

5k Beginner

Training Plan



5k Beginner Training Plan

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● Introduction

● The world of running

Welcome to the world of running, jogging and walking – an energising, fun activity that caters for beginners and seasoned athletes alike and keeps you in shape! There is currently a huge surge in popularity over distances such as 5k (3.1 miles), with hundreds of 5k events staged throughout the country; from the hugely successful women's Race for Life series with more than 150 races and fields of several thousand, to small, local events with less than 100 competitors. 5k is an ideal distance to prepare for because you don't need to commit large amounts of time to training. This beginner's training plan focuses on everything you need to get started, including sensible precautions to take and a week-by-week structured plan that will convert you from complete beginner to a fitter, healthier, successful 5k runner. This guide includes advice on:

- Training: how to get started
- Kit: what to buy and what to leave on the shelf.
- Footwear: how to choose the right training shoes for you.
- Nutrition: how to correctly fuel your body.
- Hydration: when to drink, so that you don't dehydrate
- Training: a 12-week programme to prepare you for your first 5k event



● The 5k

5k is a fun event to compete in. It serves both as an ideal introduction to the sport and also a meaningful challenge in its own right. Completing your first 5k is a great achievement wherever you finish in the field and this training plan steps you through from novice to race day competitor and includes a multitude of tips and advice to help you reach your 5k goal.



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● What happens in a 5k event?

If you've never watched or entered a 5k event before, at first sight it appears to be chaotic, with hundreds or even thousands of competitors arriving, warming-up and generally preparing. The usual pattern of a 5k race is as follows:

1 Arrival

Every entrant arrives at the race venue. Most events will have designated parking areas and larger races will have a public address system to keep everyone updated as the start time approaches.

2 Preparation

As the race start time gets nearer, competitors will be making final adjustments to their kit, visiting the toilet and warming-up – so that they are fully prepared for their race.

3 Lining up

Everyone lines up according to their expected finishing time, with the faster runners right on the start line and those expecting to finish later, further back. This way, no-one is impeded.

4 Start

A gun, klaxon or similar is sounded and the race begins. Unless you are right on the start line, progress will be slightly slower as the runners in front get away – which is often a good thing because you're not tempted to begin too quickly, which can ruin your race.

5 Main race

Over the duration of the race there will usually be kilometre or mile markers every kilometre or mile, so that you can monitor your pace and frequently a drinks station for re-hydrating.



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6 Finish

The finish line will be clearly marked, usually with a gantry or banner and a time clock.

7 Post finish

Runners are grouped into finishing funnels where medals/t-shirts etc are given out (depending on the race) and drinks are also usually available.

● Before you begin . . .

Before you start that first training session, it is important to take a little time out to check a few safety considerations before you commence 5k training.

● Safety first

To start with, it is vitally important to ensure that it is safe for you to begin an exercise programme. Complete the safety checklist below and if you answer YES to one or more questions, or alternatively, if you are at all concerned about starting training, then make an appointment with your doctor for a check-up before you start.

● Health-status safety checklist:

- | | | | |
|----------|---------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-----------------------|
| 1 | Are you aged over 30 and/or have not exercised for some time? | Y/N | <input type="radio"/> |
| 2 | Do you suffer from any medical conditions? | Y/N | <input type="radio"/> |
| 3 | Are you a smoker or have recently given up smoking? | Y/N | <input type="radio"/> |
| 4 | Have you undergone any surgery in the past two years? | Y/N | <input type="radio"/> |
| 5 | Are you suffering from any injuries? | Y/N | <input type="radio"/> |
| 6 | Are you currently on any prescribed medication? | Y/N | <input type="radio"/> |
| 7 | Are you unsure about beginning an exercise programme? | Y/N | <input type="radio"/> |

Once you have the all-clear from your doctor then you're ready to step out on the road to 5k fitness.



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1 Getting started

● What gear do I need?

To get started on your road to 5k fitness, you need minimal equipment. Running is a very simple sport and requires very little specialist kit. The most important point is that you have suitable clothing (particularly footwear) and that you feel comfortable in everything. The most technical and most important things you need to buy are your running shoes. These have evolved over the past ten years into sophisticated pieces of technology of which each manufacturer has developed their own version.

