

tackling the big one

How many truly remarkable things have you done in your life? If the answer is not many, or even none, then maybe it's time to run a marathon. Because no matter how fit you are, running 26.2-miles for the first time will certainly be one of the most memorable moments in your life. And while the marathon takes no prisoners, if you train intelligently and diligently, you can succeed and achieve something quite remarkable...

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Let's get one thing straight from the outset; running a marathon is not like running a longer version of a 10K fun run, or half-marathon. Marathon running will push your body through new physical and mental barriers, and as such needs to be treated with respect. If you've little previous running background, or you're not sure that you can commit yourself to the training required, then marathon running is not for you, as you'll almost certainly end up injured, demoralised or both! Unlike most other running events, the marathon will find out weaknesses and punish those who are inadequately prepared!

How much background?

Although different people respond differently to the rigours of marathon training, as a very rough guide, you should fulfil the following criteria before taking on a marathon:

- You have been running regularly for at least a year;
- You can run at least 5 miles comfortably in one go;
- You are averaging 20 miles per week or more in training;
- You are not suffering from a chronic or recurring injury problem.

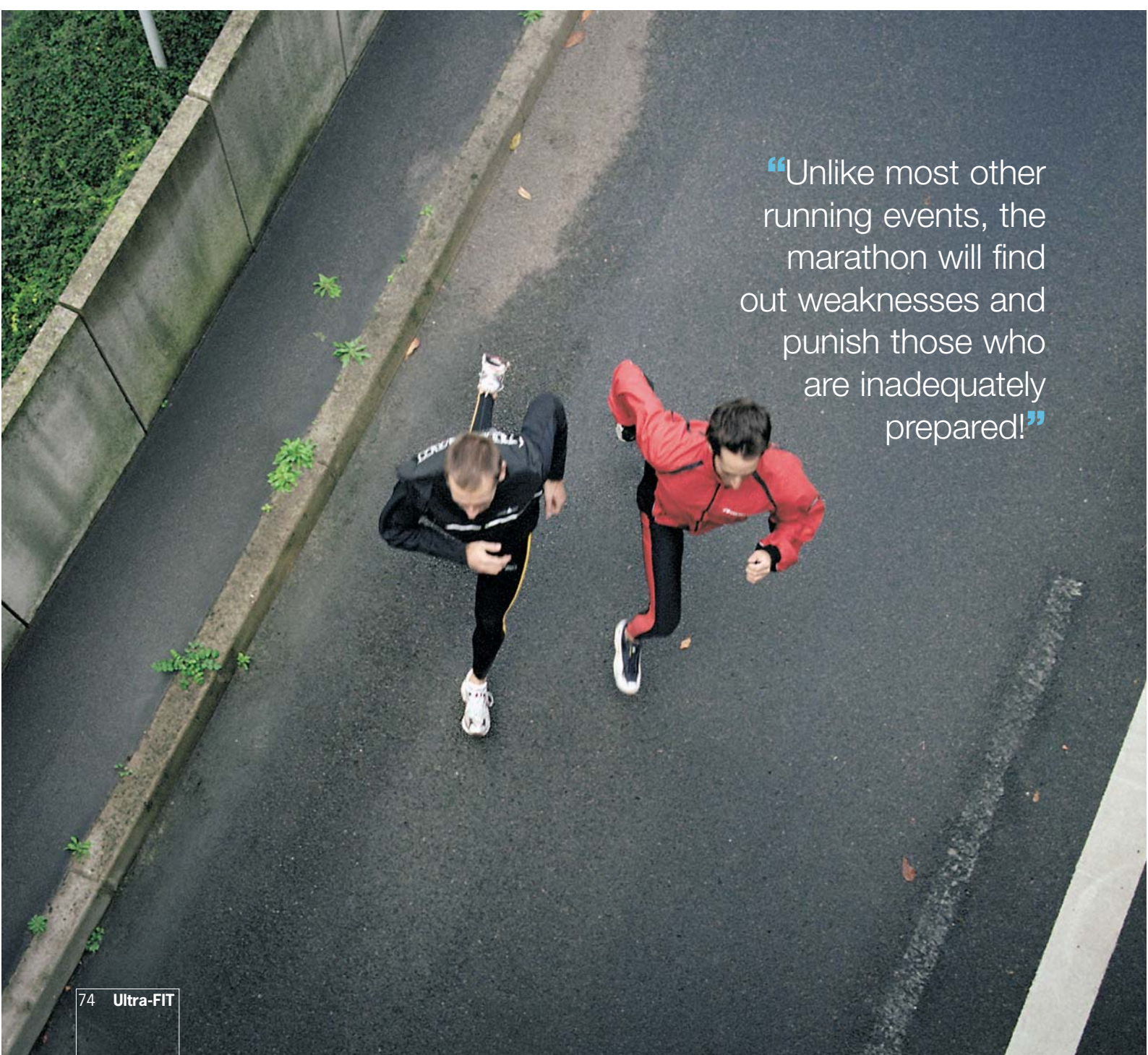
You may be able to get away with less running background if you've come to running from a background of competitive sport that demands high levels of fitness and endurance, such as cycling. However, for most people, the above requirements should be seen as a minimum in order to get the best out of this 23-week marathon training plan.

