



Marathon Dreamer to Marathon Doer

Turning Your Marathon Dreams
Into Reality

Questions to consider when deciding
if you are ready to run a marathon

by Sara Kurth | sarakurth.com

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The Workbook

There is a ton of information out there on how to start running. And at least another ton on how to train for a marathon.

But how do you know if you are ready to start training for a marathon? What should you consider before your start?

How do you prepare to prepare?

This workbook walks you through key areas to consider before you begin marathon training

- The Mind
- The Body (The Doctor)
 - The Race
 - The Plan
- The Calendar
 - The Closet
 - The Kitchen

Who am I?



So who am I to tell you how to train for a marathon?

Hi! I'm Sara. I've been running for over half my life and have completed 25 marathons, 1 ultra marathon, and more half-marathons than I can count. I'm a certified running coach and work as a coach and pacer for local marathon training programs. I've worked with hundreds of newer runners, helping them train for a marathon and preparing them to cross the finish line both happy and healthy.

The Mind

The marathon is almost more of a mental challenge than a physical one. Marathon training is an odd combination of the very hard, the very boring, the very challenging and the very monotonous.

If you are like nearly every marathoner I have ever known, at some point (or many points) during training you will doubt your abilities. You will want to quit a run. You will want to quit training. There will be days where you have zero energy and enthusiasm. You will be on an emotional roller coaster.

These feelings are very, very common.

Having an understanding of what running a marathon means to you can help you get through the down times. Being clear on your 'why' will give you an extra boost of confidence and drive on days when you want to quit.

Preparing your mind to run a marathon is an important step to being ready to start on day one of training.

Why do you want to run a marathon?

How can you turn this 'why' into a reminder that you'll see regularly?

For example: Create a mantra, make a vision board, or find a related inspiring quote

On those days when you don't even want to start running, take a few moments to consider your why. Repeat your mantra/quote or review your vision board.

What are your training and race goals?

For example: A race goal of finishing in X hours, or a training goal of running 4 times a week with weekly yoga

Do you have any expectations for either the marathon or the marathon training process?

When you think of running a marathon, what are you afraid of?

Be honest, are any of these fears true or realistic?

What can you do to minimize the impact of these fears?

For example: If you are afraid you won't finish within a course time limit, look for a walker-friendly marathon

What will motivate you to keep running when you want to quit?

How can you use this to establish accountability so you stay on track?

For example: Find running accountability partners, use on-line tracking apps, or join on-line or IRL running clubs

The Body

The obvious item that needs to be prepared for marathon training is the body.

Before training for something as intense as a marathon, you should visit your doctor (or other qualified trained medical professional) to make sure you are physically capable of doing it.

When you run, do you have any aches or pains that should be checked out by your doctor?

Have you gotten the OK from your doctor to begin training for your first marathon?

Yes No

What issues (if any) did your doctor raise with you about running or training for a marathon? How will this impact your training?

How many times a week are you currently running? What is your longest distance run? What is your average weekly mileage?

You should have a solid base of running before you start seriously training for a marathon. This is generally considered to be regularly running 3-4 times a week and being comfortable with long runs of 5-8 miles.

If you are a total newbie and your mileage is currently zero, you can still set your sights on a marathon, but your timeline for training will need to be extended to build a solid fitness base. If you've never run, do not pull out a standard 16-week training plan and expect success.

How much time (if any) will you need to train to get to a base of comfortably running around 20-25 miles a week?

The Race

In order to run a marathon, you have to choose a marathon!

For some, this is an easy decision. There is a hometown race or a dream race they have always wanted to do. For others, it can be a very difficult decision.

If you know, what marathon do you want to do?

What does this race mean to you?

If you don't know which marathon you want to do, what do you want your race to be like?

For example: urban, suburban, or rural? A hilly course or flat? What time of year do you want to run? Do you want to run close to home or do you want to travel?

There are no good, bad, right or wrong answers here. To have the best race experience possible, consider your preferences and plan accordingly.

Research your target race.

For example: When does race registration open? Is there a lottery process for entry? Do you have a Plan B race if you don't get into the lottery?

Brainstorm and create to-dos for your target marathon.

For example: research relevant race, registration, and training dates, make a race and travel budget, and make necessary travel plans and reservations

The Closet

The key to a long and happy running life is a great pair of running shoes.

