17 Weeks to Improve Your Marathon Performance

If you want to break four hours in a marathon, this plan is for you

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📷 **MARATHONDYNAMICS**

The Royal Victoria Marathon

This training plan is for runners who have either run marathons before, or who have recently completed a 10-kilometre race or half-marathon (or can run those distances comfortably), AND are currently maintaining weekly training volume of at least 25 plus kilometres a week (on at least three runs/week), before starting. It is primarily designed for those looking to improve marathon performance and/or run a sub four-hour time goal.

It is strongly advised—especially for those aged 35 and over—and/or who live largely sedentary lives, to include 30-minute brisk walks five/six times a week during training. Supplementary running-specific strength training (especially lower body and core) is recommended at least twice a week—to help stay injury-free.

TRAINING TIPS

- Each week, there are up to three quality workouts—Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday. These drive 80 per cent of your improvement and fitness, so make them your key training priority.
- Workouts can be shuffled within a given week, and key runs can even be moved between weeks, to accommodate personal circumstances, but strive not to break the "hard/easy" principle (quality runs on back-to-back days) or do runs of the same character in back-to-back weeks.
- Be flexible. It's perfectly fine to adjust any given run distance by +/- 1 to 2 kilometres, and any given pace by +/- 5 to 10 seconds/ kilometre. even under ideal run conditions.
- Missed runs, by more than one day, are best left behind. Re-focus and recommit to current/future runs rather than trying to play catch up and squeezing in extra volume or frequency in an effort to make up. The goal is consistency and progress, not perfection!
- Prescribed paces assume ideal conditions, both external, such as temperature, flat course, low winds, and internal—your own health, stress level, etc. Please adjust paces to reflect those circumstances and conditions. On some runs that can mean running 20 - 40 seconds/kilometre slower than target pace.
- Hills. Where average elevation is referenced (i.e. 10 metres/ kilometre), use your GPS device and/or online training log to check the total "climb" of particular runs to verify how hilly/flat they are, e.g. a 12-kilometre hilly OMP should have approximately 120 metres of elevation.

LEGEND

OMP - Ordinary Mortal Pace. Run as strongly, smoothly and confidently as possible without overreaching. For most runners this is a little faster than marathon pace, a little slower than half-marathon pace.

WU/STR/CD – Warm-up/strides/cool down. Easy running at or slower than current LSD (Long Slow Distance) pace, done before/after hard effort runs. Strides are approximately 100 metre smooth accelerations to faster than target training pace (but not all-out sprinting).

Triple Thrill Hills – these are sets of three different distance hills, with slightly shorter recovery easy runs between hills within sets, and slightly longer recovery easy runs/rest between sets.

P1-2 Punch Progression Run – consider these two parts of a single run workout. They should always be done within 12 - 24 hours of each other, otherwise the intended benefit is largely lost. P1 is a slightly slower/easier than usual OMP run (think hilly OMP pace done on flat course), designed to leave you not fresh to start P2. The Progression Run the next day is a long run with a very exaggerated negative split. You must start slow for the first one to three kilometres (i.e. 30 - 40 second/kilometre slower than LSD pace) in order to have any chance of continually picking up speed (closing at approximately half-marathon pace). This combination run emulates the fatigue of the final 10 - 12 kilometres of a marathon, without actually running the full distance in training. This lowers injury risk and speeds up post-run recovery and teaches you how to pick up effort/pace late in the race when it's hard to do (and you need it most).

APPROX. SPEED/PACING GUIDELINES (IN MIN/KMS):

RUN TYPE	2:15	2:10
Long Slow Dist (LSD) =	05:45	06:10
Marathon Race Pace (RP) =	05:20	05:40
Ordinary Mortal Pace (OMP) =	05:10	05:30
Half Marathon Race Pace =	05:00	05:20
Tempo Pace =	04:55	05:12
Cruise Tempo+/10 km Pace =	04:40	05:00
5 km Race Pace =	04:30	04:48
1 Mile Trial Pace/Time =	04:10 (6:40)	04:20 (7:00)