Shoes

Correct footwear is one area where you should not compromise. Good running shoes are an investment in comfort, protection and injury prevention and it is worth visiting a specialist sports footwear retailer rather than a chain store and discussing your requirements with them. A specialist retailer with gait analysis and pressure plate testing will be able to assess your requirements and recommend suitable shoes for your particular gait and running style. Good shoes will last and your initial investment will be repaid many times over and if you calculate the 'pence-per-session' cost of your shoes, you will find them extremely good value.

realbuzz.com **top tip**

You want to be comfortable when you run, so finding the correct shoe size is very important. When you shop for running shoes, always go in the afternoon because after lunch, your feet will have expanded a little. Hence a snug fit in the morning could mean a tight fit in the afternoon and blisters when training, which is certain to curb your enthusiasm!



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Socks

Working upwards from the shoes, next you need some socks to train in. These can be simple white sports socks that can be picked up from most sports stores. However, if you get more serious about your running, it is wise to invest in some socks that have been specifically designed for running. These have been designed to wick away moisture and sweat from the foot so you don't slip and consequently suffer from blisters. Additionally, these types of socks are designed with more padding in certain areas for enhanced cushioning.

The most advanced socks are designed for the appropriate foot i.e: they are left and right foot specific. The specific foot socks have a great benefit in that they hug the foot better and there is no excess sock floating around in the shoe which may cause blisters. As with most things nowadays, you get what you pay for and a £1 pair of socks won't give you as much comfort as an £8 pair.

realbuzz.com **top tip**

Buy your socks before you buy your shoes!
Socks come in a wide range of thicknesses, which can significantly affect the fit of your running shoes. Take the socks that you are going to train in along to the shoe retailer so that you get a perfect match.



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Shorts and tights

After socks come shorts or when it is colder, tights. Shorts should be comfortable, lightweight and have the ability to wick away sweat when you train. Most running shorts now come with a pant liner so you don't have to wear anything else with them. This is good but you have to try them on first as some of the inners can be a little restrictive if you don't get the right size. Most shorts come with elastic waist bands and the more expensive ones come with a drawstring as well. It is worth paying a little extra to get the drawstring as you can tie the shorts to your specification as opposed to relying on the elastic to hold them up.

Elastic-only shorts often move down a little, especially in wet conditions. Your shorts shouldn't be so tight that they cut off circulation round your waist but conversely they shouldn't be so loose that they flap around all the time either. Finally, check the slit up the side, often this is quite large to allow for a greater ventilation and freedom of movement but make sure you are happy with how much leg it actually shows when you run!

When the weather is colder it is advisable to wear tights to keep your legs warmer and thus reduce the chance of injury. Fabric technology has exploded recently with the aid of new synthetic materials and NASA technology. This has aided running no end with high-tech materials filtering down to basic running kit like tights and t-shirts. The running tights are available which hug the legs more efficiently and stop the wind and rain penetrating to the leg itself. This helps in reducing injuries from cold muscles and also means that you can enjoy running when the weather is a little worse than ideal. Only diehard older runners now wear loose fitting cotton tights.

The fashionable and technological knowledgeable runners are choosing high tech garments that help them in their running. Your tights should be snug fitting and comfortable. It is important to try them on before you buy because many manufacturers have different cuts to suit different styles of runner. Generally, the more expensive the tight, the more comfortable they will be and the better at keeping you cool in summer and warm in winter.



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Tops

Short and long-sleeve t-shirts have also benefited, like tights, from technological advances. The mid to top range t-shirts all wick away sweat to keep you cooler and allow a greater air circulation through the fabric. They feel very lightweight but have the properties to keep you warm or cool depending on when and how you wear them. Running t-shirts should be reasonably tight but not figure-hugging and likewise they shouldn't flap around when you run in them. It is a fine balance between well fitted and slightly baggy that you should aim for. With long-sleeve t-shirts, you should aim to get ones with cuffed sleeves so they stay down around your wrists. If there are no cuffs then the sleeves often ride up your arms when you run and this can be both annoying and cold.

Similarly, for hot weather training, vests are also designed with technological, wicking fabrics that also help air circulate around your body to aid cooling.



