

HALF TIME

Training for a half-marathon needn't be a slog – as these simple plans and success stories show

Words:
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IMAGE: GETTY IMAGES

The half-marathon has something to offer every runner; whether you're a beginner looking to stretch yourself for a new challenge, or you have a few 13.1-milers under your belt and are seeking a new personal best, or a marathon runner looking to stay in tune, it's a great distance. Training for a half is well within reach, as our three-day-a-week beginner's and improver's schedules, devised by coach Nick Anderson (fullpotential.co.uk), go to show. And while you start to plan for your new half-marathon PB, read how four runners, from beginner to elite, set their own.

THE BEGINNER'S STORY

JULIE DEADMAN
43, Knutsford

I've always enjoyed running, but I started to run more frequently as a way to relax while I was caring for my dad, who was unwell. After a long illness, he sadly passed away last October. My dad and I had chatted about my running progress every day and I had promised him that I'd run this year's Reading Half-Marathon for him - he was Reading born and bred, and a loyal supporter of Reading Football Club all his life.

My goal was to finish the race in under two hours. Ian Corless, my coach (fullpotential.co.uk), gave me structured weekly training plans that included speed and endurance work. On top of the support he gave me, learning how the various bits of the training jigsaw fitted together really helped me and increased my confidence in my own ability.

I arrived at the start fired up to do well for dad's sake. I knew what I had to do and I believed I had the focus to achieve it. I lined up on the busy start line in my Reading FC shirt with my dad's name on the back, ready to enjoy the challenge that lay ahead.

When the gun went off, I tried to stay patient and not charge for gaps. It was a perfect day for running - a frosty start but lovely spring sunshine all the way round. I kept to my goal pace and passed the 10K mark in 53 minutes - beating my 10K PB.

I reached the 10-mile marker in 1:27. By then, I knew I would achieve my goal time and there was no greater feeling.

The finish is spectacular - you run into Reading FC's Madejski Stadium and run a half-circuit around the perimeter of the pitch. My emotions were sky high as I crossed the finish line in 1:55:12. I know my dad would have loved seeing me achieve my goal in his hometown."

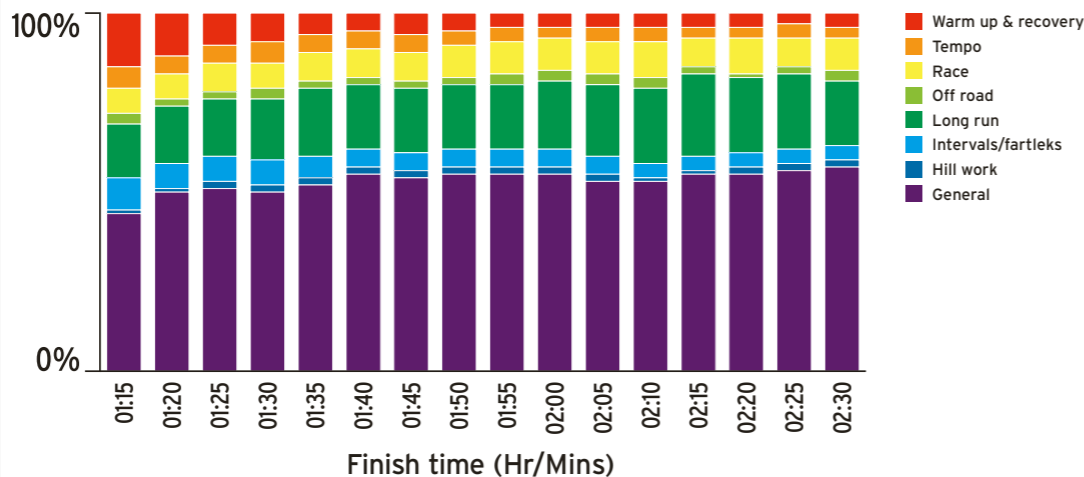
"MY EMOTIONS WERE SKY HIGH AS I CROSSED THE LINE IN 1:55:12"



CHART YOUR PROGRESS

Proven training rules

Our friends at fetcheveryone.com have logged over 800,000 training sessions and 100,000 race times from UK runners. This chart shows how various finishers' training broke down between types of running in percentage terms. Notice how faster finishers do comparatively more warm-up and recovery runs, interval and tempo sessions than other runners. The long run also makes up less of their training schedule.