17-WEEK MARATHON TRAINING PLAN

WK	MON	TUE			WED	THU			FRI	SAT	SUN		
	REST	DIST	INTENSITY	NOTES	REST/XT	DIST	O.M.P	NOTES	EASY	REST/XT	DIST	LONG RUN	NOTES
ENDURANCE PHASE													
1	Off	5	Cruise Tempo	10 min tempo pace, 1 min rest (walk), repeat as needed	Off or Aerobic X-train	7	Flat OMP	Slight Neg Split, <5 m/km avg elevation	5 easy	Off or Aerobic X-train	15	New Longest LSD, hilly	Slight Neg Split, approx 10 m/km of elevation gain
		2	Plus WU/STR/			1	Plus WU/CD						
		7	CD Total			8	Total						
2	Off	6	Cruise Tempo+	1.5 km tempo+ pace, (5% fstr than tempo), 2 min rest, repeat	Off or Aerobic X-train	8	Hilly OMP	Approx 10 m/km elevation, 10-15 sec/km slwr vs flat OMP pace	6 easy	Off or Aerobic X-train	18	New Longest LSD, flat	Slight Neg Split, <5 m/km avg of elevation gain
		3	Plus WU/STR/ CD			1	Plus WU/CD						
		9	Total			9	Total						
3	Off	7	Straight Tempo	Tempo pace (slight neg split), no rest breaks (ideally)	Off or Aerobic X-train	8	OMP+	20-30 sec/km faster, avg pace on 2nd half, 1-2 min rest @ halfway	7 easy	8 Easy OMP	20	Progression LSD, "P1-2 Punch" weekend	P1:<24 hrs b/f P2 P2: 1:30/km pace incr. from beginning to end
		3	Plus WU/STR/ CD			1	Plus WU/CD						
		10	Total			9	Total						
4	Off	8	Straight Tempo	10 min tempo pace, 1 min rest (walk), repeat as needed	Off or Aerobic X-train	9	Easy recovery run	5-15 sec/km slower than current LSD pace	5 easy	Off or Aerobic X-train	21	Race Pace Run #1	Slight Neg Split, 1st km slowest, last km fastest
		3	Plus WU/STR/ CD								2	Plus W/U	
		11	Total								23	Total	
5	Off	7.5	Cruise Tempo+	1.5 km tempo+ pace, (5% fstr than tempo), 2 min rest, repeat	Off or Aerobic X-train	10	Flat OMP	Slight Neg Split, <5 m/km avg elevation	8 easy	Off or Aerobic X-train	16	Recovery LSD, hillly	Slight Neg Split, approx 10 m/km of elevation gain
		3	Plus WU/STR/ CD			1	Plus WU/CD						
		11	Total			11	Total						
6	Off	5	5 km Time Trial	GO TIME! Try for 5 km pace matching your RP goal	Off or Aerobic X-train	11	Hilly OMP	Approx 10 m/km elevation, 10-15 sec/km slwr vs flat OMP pace	9 easy	Off or Aerobic X-train	27	New Longest LSD, flat	Slight Neg Split, <5 m/km avg of elevation gain
		4	Plus WU/STR/ CD			1	Plus WU/CD						
		9	Total			12	Total						
STRENGTH PHASE													
7	Off	4	Straight Hill Reps	7-9x 200-250 m, 6-8% incl, @5/10 km spd, <3:1 rest/run ratio	Off or Aerobic X-train	12	OMP +	20-30 sec/km faster, avg pace on 2nd half, 1-2 min rest @halfway	6 easy	11 Easy OMP	24	Progression LSD, "P1-2 Punch" weekend	P1: <24 hrs b/f P2 P2: 1:30/km pace incr. from beginning to end
		4	Plus WU/STR/ CD			1	Plus WU/CD						
		8	Total			13	Total						
8	Off	5	Triple Thrill Hills	100 m/225 m/350 m = 1 set, 3 sets, same inc & spd, <3:1 rest/run ratio	Off or Aerobic X-train	13	Easy recovery run	5-15 sec/km slower than current LSD pace	8 easy	Off or Aerobic X-train	26	Race pace Run #2	Slight Neg Split, 1st km slowest, last km fastest →
		5	Plus WU/STR/ CD								2	Plus W/U	
		10	Total								28	Total	