What equipment will I need?


Marathon training is punishing for your legs, so decent, well cushioned running

shoes that suit your running style are essential. If don't already possess them, visit a specialist running shop before you get stuck in, rather than risk injury by using your old clapped out trainers. Starting with relatively new shoes will also allow you to train and for and run your marathon in the same pair shoes – much better than switching shoes midway through your marathon build-up.

Would-be marathoners can also benefit from a heart rate monitor (for use both in training and during the event), and some kind of logbook for record keeping. A log provides a history of your training sessions and can be vital for determining which training methods are working best for you, or what might be causing that niggling injury. Moreover, keeping a log is highly motivating – useful for when the going gets tough!



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General principles of marathon training

Before we get on to the nitty-gritty of a marathon-training program, there are a few general training principles that should be borne in mind by all would-be marathon runners:

‘Long Runs’ – these are a vital component of any marathon build-up program, because they acclimatise the mind and body to the stress and strains of putting one foot in front of the other for mile after mile after mile! They also teach your muscles how to efficiently burn fat for energy – something you’ll need to get to the end of a marathon without hitting ‘the wall’. Although it’s OK to miss an occasional workout, or juggle your routine to fit with other commitments, your weekly long run should be considered sacrosanct!

The 10% Rule – Never increase either your weekly mileage, or your long run mileage by more than 10 percent a week and certainly never increase them together. If you do, you’ll dramatically increase the risk of injury, which could set back your training or even halt it altogether.

Easy Weeks – You can’t build up mileage relentlessly week after week without your body becoming deeply fatigued. That’s why it’s important to include slightly easier weeks with shorter ‘long runs’ in your program, which allow your body a bit of extra rest and recovery, helping you to stay comparatively fresh, while still building up your overall workload. You should incorporate an ‘easy week’ every 3rd or 4th week.

Cross Training – One session a week of cross training (eg cycling, swimming, rowing etc.) can help reduce injury risk in marathoners by preventing muscle imbalances, enhancing joint mobility and by improving muscular flexibility. Cross training can also speed recovery after your ‘long run’ and prevent boredom and staleness setting in, which is why it’s included in the program on page 78.

Rest and Nutrition – Getting adequate rest and proper fuelling are not optional extras, but need to be an essential part of your training program if you’re even going to get to the start line of your marathon! It’s during the periods of rest between training sessions that your muscles – if supplied with the right nutrition – can regenerate and get stronger. If you’re constantly fatigued and neglecting your nutrition, you’ll almost certainly end up ill or injured and you’ll never reach your potential. Two days rest each week is recommended for novice marathoners and remember that consistency is what counts;

so as long as you are consistent with your training throughout your build-up, you can afford and will benefit from plenty of rest.

