

## Your First 5K: Q+As

Find out what to do, eat and think before your first 5K with the answers to some of your most common questions

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Whether you're running your first 5K for charity, fitness or to support friends (or all three), read on for everything you need to know to finish in style.

### Training help

**Q. I've never run before, how should I start?**

**A.** The best way to start is a little jogging with walk breaks. It may feel odd, but you'll get twice as far, twice as quickly *and* feel a huge sense of achievement as you progress. More than half of the women in your Race for Life event will continue the run/walk routine right through to race day. Our [beginner](#) and [intermediate](#) programmes both include walk breaks.

**Q. What equipment do I need?**

**A.** All you need is a properly fitted pair of shoes, a suitable sports bra (for women) and some comfortable sports clothing that makes you feel good.

**Q. What should I eat?**

**A.** Just a good all-round diet, with plenty of fluids and a slight emphasis on low-GI carbohydrate. Aim to eat 50-60% of your calories from carbohydrate, 20-25% from protein and 20-25% from fat. Only half-marathon runners need go wild with pasta.

**Q. Will I lose weight (please...)?**

**A.** Nothing (except cross-country skiing) burns more calories per minute than running. But don't forget to eat and drink enough to exercise at your best in the first place. You'll still win out.

**Q. How fast should I run?**

**A.** The easiest way to make sure you're running at the right speed is to go with a friend and make sure you maintain 'chatting' pace – if you can't talk, you're running too hard. In the 'brisk' sections of the intermediate and advanced training plans you should still be able to get a few words out, even if they're just "how... much... further...?"

**Q. What if I get bored?**

**A.** You won't! Going for a run or a walk means setting aside time for yourself – you can go with a friend and chat the time away, or designate it me-time. No phone, no kids, no distractions – you can concentrate on how you're breathing, how your body is moving, or just let your mind wander and see where it takes you.

**Q. Help! I don't feel like I'm making progress**

**A.** If you're new to running, we'd call going from doing no regular exercise to doing a run-walk programme pretty good progress. Don't measure yourself against other people – if you're running or walking further, more often, more quickly or more easily, you're making progress. Improvements come in steps, with inevitable – but not insurmountable – plateaus.

**Q. Help! I have aches and pains**

**A.** Feeling a bit achy after running isn't uncommon. Minimise it by starting and finishing each run with a few minutes of gentle jogging or walking, and do some stretching when you finish your session. If your ache turns into a pain then

you may need to ease up, or take a few days off running.

**Q. Help! I feel self-conscious**

**A.** Whatever shape or size you are, the very fact that you are out there and getting fitter means you have plenty to be proud of. More likely than not, anyone who looks at you when you're training is envious of your get-up-and-go. Whether you're in the gym or in the park, hold your head up high.

**Q. Help! I'm behind with my schedule**

**A.** Don't panic! Hardly anyone gets through a whole training plan without missing or trimming a single session. If you only have time to run for half the time scheduled, do that half. If you fall behind, don't try to accelerate through the programme; instead, repeat the earlier, easier sessions and gradually increase the time on your feet.

## Race-day help

**Q. I've never been in a race before. What's it like?**

**A.** It's fantastic! Busier and friendlier than you could imagine. Just don't be tempted to dash off too fast at the start – that's the most common mistake. If you start slowly, you could spend your race overtaking and moving up the field – what a confidence boost!

**Q. How should I prepare on race day?**

**A.** The golden rule is don't try anything new. Have a familiar breakfast (or afternoon snack, if it's an evening race), a glass or two of water or juice, and make sure you'll be wearing shoes and clothing you're really comfortable in.

**Q. How fast could I (should I?) go?**

**A.** Most beginners' goal is simply to finish the race with a smile on their face, and that's what we're here to help you do. If you'd like to know what your training pace translates to, or how fast you'll need to run to hit a certain goal, see our handy [calculators section](#).

**Q. What if I'm last?**

**A.** Why not take a look at the previous year's results for your race? That way, you'll get a good idea of where in the field you might find yourself on race day. Even if you do come last, you'll probably still have a great time and get the biggest cheer going courtesy of the marshals, commentators and all the other runners.

## How to stick to a schedule

Here's how to make sure you keep to your plan.

1. Print out your plan and tick off each session as you do it, so that you can see how far you've come.
2. If you have a friend who might like to run, ask them to join you on some of your runs – think of it as a chance to catch up on some gossip or pick up tips on training.
3. Drink plenty of water before every run. Protect uncovered skin with sunscreen and start every run with five minutes of gentle walking – even if you feel confident that you can run all the way.
4. Set yourself a goal – anything from running at least half the distance to finishing within 35 minutes. Challenge yourself, but make sure your goal is achievable.
5. Build up gradually; don't be tempted to run more often than planned. Even if you've run or walked 5K before, it's a good idea to visit your GP for advice before starting any training programme.
6. Wear the right shoes. Running will not feel easy if you're in the wrong shoes, plain and simple. For help in choosing the right pair, consult our [Gear section](#) and seek out a friendly specialist running shop.
7. Try to fit your exercise in early in the day. Running or walking early can really lift your mood for the whole day and you're also less likely to miss a run.
8. On race day, start slowly and don't try to force your way through the crowds or runners ahead of you. Don't be afraid of taking a walk break if you feel you need it.

## And finally...

Running's a friendly sport and it really is the taking part that counts, so just relax and have fun! In running, your only real opponent is yourself – and remember, no matter where in the field you find yourself, you'll have achieved

something amazing just by being there at all.