MARATHON IMPROVER TRAINING PLAN

BARNARDO'S

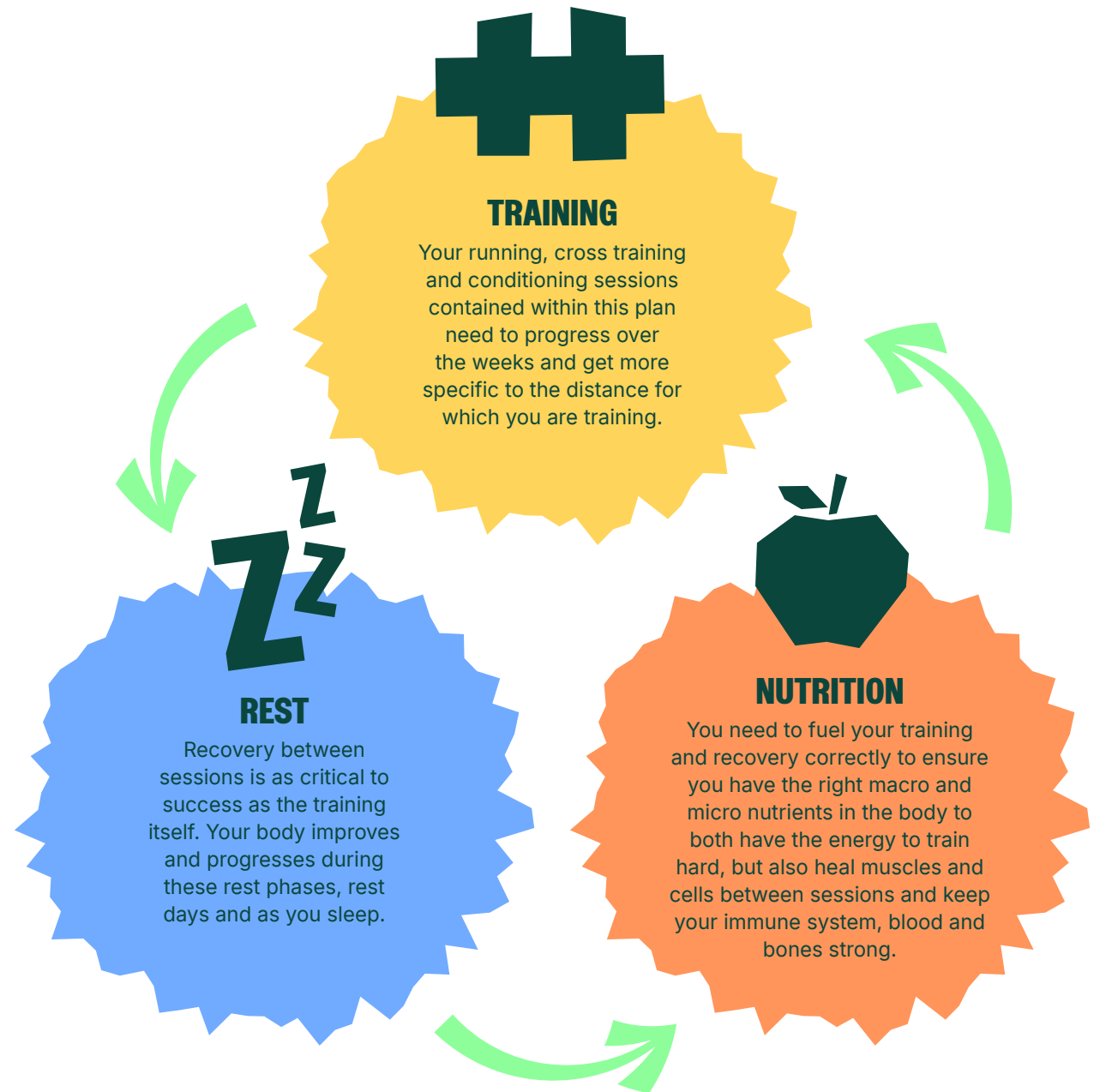Changing childhoods. Changing lives.

This plan

This improver marathon plan is designed to get you ready to run a marathon, improve on recent marathon performance or step up from 10km and half marathon races to your first full marathon. It can be used to cover a race of paces from 3 hours right through to 4.5 hours and assumes you are ready to run for 75–90 minutes continuously before you start.

Keeping it all in balance

Performance training, and developing your fitness can seem complicated at times with lots of information and conflicting advice. In truth it can be kept pretty simple. The key is the training triangle you see to the right.