When the weather gets really cold or wet it is advisable to run in a gilet or a long-sleeve waterproof top. These offer excellent wind-stopping and rain-resistance capabilities and can keep you warm and dry throughout any run. Gilets are sleeveless jackets and ideal for quicker running in slightly warmer climates while full long-sleeve waterproofs are better for colder and wetter climates. These types of tops are multi-purpose because they can be used casually as well and the ones at the top end are very high tech and guaranteed waterproof and windproof. Cheaper versions will be fine for most running conditions but they will sacrifice certain aspects like being 100% waterproof or windproof. Being prepared for cooler conditions enables you to stay warm, dry and enjoy the run more. In warmer climates the new fabrics and technologies enable you to train harder by staying cooler and wicking away sweat and moisture from the body. Both of these mean you can't blame the weather for not training anymore and you can get and stay fitter all year round now in comfort and style.



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Gloves

These should be lightweight and comfortable. Only in extreme weather will you need to wear thick running gloves and more often than not you will heat up enough to be okay in the normal thin type. Woollen gloves are the norm because they are cheap to buy, but they don't offer the same waterproof and wind stopper capabilities of the new high-tech fabrics. Woollen gloves will be fine for most runners but if you are venturing out into colder or wetter climates, it is worth investing in a high-tech pair. Running with cold hands can ruin the experience for you, so choose carefully when you buy, especially if it is near wintertime.

Hats

Hats are similar to gloves in that woollen ones are the norm because they are easy to get hold of and are cheap. The more high-tech versions such as those made of fleece, offer wind-stopping capabilities and some are waterproof as well. Caps offer greater protection from the rain, snow and sun but often they can get blown off in windy conditions. They don't offer the same warmth capabilities as woollen/high tech fabrics but they are good when you need better protection from the elements. In addition, they are better for runners who wear glasses because they help the glasses from getting rain or snow on.



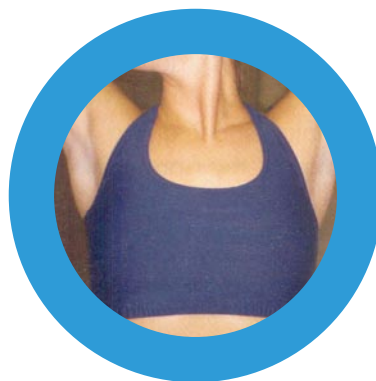
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Sports bras

It is important to wear a sports bra that fits you snugly and gives adequate support for running. The bust is only held in place by the skin around it and the Coopers Ligaments and when the bust moves, these ligaments can stretch result in a permanent droop. In addition, this movement can be painful and leads many women to avoid certain activities that could be enjoyed with a good sports bra. Everyone is different and you may well need to try on a few different products before finding what is just right for you.

- So does your sports bra fit?
- Your bra should fit snugly under the bust without being uncomfortably tight.
- All of your bust should fit in the bra without any bulges around the sides.
- The shoulder straps should not dig in (for larger busts wider straps are more comfortable).
- When you run there should be significantly less bounce than with a normal bra
- Most ladies should only need to wear one sports bra even for high impact activities.

There are many excellent bras on the market, which come in a large range of sizes and colours offering every different level of support.



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2 Training

● Where to train

With walking, jogging and running, virtually nowhere is out of bounds. From treadmills at the gym to the great outdoors, the possibilities are endless. Some people never venture from the roads whilst others train almost exclusively on paths, trails and in local parks, the choice is yours. A sensible approach is to start locally and then venture further afield as you progress. That way, when building up, you are never far from home. Varying your routes is a must – even the most committed runner tires of following the same circuit session after session, so use your local knowledge to keep your runs fresh.

● When to train

From early morning through to lunchtime and late evening, everyone has their favourite time to exercise, and training time flexibility is one of the great plusses with running – you can always train at a time to suit you.

Physiologically, early afternoon has been found to be the best time to train; the body is fully woken up and loose and the opportunity to be well fuelled and hydrated is also better. However, if for example midnight is the most suitable fit for your circumstances, there's nothing to stop you training whenever you wish.

realbuzz.com **top tip**

If you train first thing in the morning, as well as a great start to the day, you really boost your metabolic rate (the speed at which your body burns calories). This takes effect during your session and for several hours afterwards, which is a great weight management strategy.