17-WEEK MARATHON TRAINING PLAN Continued

WK	MON	TUE			WED	THU			FRI	SAT	SUN		
	REST	DIST	INTENSITY	NOTES	REST/XT	DIST	O.M.P	NOTES	EASY	REST/XT	DIST	LONG RUN	NOTES
STRENGTH PHASE CONTINUED													
9	Off	5	Straight Hill Reps	8-10 x 200-250 m, 6-8% incl, @5/10 km spd, <3:1 rest/run ratio	Off or Aerobic X-train	13	Flat OMP	Slight Neg Split, <5 m/km avg elevation	10 easy	Off or Aerobic X-train	20	Recovery LSD, hillly	Slight Neg Split, approx 10 m/km of elevation gain
		5	Plus WU/STR/CD			1	Plus WU/CD						
		10	Total			14	Total						
10	Off	7	Triple Thrill Hills	100 m/225 m/350 m = 1 set, 4 sets, same inc & spd, <3:1 rest/run ratio	Off or Aerobic X-train	14	Hilly OMP	Approx 10 m/km elevation, 10-15 sec/km slwr vs flat OMP pace	11 easy	Off or Aerobic X-train	32	New Longest LSD, flat	Slight Neg Split, <5 m/km avg of elevation gain
		5	Plus WU/STR/CD			1	Plus WU/CD						
		12	Total			15	Total						
SPEED & TAPER PHASE													
11	Off	6	Sht MxVO2 Intrvls	6-8 x 800 m @slightly fstr than 5 km speed, 2 min rest (walk/jog)	Off or Aerobic X-train	14	OMP+	20-30 sec/km faster, avg pace on 2nd half, 1-2 min rest @ halfway	8 easy	13 Easy OMP	26	Progression LSD, "P1-2 Punch" weekend	P1:<24 hrs b/f P2 P2: 1:30/km pace incr. from beginning to end
		3	Plus WU/STR/CD			1	Plus WU/CD						
		9	Total			15	Total						
12	Off	6	Lng MxVO2 Intrvls	4-5 x 1200 m @slightly fstr than 10 km speed, 2:30 min rest (walk/jog)	Off or Aerobic X-Train	15	Easy recovery run	5-15 sec/km slower than current LSD pace	10 easy	Off	29	Race pace Run #3	Slight Neg Split, 1st km slowest, last km fastest
		4	Plus WU/STR/CD								2	Plus W/U	
		10	Total								31	Total	
13	Off	8	Run Econ Reps	9-10 x 400 m @slightly fstr than 1 mile spd, 3 min rest (walk/jog 400 m)	Off or Aerobic X-train	16	Flat OMP	Slight Neg Split, <5 m/km avg elevation	12 easy	Off or Aerobic X-train	22	Recovery LSD, hillly	Slight Neg Split, approx 10 m/km of elevation gain
		4	Plus WU/STR/CD			1	Plus WU/CD						
		12	Total			17	Total						
14	Off	8	Sht MxVO2 Intrvls	8-10 x 800 m @slightly fstr than 5 km speed, 2 min rest (walk/jog)	Off or Aerobic X-train	16	Hilly OMP	Approx 10 m/km elevation, 10-15 sec/km slwr vs flat OMP pace	13 easy	Off or Aerobic X-train	35	New Longest LSD, flat	Slight Neg Split, <5 m/km avg of elevation gain
		4	Plus WU/STR/CD			1	Plus WU/CD						
		12	Total			17	Total						
15	Off	7	Run Econ Reps	5-6 x 1200 m @slightly fstr than 10 km speed, 2:30 min rest (walk/jog)	Off or Aerobic X-train	13	Easy recovery run	5-15 sec/km slower than current LSD pace	12 easy	Off or Aerobic X-train	14	Easy LSD pace	50/50 LSD/RPR, take 1-2 min rest @ halfway to reset
		4	Plus WU/STR/CD								14	@marathon pace	
		11	Total								28	Total	
16	Off	7	Race Pace Setter	8 x 400 m @ slightly fstr than 1 mile spd, 3 min rest (walk/jog 400 m)	Off or Aerobic X-train	15	Flat OMP	Slight Neg Split, <5 m/km avg elevation	9 easy	Off or Aerobic X-train	12	Recovery LSD, hilly	Slight Neg Split, approx 10 m/km of elevation gain
		4	Plus WU/CD			1	Plus WU/CD						
		11	Total			16	Total						
17	Off	6	Race Pace Setter	Settle in @target marathon pace. Relax.	Off or Aerobic X-train	8	Race Pace reminder and tune-up	5 min easy, relaxed LSD, then 1 min @ RP, repeat 7-8 times	6 easy	Off	42+	**RACE DAY**	It's ON - relax early, dig deep late in race - YOU DID IT!
		4	Plus WU/CD										
		10	Total										