Psychology of marathon training

Although it's physically demanding, many novice marathoners discover that the mental demands of marathon training are actually the most difficult to deal with. Fortunately, there are a number of strategies that can help:

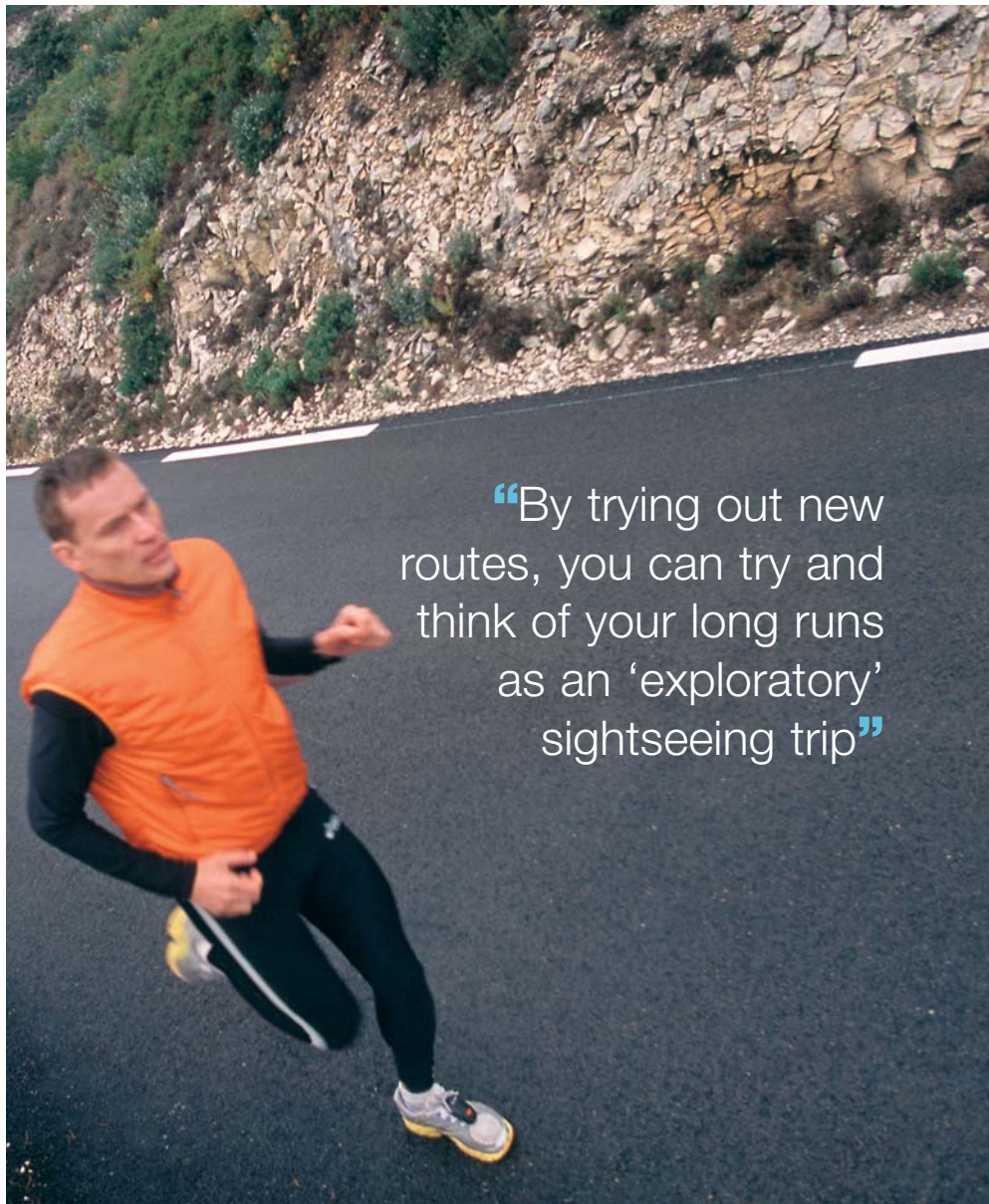
- Find and train with other runners who share your marathon goals. They will almost certainly provide you with the emotional support that can make all the difference.
- Run your weekly long run with a training partner, which will alleviate the boredom and provide motivation. However, make sure that you both share approximately the same training pace so that your workouts don't turn into races!
- Try to think of your long runs as a series of shorter runs stitched together – eg mentally run one section at a time rather than telling yourself you have to complete an entire 19-mile course in one hit! Alternatively, by trying out new routes, you can try and think of your long runs as an 'exploratory' sightseeing trip, where you get to see new sights from a runner's perspective!
- Try and find an experienced marathon runner who's enthusiastic and positive and willing to coach you. You'll find this both inspirational and motivating.
- Finally, realise and accept that training for a marathon is tough and be prepared to accept some hardship. Pat yourself on the back for tackling something that 99% of people would be unable to even contemplate, let alone do!

