

## Your first half marathon - The 10 Dos and 10 Don'ts



### The Dos!

#### **1. Complete base training**

What is this? Base training is getting your body used to completing a certain number of miles of running and exercise per week in the month or so leading up to the start of your training schedule. Base training builds your endurance to a level from which you can start to build on additional mileage (typically through longer runs) and the additional intensity as you get closer to your race. 10 to 12 weeks out from the date of your race you should be looking to run three times a week and covering between 12 and 15 miles per week. Good base preparation will help you avoid any niggles/injuries as you go through your training schedule.

#### **2. Complete the training!!!**

There is no doubt that if you don't put the training effort in then you will not complete the race in the way you are hoping. This could mean you end up walking large parts of it. Make sure your training plan fits in around your race goals and other commitments you may have at home. Regular training is important so take time out to develop your training plan/schedule (see below).

#### **3. Do have a target and share that with someone**

The sharing process firms the target up and ensures that you commit to the training and race plan. The target may be a particular time, raising a certain amount for charity or it may be simply to complete the 13.1 miles non-stop – you choose!



#### **4. Own your training schedule**

Successful training and preparation for your half marathon starts with a training schedule that works for you and that you own. The schedule acts as a road map to get you from where you are now to race day. By sticking to the schedule you will be prepared for the race and give yourself the best opportunity to achieve your target. Just like driving, if you go out without your road map you are likely to get very lost along the way! The schedule gives you structure for your training but don't be afraid to make adjustments along the way. Things can happen, circumstances can change and, therefore, you may need to make changes to your schedule. If you are unsure just come and speak to one of the club coaches.

#### **5. Complete some preparation races in the build up to the half marathon, but don't overdo it.**

The races give you an opportunity to take checkpoints on your training and get used to race conditions, particularly if you haven't had that experience before. You can run shorter distances at the sort of pace you will be running your half marathon at so that you can practice for race day and get used to that race experience at the same time. Running the club 5K handicaps will also help – they are good training (half marathon training isn't just about running long distances) and you experience running with others.

## **6. Listen to your body!**

It will tell you how it is feeling as you increase the training load and get closer to the race. If it is crying out for rest on a particular day then give it some! You will almost certainly feel better for it and be fresher for training on the next occasion. Remember, recovery time is as important as the miles you run as this enables your body to adjust to the training load you are putting it through. Build rest and recovery into your training schedule and then you will have no reason to feel guilty about resting rather than running!

## **7. Break your training down into blocks of 4 weeks**

Build up your training during the block and then back off in the last week to give your body a chance to recover and benefit from what is known as 'adaptation' – adapting to the increased load you have put on it. You can then start another 4 week block. This will typically mean that your weekend long runs build up over three weeks of the block before dropping slightly in the fourth week rather than completing the same distance each weekend over the four weeks. Your last block before the half marathon should include a period of at least two weeks as a taper down.

## **8. Do continue to have a balanced diet during your training and make sure you drink enough fluids.**

As you progress through your training you will be increasing the load on your body and the volume of calories burnt. You must ensure that you put enough calories back into your body. The half marathon distance means that you will be running for a time where carbohydrates and electrolytes will get depleted. You will need to ensure that you are replacing carbohydrate and electrolytes as you burn these off, so find energy drinks/gels that work for you. Use some parts of your training plan to experiment with different brands of energy drinks and gels so that you get used to taking them. Trying a new type of energy drink or gel on the day of the race is an absolute no no!!!!

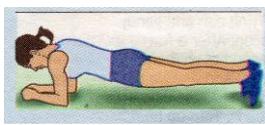
As you go into your pre race taper increase the proportion of carbohydrate in your diet so that you ensure your body is fuelled up for the race (this is known as carbo loading).

## **9. Do build in regular treats and rewards into your training plan to keep yourself going.**

For example, buying yourself a new pair of running shoes 2-3 weeks before the start of your 2 week taper down period in readiness for the race or treat yourself to a massage at the end of each 4 week training block.

## **10. Do complete some regular non-running training**

You will be increasing the load on your body as you progress through your training. You can protect yourself against injury by building in regular non-running training to help build up parts of your body in readiness for this. Circuits, pilates, core training and weights are all good contributors. Look out for helpful articles in RunnersWorld and on the Catch a Coach section of our website.





## **The Don'ts!**

### **1. Don't get to the start of the race without a target in mind**

If you are at the start with no target then your mental state is more likely to be 'anything will do!' If you have completed the training and followed the advice given to you then you should be ready to follow a game plan in the race. Set out what you want to achieve at the start of your training so you have a plan to work to (see the Dos above) and try and stick to that right through to race day.

### **2. Don't run your long runs too quickly**

You should be completing these at a slow pace. Most importantly it should feel slow to you. This helps your body get used to running for the length of time you will be running in the race. If you have a heart rate monitor try using that on your long training runs and ensure that you don't go above 60% of your maximum heart rate. If you haven't got a heart rate monitor don't worry – the long run pace should be that at which you are still able to hold a conversation with your fellow runners.

### **4. If you miss any training sessions, for whatever reason, don't be tempted to cram in extra training in order to catch up**

You will most likely over train and run the risk of picking up an injury. Simply pick up the training from where you left off and adjust your schedule accordingly. This may also mean that you will need to adjust your target for the race. Be realistic with yourself. If you have any doubts or want advice just speak to one of the club coaches.

### **5. Don't go off too quick at the start!**

It is so easy to get sucked in with other runners and ending up running their race plan. Always keep your target pace in mind and remember it is your race!!!

### **6. Don't start your training too late**

You should ideally have at least 12 weeks between the start of your training and the race itself. This enables you to have a plan that includes at least two training blocks of 4 weeks plus a period of 3-4 weeks pre race to include your taper down.



### **7. Don't wear new shoes for the race or run the race in kit that you have not worn before!!**

Shoes should be broken in but not worn out (see the information in the Coaches Corner for further details). Given the extra mileage you are covering in training you may need to face up to the fact that you will need to buy at least two pairs of shoes to get you through training and the race itself!! (Buy one pair as a treat – see the Dos above). If you run in new kit you are likely to end up with chaffing and blisters in places that you are not expecting and have to endure that discomfort for a long period of the race! Use your build up runs and races to get into good habits with using Vaseline and talcum powder in all of the right areas!

**8. Don't increase your training volume or intensity too quickly.**

As a good rule of thumb, your total weekly training mileage should not increase by more than 10% per week and you should not be doing more than 50% of that weekly mileage in your long run. Remember to count your non running training in this. For example, if you are completing a weekly circuits session this has a running equivalent rating. This can be found by taking the time you are exercising and translating that into the number of miles you would cover in that time normally.

**9. Don't ignore the coaching team at the club!!**

They are here to help you. If you have any questions about your training plan or preparation please catch up with one of them and ask them! Other runners in the club training for a half marathon or marathon are also important resources that you can use. Training in a group is a powerful motivator and you can help each other get through the tough times and share in each others successes – that's one of the great benefits of being in a club, so make the most of it!

**10. Don't forget your stretching**

Get into good habits and remember to go through a programme of stretching after each session of running or exercise. If you don't 'oil the machine', it is likely to seize up just when you need it the most!!

