

12 week Marathon Training plan: Off-Road

Points to Consider:

- I would recommend that before you take on the challenge of a marathon, you have trained for, and raced at least a couple of half marathons. Therefore, you will know how your body responds to long distance running, and you will have a great base for the next challenge.
- The majority of a marathon will be run within your aerobic zone, therefore this needs to be reflected in your training
- You will be running at approx. 75-80pcent of your VO2 max (depending on ability) and will be close to your lactate threshold at times, therefore you should consider including training that replicates this, and train those systems.
- Depending on your experience, over the 12 weeks you will need to develop your ability to endure longer runs. Do not increase your running time more than 10pcent week on week, and always build in a recovery week. The plan suggested works on a 3 week build and 1 week recovery which fits nicely with the 12 weeks, so the race sits at the end of an easier week.
- I would also thoroughly recommend that you support your run training with strength and Conditioning. Not only should this increase your muscle power, but it should also improve your body balance and improve your flexibility which is imperative for avoiding injury. Pilates is also very good to build into your training week as this will build a strong core, improve posture and correct neutral alignment and teach you how to breathe efficiently. However, do not complete your S and C before a hard run session. If at all possible, leave as long a gap as you can between the two, and complete the S and C as the second activity, so in the evening after a morning run.
- Include a session of running drills. Not only will this develop your technique but it will also help prevent injury and improve your running economy, which is very important when you have 26.2miles to run!

- In your shorter harder sessions, include elements of downhill running as well as uphill running. The eccentric loading of the muscles in downhill running increases the damage to muscle fibres (and increases DOMS). By introducing reps of downhill running, you can stimulate muscle growth and improve performance (it's also good for developing your balance and coordination when completed on uneven ground) BUT it's hard work, and causes stress on the muscles, so these sessions should be limited, and supported with good nutrition to help repair, and followed with an easy aerobic run or even walk.
- You have entered an off road marathon, therefore a high percentage of your training should be completed on similar terrain, especially your longer runs.



12 week plan

Day	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6
1	45min easy run off road, to include 5 x 60m strides spread throughout the run	50min easy off road run to include 5 x 60m strides spread throughout the run	Easy warm up to include 4 x 50m strides: Threshold run (perceived half marathon pace) for 35mins. Warm down 10-15mins	Easy warm up to include 4 x 50m strides. Threshold run (perceived half marathon pace) as 5 x 4mins efforts with 2 mins easy jog between. 15mins easy warm down	45mins easy off road run to include 5 x 40m strides	50min easy off road run to include 5 x 60m strides spread throughout the run
2	50min steady off road undulating run	55min steady off road undulating run	50mins easy to include 6 x 30m strides	40min steady off road run including 6 x 50m strides	Easy warm up to include 4 x 50m strides: Threshold run (perceived half	Easy 10-15min warm up to include 4 x 20m strides. Main set: Threshold run as 5 x 7mins efforts at

					marathon pace) for 40mins. Warm down 10- 15mins	threshold with 90secs easy jog between efforts. 10-15mins easy warm down
3	Rest day	Rest day	Rest day	Rest day	Rest day	Rest day
4	50mins steady off road run	55mins steady off road run.	15mins easy warm up then 20mins as 1min at 3k pace 1min easy jog recovery. 15mins easy warm down.	35min steady run	Fartlek run on off road hilly course as 2(1min, 2mins, 3mins 4mins 5mins all at 3k pace) take 90secs walk rest between intervals. 15mins very easy w/d	Hill reps: Nice easy 10-15min warm up: 2(3 x 30secs up hill and down hill efforts)with 90secs walking rest at top, then repeat back down. With 90secs rest at bottom.
5	Strength and conditioning / pilates	Strength and conditioning / pilates	Strength and conditioning / pilates	Strength and conditioning / pilates	Strength and conditioning / pilates	Rest day
6	8-9miles easy run (or 80-90min run)	9-10 easy miles run (90mins)	Up to 12miles (1hr 45mins)	Off road 10miler	Up to 14-15miles Build, (3 miles easy 7miles at MP plus 40secs 4-5miles at MP plus 10secs)	15-16miles build run (3 miles easy, 7miles at MP plus 70secs per mile, 6miles at MP plus 20secs)
7	Rest day / s and c	Rest day / s and c	rest day / s and c	Rest day	Rest day	s and c / pilates