Most of us think about training sessions as a 'need to do' in order to become stronger, fitter or faster. In reality you won't really make gains until the other two sides of the triangle, nutrition and rest, are also considered with equal focus and attention.

As you increase your training keep the triangle in balance by improving your nutrition and ensuring you listen to your body and respect its need to rest in order to improve.

TRAINING
Your running, cross training and conditioning sessions contained within this plan need to progress over the weeks and get more specific to the distance for which you are training.

REST
Recovery between sessions is as critical to success as the training itself. Your body improves and progresses during these rest phases, rest days and as you sleep.

NUTRITION
You need to fuel your training and recovery correctly to ensure you have the right macro and micro nutrients in the body to both have the energy to train hard, but also heal muscles and cells between sessions and keep your immune system, blood and bones strong.

WEEK	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT	SUN
1	Rest	**30min progression run of** 10mins easy/10mins steady/ 10mins @threshold	30min recovery run or aerobic cross training, + core	**Easy/Steady 30min run**	Rest	**40mins continuous hills with** 4 x (5mins effort and 2mins jog recovery), + core	**75-90min long run** conversational pace
2	Rest	**30min progression run of** 10mins easy/10mins steady/ 10mins @threshold	30min recovery run or aerobic cross training, + core	**Easy/Steady 30-40min run**	Rest	**45mins continuous hills with** 3 x (7mins effort and 2mins jog recovery), + core	**90min long run** conversational pace
3	Rest	**45min progression run of** 15mins easy/15mins steady/ 15mins @threshold	30min recovery run or aerobic cross training, + core	**Easy/Steady 40min run**	Rest	**45mins continuous hills with** 3 x (10mins effort and 2mins jog recovery), + core	**Easy 90-100min long run** on an undulating route
4	Rest	**Easy 30-40min run**	30min recovery run or aerobic cross training, + core	**Easy 30min run**	Rest	**Parkrun** or self-timed 5km time trial	**Easy 75-90min long run** on an undulating route
5	Rest	**45min threshold run including** 4 x (5mins @threshold and 2mins jog recovery)	30-40min recovery run or aerobic cross training, + core	**40min out and back run –** Run out steady pace for 20mins, turn back 2-3mins faster	Rest	**45mins continuous hills with** 4 x (6min effort and 90s jog recovery), + core	**Easy 1hr 45mins long run** on an undulating route
6	Rest	**45min threshold run including** 5 x (5mins @threshold and 90s jog recovery)	40min easy run or aerobic cross training, + core	**40min out and back run –** Run out steady pace for 20mins, turn back 2-3mins faster	Rest	**50mins continuous hills with** 3 x (8min effort and 90s jog recovery), + core	**50mins-2hrs long run** on an undulating route
7	Rest	**45min threshold run including** 5 x (5mins @threshold and 75s jog recovery)	40-50min easy run or aerobic cross training, + core	**45min run** with the last 25mins @threshold	Rest	**45-60mins continuous hills with** 3 x (10min effort and 90s jog recovery), + core	**Easy 2hr long run** with last 15mins easy
8	Rest	**60min threshold run including** 5 x (6mins @threshold and 90s jog recovery)	40-50min easy run or aerobic cross training, + core	**60min progression run of** 20mins easy/20mins steady/ 20mins @threshold	Rest	**Parkrun** or self-timed 5km time trial, + core	**All easy 2hrs** 15-30mins long run