BEGINNER'S HALF-MARATHON SCHEDULE

Designed by coach Nick Anderson, this three-day-a-week schedule lets you run by time and effort, rather than counting miles. It's designed for those new to the half-marathon - it builds up from 30-minute run/walk sessions to race day over 12 weeks. You can gauge your effort using your rate of perceived exertion or, if you are using a heart-rate monitor, your maximum heart rate. Here's what the different levels of effort should feel like:

5 (out of 10) or 50% maximum heart rate (max HR)
A brisk walk.

6 (out of 10) or 60% max HR
Recovery running. This is a very easy running pace that allows you to maintain a conversation with no problems.

7 (out of 10) or 70% max HR
Steady running. A little harder than recovery pace, but you should still be able to maintain a conversation.

8 (out of 10) or 80% max HR
Threshold running and target half-marathon pace. Feels harder, and you should only be able to speak a few words at a time.

WEEK	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT or SUN
1	Rest	30 mins: 5-min walk/5-min run, repeat 3 times 5/7	Rest	30 mins: 1-min walk/1-min easy jog/1-min run, repeat continuously 5/6/7	Rest	30 mins: 5-min walk/5-min run, repeat 3 times 5/7
2	Rest	30 mins: 4-min walk/6-min run, repeat 3 times 5/7	Rest	30 mins: 2-min walk/2-min easy jog/2-min run, repeat continuously 5/6/7	Rest	30 mins: 4-min walk/6-min run, repeat 3 times 5/7
3	Rest	30 mins: 2-min walk/8-min run, repeat 3 times 5/7	Rest	30 mins: 2-min walk/2-min easy jog/2-min run, repeat continuously 5/6/7	Rest	30 mins of 2-min walk/8-min run, repeat 3 times 5/7
4	Rest	30 mins: 2 x 10 mins of continuous easy running. Have a 5-min walk between blocks 5/7	Rest	45 mins: 3-min walk/3-min jog/3-min threshold run, repeat continuously 5/6-7/8	Rest	50 mins: 2-min walk/8-min run, repeat 4 times. Have a 5-min brisk walk warm-up & cool-down 5/7
5	Rest	20 mins continuous running with 5-min walk warm-up and cool-down 5/7	Rest	Repeat above session	Rest	60 mins: 3-min walk/12-min run, repeat 4 times 5/7
6	Rest	25 mins continuous running with 5-min walk warm-up and cool-down 5/7	Rest	5-min walk/5-min easy run/5-min threshold run, repeat 3 times 5/6-7/8	Rest	Repeat above session
7	Rest	30 mins easy-pace run with 5-min walk warm-up and cool-down 5/7	Rest	45 mins: 5 x 5-min threshold/2-min walk & 5-min warm-up and cool-down 5/8	Rest	75 mins: 3-min walk/12-min run, repeat 5 times 5/7
8	Rest	40 mins easy pace with warm-up and cool-down walks 5/7	Rest	5-min threshold/5-min easy run, x 2 with warm-up walk/jog and cool-down 5/8	Rest	Repeat above session
9	Rest	45 mins easy pace with warm-up and cool-down walks 5/7	Rest	30 mins: 5-min easy/5-min threshold. Add a 5-min warm-up and cool-down jog 5/6-7/8	Rest	90 mins: 3-min walk/12-min run, repeat 6 times 5/7
10	Rest	45 mins easy 6-7	Rest	40 mins: 5-min easy/5-min threshold. Add a 5-min warm-up and cool-down jog 5/6-7/8	Rest	100 mins: 18-min easy run/2-min walk, repeat 5 times 5/6-7
11	Rest	30 mins: 10 very easy jog/10 steady/10 threshold 6/7/8	Rest	40 mins easy pace: 2 x 10 mins threshold. Have 5-min jog between efforts 6/8	Rest	60 mins: 25 mins easy pace/5 min walk, repeat 2 times 5/6-7
12	Rest	30 mins: 5-min easy/5-min threshold, repeat 3 times 6/8	Rest	20 mins easy relaxed run 6-7	Rest	RACE DAY 15-20 mins easy pace/walk 5 mins. Take on your drinks while walking. 5/6-8

MY FIRST HALF



British elite runner **JO PAVEY** remembers her step up to the 13.1-miler

"Moving up to the half-marathon is a natural progression for a distance track-runner with aspirations to run a full marathon - and that was my reason for entering the Great North Run in 2006.