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● Principles of training

It is common to think that when a training improvement is made (for example running further or running a faster time over a particular distance), that the improvement has been made at that specific time. In fact that is not the case; the improvement has been made some time previously, following an earlier training session. During the training session, it is the measurable results that are registered in the form of quicker times or further distances. This is because of the way the body responds to training. When exercising, the body is challenged. Following a training session, when the body is at rest, it adapts and gets stronger, and improvements can be measured during a subsequent session. Hence the most important component of any training programme is rest, so that the body is able to adapt to training. Inadequate rest can result in excessive fatigue, loss of motivation and at worst, injury.

● Structuring your training sessions

Following correct exercise protocols is key to getting the most out of your training, so that you start out on the road to fitness with safe and correctly balanced training sessions. To get the most out of your training, you should adhere to the following sequence each time you train:

Warm-up

The warm-up, raises the heart-rate, gets blood flowing to the working muscles and prepares the body for exercise. It should be for a minimum of five minutes and replicate the movements or activities of the main session.

For example: when beginning a run, five minutes very easy jogging will prime the body for the main training session.



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Mobility

Some basic actions to put the limbs through the range of movement that the main session requires will ensure that the joints are loosened up, lubricated and will function more efficiently.

Main session

This will form the bulk of the training session. For example: a brisk 10 minute run.

Cool-down

The cool-down should be at a lower intensity than the main session and should bring the body temperature and heart rate closer to pre-exercise levels. Waste by-products of exercise will be flushed from the muscles and tissues, accelerating recovery before the next training session.

For example: the cool-down should be a minimum of 5-10 minutes light CV. Jogging or walking is ideal.

Flexibility

Stretching exercises should be carried out after the main session and cool-down as the body is in a greater state of relaxation than at the beginning of the session. 5-10 minutes spent stretching the muscles worked will maintain suppleness.



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● How to stretch

Please try these simple stretches.

1 Shoulder

Rotate your shoulders both individually then together, forwards and backwards for 20 to 30 seconds each. Then pull your arm back over your head and gently pull the elbow down towards the back. Repeat with both arms and hold for 10 seconds each.



2 Back

Tilt your pelvis upwards, while bending your knees slightly. Arms out front away from your chest, interlock your hands, palms facing outwards. Round your upper back and tilt your head to look down. Feel the stretch in your back.



3 Chest

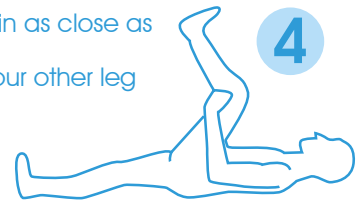
Place your hands on the small of your back and try to move your elbows towards each other behind your back.



Hip and thigh

Lying on your back, bring a knee in as close as possible to your chest, keeping your other leg stretched out on the floor. Repeat with the other leg.

4



5 Quadriceps

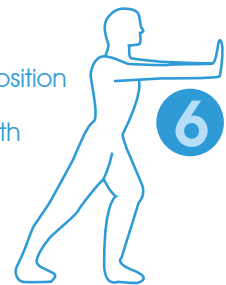
Standing up, pick up your right ankle. Ease your foot into your buttocks using your right hand. Repeat with your left leg.



Calf

Find a wall, tree or car to lean on and get in a position to push it over. Keep the feet about shoulder width apart and the rear leg straight. Lean the hips towards the tree, wall or car. Alternate legs and hold for 10 seconds each.

6



7 Spine and trunk

Sit on your bottom with your legs stretched out. Raise your right foot and place it on the floor to the left of your left knee while stretching your upper body around to the right. Use your left arm as a lever to ease around as far as you can. Repeat with your left foot. Keep your spine long, as well as your shoulders down as you do this.



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To get the most out of your post exercise stretching session, simply follow the step-by-step guide below:

Relax

It is very important to be relaxed. Physical and mental tension will inhibit your range of movement and prevent your muscles from stretching as effectively. Hence, you will not achieve maximum flexibility benefits.

Ease into the stretch

Gradually move your body or the limb being stretched into the stretch position. Once you feel slight tension in the muscle, (known as the point of bind), which is the limit of the muscle's flexibility, hold the position. Avoid bouncing or any other movements, which could overstretch the muscle and result in injury.

Relax your breathing

Always keep your breathing easy and relaxed because that will reduce all-round muscular tension, which in turn will allow you to stretch further. Holding your breath will tense up your entire body, making stretching much harder.