WEEK	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT	SUN
9	Rest	**45min including** 3 x (6mins @half marathon effort and 2-3mins jog recovery)	30min recovery jog, + core	**30min progression run of** 10mins easy/10mins steady/10mins @half marathon pace + strides	Rest	Easy 20-30min run	**Half marathon @PB pace** + 15-20mins easy jog cool down or 2hr long run with the last 60mins @marathon pace
10	Rest	**45min recovery run**	40-50min easy run or aerobic cross training, + core	**75min threshold run with** final 30mins to include 4 x (6mins @threshold and 3mins easy recovery)	Rest	Easy 40-50min run, + core	**2hr 45mins with** 3 × 20mins @marathon pace (MP) and 5mins easy recovery
11	Rest	6 x (3mins alternating odd nos @ threshold effort and even nos @5km effort with 90s jog recovery)	45-60min easy run or aerobic cross training, + core	**75mins** with last 30mins @threshold	Rest	Easy 40-50min run, + core	**2hr 30-45mins long** run with last 45mins @marathon pace (MP)
12	Rest	8 x (3mins alternating odd nos @ threshold effort and even nos @5km effort with 90s jog recovery)	45-60min easy run or aerobic cross training, + core	**80min threshold run including** 3 x (15mins @marathon pace and 2-3mins jog recovery)	Rest	Easy 40-50min run, + core	**3hr-3hrs 15mins long run** with the last 60mins @marathon pace (MP)
13	Rest	10 x (3mins alternating odd nos @ threshold effort and even nos @5km effort with 90s jog recovery)	45-60mins easy run or aerobic cross training, + core	**80-90min threshold run including** 3 x (15mins @ marathon pace (MP) and 2-3mins jog recovery)	Rest	**45min progression run of** 15mins easy/15mins steady/ 15mins @threshold, + core	**2hr 45mins-3hrs long run** with the last 45mins @marathon pace (MP)
14	Rest	5mins @threshold + 2 x (5 x 90s @5km effort with 60s recovery) 120s between sets	45-60mins easy run or aerobic cross training, + core	**90mins with** last 30-40mins @marathon pace (MP)	Rest	**45mins threshold run** 6 x (3mins threshold and 3mins steady running), + core	**1hr 45mins-2hrs long run** with the last 30mins @marathon pace (MP)
15	Rest	5mins @threshold + 10 x (90s @5km effort and 60s recovery)	30-45mins easy run or aerobic cross training, + core	**45min progression run of** 15mins easy/15mins steady/ 15mins @threshold	Rest	**Parkrun** or 30min steady run, + core	**Easy 75min run**
16	Rest	**Easy 30min run with** 3 x (5mins @threshold and 3min jog recovery)	30min recovery run	**Easy 25-30min run**	Rest	Super easy 25min run	**Marathon Race Day! Good Luck!**

Rest (R)

To help your body cope with the workload, rest is going to be as important a part of your training schedule as the running itself.

Listen to your body and take heed of any warning signs. If you feel fatigued even before you've run a step, find yourself thinking up excuses not to run or start suffering a series of minor injuries; you probably need more time off. Taking enough rest allows physical and mental recovery and gives your body the time to adapt to your workload.

Threshold Runs (THR)

After the long run threshold runs are probably your most valuable workouts. They are run at a controlled brisk pace, about 80–85% of your maximum heart rate (MHR), you'll only be capable of uttering a couple of words to your training partners.

Tempo/threshold runs improve your lactate threshold *(the speed above which your body struggles to cope with the lactic acid created by burning energy without oxygen)*, your running economy and aerobic capacity.

Long Runs (LR)

Long runs are vital in your plan and key to racing well in long distance races from 5km-marathon. At first, concentrate on increasing the time on your feet rather than worrying about distance. Start off by heading out for at least an hour and run at a conversational pace or 6/10 effort. Gradually this will build to 75% of maximum heart rate (MHR) as you start to practice periods of marathon or race pace running. These runs improve your muscular endurance and condition your body to burn fat as its primary fuel source.

Continuous Hills (CH)

Hill running develops strength in your muscles and tendons without putting them under the type of stress they are exposed to during faster running. Run up a 5–10% gradient for 45–90 seconds at a threshold effort. Turn immediately at the top and run down the hill at the same effort, then turn at the bottom and repeat without any recovery until the rep time ends. Like a tempo/threshold run, a hill session is time to concentrate, as you should be working at about 80–85% of maximum heart rate (MHR) and be able to utter just a few words.

Interval Training (IT)

Intervals help to boost specific race pace speed and involve running timed efforts with a controlled recovery. The effort level is around 85–100% of your maximum heart rate (MHR), depending on the duration of the event you are training for and the length and volume of intervals used. A typical example might be:

- 6 × 3minutes @5km race pace with a 90 second jog recovery.

Race Pace (MP)

Understanding the pace and effort you intend on running your marathon at is very important. Pace judgment and patience on the big day will be crucial to running your best marathon. Marathon pace practice allows your body and mind to get used to what will be required on race day, and it builds endurance quickly.

Warming Up/Cool down (WU)

When you are going to do any faster running such as hills, threshold runs, intervals or a race, it is important to warm up gradually. A 10–15 minute jog lets your muscles warm up and improve their range of movement.

Cross-Training and core conditioning (XT)

It is important that your training is balanced with some non-impact activities such as swimming, cycling, rowing, the cross trainer etc, otherwise you are more likely to pick up an annoying injury that will set back your training.

More experienced runners should also add cross training to their regime. Endurance running, especially the marathon, requires whole body-conditioning. To achieve this you should aim to work a variety of muscle groups and not just your legs. Be careful not to make the cross-training, whether it is core conditioning, lifting weights, using an elliptical trainer or practicing pilates, so intense that you are left too tired for running.

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