for exactly 4:00:00 over 42.195 km.

RACE PACE

5:38/km / 9:04/mile

An even average of 5:38/km gives about 3:57:42. A modest margin, not permission to bank time early.

EASY AND LONG RUNS

Conversational effort

Typically 6:20-7:00/km / 10:12-11:16/mile for a runner ready for this target. Run slower when heat, hills or fatigue require it. Use current fitness rather than forcing a goal-based easy pace.

STRIDES

Relaxed, quick and controlled

20 seconds with at least 60 seconds easy recovery. Never sprint; keep them within the day's total distance.

Build your endurance

Most of the schedule is deliberately easy. Consistency matters more than winning a training run.

Easy and medium runs

Keep a conversational effort. Wednesday adds aerobic volume; it is not another tempo day.

Long runs

Progress gradually, with shorter recovery weeks. For the longest easy runs, use around three hours as a practical cap if covering the full distance would take substantially longer. The listed mileage is a maximum, not a requirement to run faster.

Rest and strength

Monday and Friday are rest days. Optional familiar strength work can follow an easy run; avoid soreness before the long run and reduce it during the taper.

Practise marathon rhythm

Selected sessions rehearse race pace. A demanding long run replaces the midweek pace session that week.

Marathon-pace sections

Aim near 5:38/km / 9:04/mile only when controlled. Use the distances given; warm-ups and cool-downs are already included in the total.

Fuelling rehearsal

Start practising fuel and drinks during the early long runs. Check carbohydrate per serving, take fuel regularly and test the actual products available at your race. Work towards a strategy you tolerate; race day is not the time to experiment.

Taper and race day

Reduce mileage over the final three weeks, keep short touches of marathon pace and resist fitness tests. Use official distance markers to check progress and adjust for heat, hills or unusual fatigue.

How to use this plan

1. Count back 18 weeks from your Sunday race. This is a complete race-date build, not a four-week block to repeat.
2. All session distances include warm-ups, cool-downs, strides and easy recoveries. Weekly totals show the full prescribed distance; shortening a long run reduces that total.
3. Move days to suit your week while preserving recovery before quality sessions and the long run. Do not squeeze missed sessions together.
4. After a missed week, resume conservatively at a manageable earlier load. After a longer interruption, reassess the target and race date rather than skipping ahead.
5. If marathon pace becomes a hard effort, run easy and review the target. If pain changes your stride or worsens, stop and seek appropriate advice.
6. Use the race-pace buffer for normal course and pacing variation, not a fast start. A time goal depends on endurance, conditions and consistent preparation.

Free plan. No subscription required. Pick your target, follow the plan, run faster.

Training guidance is general information, not personalised medical advice. Reduce or stop training if pain changes your stride or worsens.