Day	Week 7	Week 8	Week 9	Week 10	Week 11	Week 12
1	50mins steady to include 4 x 5mins at perceived 10k pace	40-50mins easy to include 5 x 60m strides	Rest day	15mins easy warm up to include 5 x 60m strides: Main set: 5 sets of 5mins at 10k pace then 8mins at marathon pace. (Take 2 mins very easy between sets) 10mins easy warm down	15mins easy to include 5 x 60m strides: Main set: 8 x 7mins at between 10k and half marathon pace. 10mins easy warm down	Threshold run: warm up (20mins) 5 x 5mins at steady pace with 90secs jog recovery) Heart rate should be 70-80pcent in efforts)
2	40mins easy, though push up the hills	10mins easy to include 4 x 20m strides. Main set: 6 x 5mins at 10k pace with 2 mins jog between. 10mins easy wd	45mins easy	40mins easy to include 4 x 20m strides	35mins easy	6miles easy (include 5 x 60m strides spread across the run)
3	s and c	Rest day	60mins steady	Rest day	Rest day	Rest day
4	10mins easy warm up to include 4 x 50m strides. Main set: 5 x 10mins at half marathon pace (2mins easy) 10mins warm down	10mins easy 40mins at MP 5mins easy	10mins easy to include 5 x 60m strides. Main set: 2(10 x 90secs hard (around 3kpace)) with 90secs jog between reps. Take 5mins easy jog between sets. 10mins easy w.d	10mins easy to include 5 x 60m strides. Main set: 2(10 x 60secs hard (around 3kpace)) with 90secs jog between reps. Take 5mins easy jog between sets. 10mins easy w.d	15mins easy to include 5 x 60m strides: Main set: 25mins at between 10k-half marathon pace. 15mins easy warm down	4 miles easy (include 4 x 60m strides)
5	Rest day	30mins easy	Strength and	Strength and	Strength and	Rest day

		to include 5 x 30m strides. Really good stretch here too.	Conditioning	conditioning	conditioning	
6	17-18miles build run 3miles easy, 8miles at MP plus 50secs, 7miles at MP plus 30secs	Rest day	19-20miles as 4miles easy 14miles at MP plus 15secs. 2miles easy	14 miles	10miles as 1 mile easy 7miles at MP plus 5 secs 2 miles easy	10-15min very easy run with 5 x 15second lifts (NB: If you prefer a full days rest before an event swap day 5 and 6 around)
7	Rest day / pilates	Half marathon off road	Rest day / pilates	Rest day / pilates	Rest / pilates	Marathon day



Notes:

- First two weeks the aim is to adjust your body to longer distance running, then after the first few weeks, once your body has adjusted to the longer distances, interval sessions can be introduced. However listen to your body. If you are fatigued and struggling with the development in distance, keep the sessions aerobic until you are adjusted.
- Weeks in blue are an easier training week
- Flexibility should be completed every day! Make sure all sessions include a series of dynamic stretches to warm up and static stretches to finish. I would recommend a shorter stretch at the end of the session, then get warm, showered, have a recovery shake (glass of milk with fruit mixed in is great) then spend a good 30mins on stretching.

- Easy means conversational pace.
- Steady means around 70percent of maximum heart rate so perceived effort 7 out of 10
- When identifying your target pace for your marathon, work out your pace per mile from your last half marathon, and add approx. 20secs per mile for your sustainable marathon pace. (However do take into consideration the terrain. If your last half marathon was on road, then you will be significantly faster than a hilly off road marathon!) Ideally half way through this programme you will identify a half marathon to race in, on a similar terrain to your full marathon, which will give you a good indicator of your final pace. Then the plan indicates sessions that you add seconds to your half marathon or marathon pace per mile to sustain for a certain distance.
- Pace Judgement is really important for longer distance races, if you go off too hard, you really will suffer later on....Sessions where you wear your garmin, but do not look at it, and judge your effort on your own perception are great sessions for you to monitor how accurate you are at judging your pace!