Prior to that my career consisted almost solely of running up to 5,000m on the track, so the thought of a 13.1-mile road race was daunting.

I needed to change the emphasis of my training. But with the race coming at the end of a long, low-mileage track season, the time available was far from ideal. I was anxious. However, having recently run a PB over 5,000m, I knew I was race fit - albeit for a much shorter distance. Training went well. Long runs were increased in duration to 1:45 - they had been 1:20 during the summer; hill training was re-introduced to prepare for the climbs on the course; I reduced speedwork in favour of mile and 2K intervals and I added a 60-minute race-pace tempo run.

I didn't want to try anything too risky in my first outing, so my race plan was simple: try to stay with the leader, then make a move during the last mile or so. I felt fine until we dropped down the final steep hill near the finish. I just fell apart. I managed to finish fourth. It was later found that my blood sugar levels, rather than falling, had gone abnormally high.

I learnt a lot from the experience. Crucially, I analysed how I could address this problem for the future, and I was able to perform better when I ran the race again in 2008, finishing third."

TIPS FROM THE TOP



Advice on racing your best half from USA record-holder **RYAN HALL**

IN TRAINING

1 Don't be afraid of mistakes. "You're going to screw up sometimes," says Hall, who frequently goes out too hard on tempo runs. "When I do, I think this is good practice for when I go out too fast in a race and have to regroup."

2 Simulate race conditions. If you want to run fast on the roads, do your intervals on the roads.

3 Know the purpose of each workout. Make the hard runs hard and the recovery runs easy, says Hall. Many runners make the mistake of running too hard on their easy days, which is counterproductive.

AT THE RACE

4 Inspect the course. Familiarise yourself with landmarks, so you have some mental breaks in addition to the mile markers. Look for places to run the tangents if you're going for a PB.

5 Let the terrain dictate your pace. If you want to average seven-minute miles, it's okay to run 7:10s up the hills and 6:50s down, rather than forcing yourself to stick to sevens the entire way.

6 Run the mile you're in. "I avoid thinking about how far I have to go early in the race, because that can be overwhelming," says Hall. "Late in the race I try to forget about how far I have gone, because that would give me an excuse to give in to fatigue."

IMPROVER'S HALF-MARATHON SCHEDULE

This is designed for runners who have run a few half-marathons, but are looking to improve on their best time. "You should certainly be looking at sub 1:50, but I've coached runners who have run under 1:30 for a half on a three-day-weekly schedule," says Anderson. Gauge your effort using your rate of perceived exertion or, if you are using a heart-rate monitor, your maximum heart rate. Here's what the different levels of effort should feel like:

6 (out of 10) or 60% maximum heart rate (max HR)
Recovery running. An easy running pace that allows you to maintain a conversation with no problems

7 (out of 10) or 70% max HR
Steady running. A little harder than recovery pace, but you should still be able to maintain a conversation.

8-8.5 (out of 10) or 80-85% max HR
Threshold running and target half-marathon pace. It hurts, and you should only be able to speak a few words at a time

8.5+ (out of 10) or 85%+ of max HR
Interval running. This is just below your maximum effort and you won't be able to speak. Use for short intervals and speedwork.