The importance of tapering

One of the most fundamental mistakes novice marathoners make is failing to taper down properly for the event.

Reducing your weekly and long run mileage during the final two weeks is absolutely essential to ensure that you've fully recovered from previous workouts and completely rested for the big event. Trying to cram in extra workouts is completely counterproductive, especially in the week before the event. Any training benefits will appear after the event itself, and all you'll in fact be doing is slowing or

reversing the recovery process needed by your muscles, as well as emptying them of precious glycogen – you body's premium grade fuel for the event. Remember, if you have put in the miles over a long enough period of time you WILL be able to cope with the distance. Think of the race day as your wages day. It's time to collect what's owed to you and see what you have worked so hard to get!



“By trying out new routes, you can try and think of your long runs as an ‘exploratory’ sightseeing trip”

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Nutrition and marathon training

You might be physically strong and mentally determined, but unless your nutrition is up to scratch, you're going to struggle to train for, let alone compete in a marathon. You can forget fancy diets – what marathon training requires is carbohydrate and lots of it! That means ensuring that a substantial proportion of your diet (about 60% of calories) consists of

whole grain breads and cereals, pasta, rice, potatoes, pulses (beans, peas and lentils) and fruits and vegetables. As a rule of thumb a 70kg adult consumes around 100 calories for each mile run, which should be replenished by carbohydrate. That's 1000 calories' worth of carbohydrate needed for a 10-miler! Consuming frequent high-carbohydrate snacks and meals is the key, and it's particularly important to replenish

carbohydrate immediately after training, when your muscles are most able to soak it up and convert it into stored premium grade muscle fuel – glycogen. Hydration is critical too. You'll be losing significant amounts of fluid during your long runs, especially in warm weather. As well as staying properly hydrated generally, you'll need to either take drinks with you, or plan drink stops on your route. **UF**

SUGGESTED NOVICES 23-WEEK MARATHON TRAINING PLAN

Week	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun (Long Run)
1	rest	3	cross	3	3	rest	6
2	rest	3	cross	3	3	rest	7
3	rest	3	cross	4	3	rest	5
4	rest	3	cross	4	3	rest	8
5	rest	3	cross	5	3	rest	9
6	rest	3	cross	5	3	rest	7
7	rest	3	cross	6	3	rest	11
8	rest	3	cross	6	3	rest	12
9	rest	3	cross	7	4	rest	9
10	rest	3	cross	7	4	rest	14
11	rest	4	cross	7	3	rest	15
12	rest	4	cross	8	5	rest	12
13	rest	4	cross	9	5	rest	17
14	rest	5	cross	9	5	rest	13
15	rest	5	cross	10	4	rest	19
16	rest	5	cross	10	6	rest	7
17	rest	5	cross	8	5	rest	21
18	rest	5	cross	8	6	rest	14
19	rest	6	cross	10	6	rest	8
20	rest	6	cross	8	5	rest	22-23
21	rest	5	cross	8	4	rest	12
22	rest	4	cross	6	3	rest	8
23	rest	3	rest	1-2	rest	rest	RACE

Notes:

- Long runs should be run at an 'easy' pace, around 65-70% of your maximum heart rate (calculated by $0.65-0.7 \times [220 - \text{your age}]$).
- Shorter runs can be run at a brisker pace as and when you feel like it, but don't force it.
- Cross = cross training session; aim for around 30 minutes at an easy pace. You can vary the modes, even in the same session.
- While consistent training is vital, you shouldn't become a slave to your schedule. Be aware of what your legs are communicating to you whenever you run. For example, if your muscles feel weak or fatigued midweek, take an extra day off and save your legs for the weekend long run.