

A Guide to Running a Half-Marathon in under Two Hours

An achievable training plan for runners of all levels

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Banff Half Marathon

Running under two hours for the half-marathon is an achievable goal for many runners. In this gentle half build you will be guided through a 12-week training plan where the goal is to run four days per week with the remainder of the week for cross training, strength, and flexibility exercises. Before beginning this plan, you should be comfortable running two-three times per week at a pace faster than 7:00/km. Listen to your body and modify your training to avoid injuries.

The plan consists of a workout (Wednesday), long run (Sunday), two easy runs (Tuesday/Thursday), and an optional cross training day. Running by effort at the beginning is key to determine the running pace that feels best for you. The long run should be done at a comfortable pace that you could maintain for an hour or more, this is called Long Slow Distance (LSD). Think about controlled breathing, relaxed arm swing, low knee lift, and feet touching the ground lightly with each stride. Some long runs are just a run whereas others have half marathon pace sections embedded. Easy runs are shorter runs during the week where you are running 15-30 seconds faster than your long run. The workouts are a chance to practice race paces and good running form. They consist of a warm-up, strides, intervals, and cool down.

COACHING TIPS

- Be patient – follow the plan and take rest days off running
- Believe in yourself – use positive self-talk to get you through tough training
- Flexibility – adjust the plan to fit your work/life schedule
- Running shoes – wear shoes that are supportive and feel good on your feet
- Maintain flexibility and strength – short sessions throughout the week will help to avoid injuries
- Switch up running routes and surfaces – flat, hilly, paved, and trail

LEGEND

STRIDES – Accelerations to practice faster leg turnover and good running form (good posture, knees driving forward, arms bent). On an 80-100 metre flat stretch of pathway or grass, think about starting at an easier pace and finishing fast.

MP – Marathon Pace

HMP – Half-Marathon Pace

(5:42/km or under if your goal is to run under two hours).

NEGATIVE SPLIT – Run at your long run pace for the first half of the run and then increase to half-marathon pace for the second half.

12-WEEK HALF-MARATHON TRAINING PLAN

WEEK	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
1	Off	3 km	3 km + Strides	3 km	Strength/ Yoga/ Core	Cross training - 30 min ride, elliptical, swim	5 km
2	Off	4 km	4 km + Strides	4 km	Strength/ Yoga/ Core	Cross training - 30 min ride, elliptical, swim	6 km
3	Off	5 km	5 x (1 min fast/1 min easy), 15 min warm-up and cool-down	5 km	Strength/ Yoga/ Core	Cross training - 30 min water run, ride, elliptical	7 km
4	Off	6 km	4 x (3 min at goal 10 km pace/ 2 min easy jog between), 15 min warm-up and cool-down	6 km	Strength/ Yoga/ Core	Cross training - 45 min ride, elliptical, swim	8 km with last 4 km at HMP
5	Off	7 km	2 x 7 min at goal 10 km pace/ 2 min easy jog between, 15 min warm-up and cool-down	7 km	Strength/ Yoga/ Core	Cross training or easy 5 km run	10 km
6	Off	8 km	2 x (5, 4, 3 min) descending - 90 sec jog, 3 min set rest, 15 min warm-up and cool-down	8 km	Strength/ Yoga/ Core	Cross training or easy 5 km run	13 km - negative split with last half at HMP
7	Off	5 km	12 min at 10 km pace, 5 x 30 sec hills fast - easy jog back to start, 15 min warm-up and cool-down	5 km	Strength/ Yoga/ Core	Cross training or easy 5 km run	15 km
8	Off	9 km	4 x 1 mile at 10 km pace, 15 min warm-up and cool-down	8 km	Strength/ Yoga/ Core	Cross training or easy 5 km run	18 km - 4 km easy, 2 x 5 km at HMP with 2 km easy between, 2 km easy cool-down
9	Off	10 km	6 min at goal 10 km pace, 4 x 1 min fast, 6 min at 10 km pace, 15 min warm-up and cool-down	9 km	Strength/ Yoga/ Core	Cross training or easy 5 km run	22 km
10	Off	10 km	5 x 1 km at goal 5 km pace, 3 min easy jog rest, 15 min warm-up and cool-down	10 km	Strength/ Yoga/ Core	Cross training or easy 5 km run	19 km - 8 km easy, 8 km at HMP, 2 km easy
11	Off	8 km	6 x 800 metre or 3 min at goal 5 km pace, 2 min easy jog rest, 15 min warm-up and cool-down	8 km	Strength/ Yoga/ Core	Cross training or easy 5 km run	15 km
12	Off	5 km	3 x (3, 2, 1 min) 1:1 work to easy jog, 3 min set rest, 15 min warm-up and cool-down	4 km + Strides	Off	4 km + Strides	RACE DAY 🏁