WEEK	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT or SUN
1	Rest	10 mins easy/8 mins @ threshold pace, repeat 2 times 6-7/8-8.5	Rest	10 mins easy, 2 x 5 mins of continuous hills (approx 45 secs up/45 secs down), 10 mins easy 6-7/8-8.5	Rest	60 mins easy 6-7
2	Rest	10 mins easy, 10 mins @ threshold pace, repeat 2 times 6-7/8-8.5	Rest	10 mins easy, 2 x 7 mins of continuous hills, 10 easy 6-7/8-8.5	Rest	70 mins easy 6-7
3	Rest	7 mins easy, 7 mins @ threshold pace, repeat 3 times 6-7/8-8.5	Rest	10 mins easy, 3 x 5 mins of continuous hills, 10 easy 6-7/8-8.5	Rest	75 mins easy 6-7
4	Rest	36 mins: 6 x 3 mins, with 3 mins easy in between Reps 1, 3 & 5 @ 6-7; reps 2, 4 & 6 @ 8-8.5	Rest	40-min hilly run. Easy but faster up hills 6 if easy, 7-8 if hilly run	Rest	60 mins easy or 10K race 6-7 or 8-9
5	Rest	45 mins relaxed 6-7	Rest	10 mins easy, 2 x 10 mins of continuous hills (approx 45 secs up/45 secs down), 10 easy 6-7/8-8.5	Rest	80 mins easy 6-7
6	Rest	5 mins easy, 2 x 12 mins @ threshold/HM race pace with 4 mins easy recovery, 5 mins easy 6-7/8-8.5	Rest	10 mins easy, 3 x 7 mins of continuous hills, 10 mins easy 6-7/8-8.5	Rest	80 mins with last 20 mins @ HM race pace 6-7/8
7	Rest	45 mins: 15 easy, 15 steady, 15 threshold 6/7/8	Rest	40 mins hilly run. Attack the hills, relax rest of run 6-7/8-8.5	Rest	60 mins easy 6-7
8	Rest	5 mins easy, 3 x 10 mins @ threshold/HM pace, 5 min easy 6-7/8-8.5	Rest	10 mins easy, 3 x 8 mins of continuous hills, 10 mins easy 6-7/8-8.5	Rest	90 mins easy with last 20 mins @ HM race pace 6-7/8
9	Rest	10 mins easy, 25 mins @ HM/threshold pace, 10 mins easy 6-7/8-8.5	Rest	10 mins easy, 2 x 6, 4, 2 mins @ HM, 10K, 5K pace with 2-min easy between sets, 10 easy 6-7/8-9	Rest	100-110 mins easy 6-7
10	Rest	10 mins easy, 5 x 2 mins hard/2 min easy, 10 min easy 6-7/8-9	Rest	45 mins hilly run or 40 mins easy if racing Sunday 6/7 or 8	Rest	75 mins easy OR 10K race 6-7 or 9
11	Rest	48 mins: 3-min threshold/3-min easy, repeat 8 times 6-7/8-8.5	Rest	15 mins easy, 5 x 3 mins @ 10K pace with 2-min easy recovery between each rep, 15 mins easy 6-7/9	Rest	60 mins easy 6-7
12	Rest	30 mins: 5 mins easy/5 mins @ threshold, repeat 3 times 6/7	Rest	20 mins easy 6	Rest	HALF-MARATHON RACE 8

THE IMPROVER'S STORY

COLIN BAXTER 40, Leicester

I have been running for six years; I finished my first half-marathon in 1:54. Once you've got your first PB you have a new goal to beat next time.

Aspiration is key. A couple of years after joining Leicester Owls AC I started training with some of the faster guys at the club, which helped drop my PB to 1:38 in a year.

Over the next year my PB dropped to 1:35, then 1:33. I now wanted to get under 1:30. I knew I could get there if I put in the extra work. Unfortunately, this came at a price - I fell and smashed my wrist. In hospital, waiting to go for an operation, I watched Paula Radcliffe cruise to victory in the New York Marathon - her post-pregnancy comeback race. I was out for five weeks. But I thought: "If Paula can do it, so can I!"

I thought the key to a sub-1:30 half was a sub-40-minute 10K. I introduced 2,000m reps to my training. When I first started I could only manage four reps and couldn't break eight minutes. But after a couple of weeks I could manage five, then started dipping under eight minutes. After eight weekly sessions, I ran a 39:34 10K, and two weeks after that - in my first half-marathon since the accident - I ran 1:28:59 at the Belvoir Half-Marathon. This April - a month after my 40th birthday - I ran 1:25:26 at the Belvoir Half. Sub-1:20 is at the back of my mind for now."

COLIN'S TYPICAL TRAINING WEEK

TUES	THURS	FRI OR SAT	SUN
Club run: 7-9 miles (usually with a fast last 1-2 miles)	5 x 2K reps (1 mile warm-up & warm-down)	Fast 5 miles or steady 7-8 miles or hill reps	10-12 mile long run



"ONCE YOU'VE GOT YOUR FIRST PB YOU HAVE A NEW GOAL TO BEAT NEXT TIME"

CHART YOUR PROGRESS

Statistically proven training rules

Our friends at fetcheveryone.com have logged over 800,000 training sessions and 100,000 race times from UK runners. This chart shows a breakdown of training-session frequency and mileage for half-marathon finishers in times ranging from 1hr 15mins to 2hrs 30mins. There are no real secrets to running a fast time - the more you put in, the more you get out. A 1:15 half-marathon runner, for example, will typically run eight times a week, while a 1:30 finisher trains almost five times a week. But the chart also shows it's possible to run around three times a week and finish in well under two hours. 🏃

