# How to Train for Your First 5K in 8 Weeks

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Finish your first 5K in eight weeks with three talkable run-walk sessions a week, a ten-percent build, and a taper that gets you to the start line fresh.

## Things you will need

- Running shoes fitted at a specialty store
- Second pair of running shoes for strength days
- Synthetic or merino running socks
- Moisture-wicking top and shorts or tights
- Anti-chafe balm for seams, thighs, and arms
- Cap and sunglasses for sun or drizzle
- Reflective clip or headlamp for dark starts
- Phone with a run-walk interval timer app
- Metronome app or playlist at 170-180 steps per minute
- Sports watch or phone GPS for pace checks
- Water bottle or handheld flask for long sessions
- Banana or cereal bar for post-run refueling
- Training log and a pen, or a simple spreadsheet
- Foam roller or lacrosse ball for calves and quads

## Weeks 1-2: Build a Base Without Getting Injured

1. **Get Fitted for Running Shoes at a Specialty Store**
   Book a fitting at a store that films your feet rather than grabbing the smartest shelf pair at a general sports chain.
2. **Set Three Run Days With a Rest Day Between**
   Pick three fixed weekdays with at least one day off in between — Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday is the classic shape — and enter them in your calendar as appointments rather than options.
3. **Alternate One Running Minute With One Walking Minute**
   The run-walk structure popularised by Jeff Galloway is the reason most beginners finish a first 5K without a shin complaint: run one minute, walk one minute, and repeat for eight to ten rounds inside a 30-minute session.
4. **Run Every Easy Day at a Talkable Pace**
   Eighty to ninety percent of these eight weeks should feel boring: an effort of 3 or 4 out of 10, at which you can speak a full sentence without gasping.
5. **Record Pain Honestly and Watch Your Shins**
   Keep one line per session: date, minutes on your feet, walk breaks taken, and a 0-to-10 pain score for calves, shins, knees, and hips the following morning.

## Weeks 3-4: Add Time on Your Feet Without Adding Risk

6. **Increase Weekly Total Time by About Ten Percent**
   Grow distance in minutes on your feet rather than miles logged, and cap the jump near 10 percent

per week: if week three totals 100 running minutes, week four goes to 110, not 130.

### 7. Stretch Your Run Intervals Out to Three Minutes

In weeks three and four, move to three running minutes against one walking minute for eight to ten rounds inside a 35 to 40-minute session, then test four running minutes once three feel easy in two sessions in a row.

### 8. Keep Your Steps Quick and Your Stride Short

Most beginners overstride, landing hard out in front of the body, which multiplies the load traveling up through shins and knees.

### 9. Add Two Short Strength Sessions Every Week

Two 20-minute sessions on non-running days protect the base you are building: two sets of eight to twelve bodyweight squats, split squats, calf raises, hip bridges, and a plank, resting between sets and never lifting to failure.

### 10. Cut Back at the First Sign of Shin Pain

Decide in advance how much pain you will train through, because nobody thinks clearly late in a hard session.

## Weeks 5-6: Run Continuously and Add One Harder Session

### 11. Merge Your Intervals Into Twenty Minutes Nonstop

Choose one session in week five for a continuous effort: after a five-minute brisk walk, run 20 minutes without a break at the same talkable pace you used during the intervals.

### 12. Grow One Long Session to Forty Minutes

Your third weekly session becomes the long one: 30 minutes in week five, then 35 to 40 minutes by week six, at the slowest pace of the week and on a flat, familiar, forgiving route.

### 13. Add One Comfortably-Hard Tempo Session Weekly

From week six, turn your second run day into one quality session a week: 10 minutes easy, then two efforts of 5 to 6 minutes at 5 or 6 out of 10 effort — short phrases only, never a sprint — separated by 2 minutes of walking and easy jogging.

### 14. Keep Strength Work Short as Mileage Grows

As running time climbs, cut strength sessions to 15 focused minutes: one hip-hinge lift such as a Romanian deadlift, one single-leg squat variation, calf raises, and a side plank, for two sets of eight to twelve repetitions.

### 15. Protect Sleep, Food, and Fluid as Sessions

Seven to nine hours of sleep is where the adaptation actually happens, so fix a steady wake time first — our sleep and morning routine guide is the honest starting point if yours drifts by two hours — and note that Harvard Health coverage of sleep and exercise describes how short sleep raises perceived effort, which you feel as a higher heart rate at the same pace after a bad night.

## Weeks 7-8: Rehearse, Taper, and Race Your 5K

### 16. Run the Full Race Distance in Training

In week seven, cover the whole 5K in one session, either continuously or with 30-second walk breaks at each half-mile mark, at your target effort rather than against a target time.

### 17. Rehearse the Whole Race Morning Beforehand

Two weeks out, simulate the event from alarm to finish line: wake at the same hour, eat a planned

breakfast of 50 to 75 grams of familiar carbohydrate that is low in fiber and fat two to three hours before, then walk five minutes, jog five, and run four 20-second strides.

### 18. Taper Volume but Keep a Few Sharps

Week eight is deliberately small: about 60 percent of your week-seven volume, which means two sessions of 20 to 25 easy minutes plus one short rehearsal at race pace finished with three or four 20-second strides.

### 19. Run the First Kilometer Slower Than Goal Pace

Set a per-mile split target on your watch or write it on a band before the gun, then hold the first mile 15 to 30 seconds per mile slower than goal pace.

### 20. Recover for Two Weeks, Then Pick a Next Goal

After finishing, keep moving for 15 to 20 minutes of walking, then take two full days off running before your first session back.

## Sources


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Written as a checklist from https://www.howcompass.com/how-to/Train-for-Your-First-5K. Corrections: https://www.howcompass.com/correction