You will need other gear too (a jog bra and a pair of running bottoms that don't cause chafing are high on my list of necessary items), but it always comes back to the shoes.

Do you have an amazing pair of running shoes? Yes No

Yes, I love my shoes!

Great!

Do you need to replace your shoes? It is recommended that you replace your shoes every 400-500 miles or whenever you notice wear patterns on the soles or fraying of the lining.

No! I have no running shoes

Getting a pair should be a top priority. Research specialty running stores and retailers that can provide information and guidance on getting a good pair.

Research your options and make notes

What other clothing or gear do you already have, and what do you need to purchase (or consider purchasing)

For example: Jog bra, pants, undies, rain or winter layers, socks, Road ID, GPS, way to carry fuel or hydration.

Research your options and make notes

Experiment with what you have first, then research and buy items as you get a better sense for your needs and preferences.

The Kitchen

Nutrition and hydration play an important role in fueling your marathon success. Both on the run and in your everyday life, make sure you eat well and keep your body well-hydrated.

An important first step when preparing to training is to pay attention to what you eat and how your body feels and responds to what you are eating. When you know how your body responds to different foods, you can more effectively make changes and improvements.

For many beginning marathoners, this will be your first experience running distances long enough to require fueling mid-run. You can't do training runs of 10+ miles without some sort of mid-run fueling.

Finding the right fuel combination for you is a matter of trial and error, but you can begin considering your preferences and reviewing your options before your start to run. There is an endless combination of flavors and textures to choose from.

What textures and flavor profiles do you prefer?

Texture examples: Gel, blocks, solid bars or 'real' food

Flavor profile examples: Subtle, fruity, sweet, salty, savory

Are you willing to cook and package homemade fueling options?

Do you have any special nutritional concerns or restrictions?

For example: Vegan, kosher, caffeine sensitivity or preservative or additive free

Hydration

While doing long runs, you will need access to water. It's best to carry your own with a hydration system. If you don't want to carry your own water, make sure the routes you will run have working water fountains, and always carry cash in case you need to run into a store to buy water.

What style(s) of hydration system do you prefer?

For example: Handheld, backpack, waist pack

The Calendar

Training for a marathon takes a lot of time, there is no way around it. You are signing up for a 4 month (at least) part-time job.

It is a matter of when, not if, there will be struggles between your training calendar and your real calendar. You or your kids will get sick, you will have an unexpected business trip or appointments.

If you plan ahead, you can create a plan of action so you'll be more likely to stick with your training when these conflicts arise, or at least minimize the impact of these conflicts.

Have you discussed your training needs with your spouse, family, and friends so they understand what you are undertaking? Do they have any concerns about the time it will take?

What are some potential calendar conflicts you may have while training?

For example: Child care issues, unexpected business travel or work deadlines

What are some strategies you can use to keep up with your training, or at least minimize the impact, if/when conflicts arise?

For example: Create indoor cross training options, divide up longer runs, swap child care with other runners

The Plan

There are a million marathon training plans out there, ranging in duration from 16 weeks to 6 months or more. A good plan will see you safely and happily to the finish, and a bad plan, well... the less said about them the better.

Successfully picking the right training plan for you starts with understanding your current lifestyle and fitness level. Make sure you select a plan that is realistic for your life. The best plan in the world won't do you any good if it calls for track work and 2-a-day-runs, if those are things you know you aren't going to do.

What is your current exercise/workout schedule?

For example: How many days a week do you run? Do you do regular yoga, biking or strength workouts?

Consider what you want your training week to look like.

- How many days of running do you want to do?
- Do you want a rest day(s)?
- Do you want to include cross training or strength training workouts?

Are you interested in (and willing to do) track or speed workouts?

Adding speed work into a marathon training plan has benefits, but it isn't for all runners (I'll confess I'm one of them) and it can be too much for many new marathoners their first time out.

Do you want to train using any particular method?

For example: Run/Walk, lower mileage, fewer days a week?

Find a few plans online, in books, or develop one with the help of a coach or running club. Good starting places are reputable resources and coaches like Runners World magazine, Jeff Galloway, and Hal Higdon.

Caution: Always consider the source of a training plan. Pinterest has some great looking plans (from a design perspective) but who knows who created them or if they knew anything about running.

Are there any terms or workout types that you don't understand and need to research more?