

20 WEEKS TO YOUR FIRST MARATHON

Finish running's main event by training just three days a week.

Last year some 410,000 runners completed one of the 375-odd marathons held throughout the country, and thanks to the Furman Institute of Running & Scientific Training (FIRST), a South Carolina-based running facility for athletes of every caliber, this year you can, too. With FIRST's help we've devised a training program for moderately fit men that involves intense short and fast runs, three days a week (see chart at far right), boosting your aerobic capacity and leaving plenty of time for a life. You can begin the program anytime, but if you start on September 10, you'll peak on January 18, the day of the Houston Marathon, a flat track that's easy enough for beginners but challenging enough to leave you wanting more. —GRANT DAVIS

Get Faster

Using the forefoot running technique, you should notice that you're already running faster than you had before, but by week six you can begin concentrating on another technique that will make you even quicker. Speed, Abshire points out, isn't about long gazelle-like strides but how fast a runner can move his legs. (A top Olympic marathoner takes upward of 190 steps a minute; a beginning runner is lucky to land 140.) To do this, take short steps, and think about keeping contact with the ground.

WEEK 5

10-Mile Mark

At this point you will have logged some serious mileage, and your new stride should start feeling natural. You should also be breathing more comfortably during interval training and especially on longer runs. During week five, you'll run 10 miles for the first time, which sounds daunting, but you're running at a very easy pace to slowly get your muscles and ligaments used to pounding the pavement for long periods of time. By the day of the marathon, your body should be able to easily withstand running long distances without excessive fatigue or discomfort. By now you should also have cut your diet to a steady stream of whole grains, lean meats, and eight to nine servings of fruits and vegetables a day. Tailoring your diet, along with your running, will make you lose weight, which for this sport is a good thing: An accepted theory says that losing 10 pounds off your body will shave 10 minutes off your marathon time.

WEEKS 1-4

Start By Improving Your Stride

As you begin your training, you're going to want to concentrate on three fundamentals: your stride, your diet, and your pace. Over the past two years forefoot running has exploded in popularity among serious runners. Because you land on the ball of your foot instead of your heel, you keep better forward momentum and waste less energy, says Danny Abshire, a running coach and the co-founder of Newton Running Company. To do it, simply keep your head up, look at least 20 yards ahead, and lean slightly forward from your waist to let gravity pull you forward. Abshire invented the

Newton sneaker (see below), with a sole that puts you in a forward-leaning position, to help runners develop the gait, but you can use any shoe to run this way. While you're dialing your stride, start cleaning up your diet the way Lance Armstrong did when he was training for the Tour de France. He would "turn off" a different food, starting with alcohol, then butter, sugar and milk from his coffee, and so on. Finally, get used to using your wrist-mounted GPS, which will help give you a better sense of your average pace in the real world of hills, wind, and traffic.

illustrations by BRUNOILLO

Gear Up

One shoe does not fit all. The wrong sneakers can cause nagging pain, blisters, and injury. Find a store with a wide selection and set aside an hour or more to try them all on. Look for a perfect fit: no tightness or slipping anywhere and no uncomfortable pressure points. To help perfect your running style, we suggest the **NEWTON DISTANCE**. Once you have your new kicks, buy a pair of lightweight shorts, like the **REEBOK PRE 5**; a thin, breathable shirt, like the **GOLITE DRIMOVE SILK**; and padded socks, like the **POWERSOX APF**, which wick moisture to prevent blistering. A GPS, like the **GARMIN FORERUNNER 405**, will help you pace your runs; and finally, pick up **LULULEMON ATHLETICA'S INTERVAL JACKET** for those cold morning runs.



NEWTON DISTANCE
\$155; newtonrunning.com



LULULEMON INTERVAL JACKET
\$188; lululemon.com