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Hold for 30 seconds

To get maximum stretching benefits, you need to hold the stretch for a minimum of 30 seconds. Stretching each muscle for just a few seconds brings no flexibility benefits.

Pain means no gain

Stretching should invoke a mild feeling of 'tightness' or tension within the stretched muscle. Pain when stretching indicates injury or a muscle that has been overstretched. Therefore, never stretch beyond a 'comfortable tightness'.

Rest and repeat

A single stretch for each muscle is very beneficial but if time permits, carry out two stretches for each muscle, separated by a short break of 30 seconds. The second stretch will help extend your range of movement further.

Frequency

Ideally, stretch the major muscles after every run but if that proves too time-consuming, stretching twice a week is a suitable target.



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Nutrition and hydration

Fuelling your training correctly and keeping well hydrated is extremely important and good nutrition will enhance your running experience. Nutrition and hydration are enormous subjects and are dealt with more comprehensively in the downloadable realbuzz.com guide, *Get into... healthy eating and hydration*. However, to kick-start your healthy nutrition plan, try and follow the five golden rules below:

● Five golden nutrition and hydration rules

1. Always eat breakfast

Your body needs good quality fuel for training and by waking up your metabolism after sleep; you actually burn more calories through the day.

2. Leave a gap

Allow 1 ½ to 2 ½ hours between your last meal and your training session to allow for digestion. Exercising on a full stomach will not only feel uncomfortable but will also inhibit your performance.

3. Hydrate

Drinking water regularly throughout the day is important, but because you are exercising, your fluid requirements will be greater due to sweat losses. However, you will need to focus more on hydration and drinking straight after your workout.

4. Refuel

Your energy requirements will increase as your training increases and the optimum time to begin your refuelling is immediately after your workout. Always try and eat something (a banana is great) as soon as possible after your cool-down.

5. Don't neglect protein

Include good quality protein in your diet to support rebuilding because your body will need more to match the increased demands that you are placing on your body.



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● Plan notes

The key to successful training is to build gradually. Everyone progresses at a different rate and your body will take time to adapt to the new demands that you make on it. Hence, it is important not to allow your enthusiasm to over-ride the components of a correctly structured training plan, and to always allow sufficient rest and recovery between sessions. If you are tired and feel like a couple of days off then your body is probably telling you to step back a little. Of course if you feel like missing your run because the weather looks a little suspect then that is a different scenario altogether! Always maintain a balance between, work, family and other commitments and your training so that running enhances your life, not dominates it.

This plan assumes that you have never trained for an event before and focuses on building your running-specific fitness over 12 weeks so that at the end of the plan, you are ready for your first event. From a standing start, that is a great achievement and is a great platform to move forward from.

PLEASE NOTE: If you are already doing some training then jump in the programme at a position that matches your current training load. After that it's up to you! realbuzz.com produce a wide variety of training plans, including 5k intermediate, 10k and beyond!

Don't be a slave to the plan! The training programme is designed with rest days, recovery sessions and lower volume weeks. This will ensure your body has time to adapt to the training. However, everyone is different and if you feel that an extra day's rest will be beneficial to your training, simply take out one of the shorter sessions in that week.



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Week 1 First steps(1)			Week 2 First steps(2)		
Day	Training	Training notes	Day	Training	Training notes
Mon	Easy 10 mins walk/jog	Take it easy with a light warm-up and cool-down.	Mon	Easy 10 mins walk/jog	Take it easy and warm-up and cool-down.
Tues	Rest		Tues	Rest	
Wed	Rest		Wed	Rest	
Thurs	Rest		Thurs	Easy 10 mins walk/jog	Take it easy and warm-up and cool-down.
Fri	Easy 10 mins walk/jog	Take it easy with a light warm-up and cool-down.	Fri	Rest	
Sat	Rest		Sat	Rest	
Sun	Rest		Sun	Easy 10 mins walk/jog	3 runs this week so keep this session very relaxed.
Week 3 Building (1)			Week 4 Building (2)		
Day	Training	Training notes	Day	Training	Training notes
Mon	Rest	Recovery from Sunday's session.	Mon	Rest	
Tues	Easy 10 mins walk/jog		Tues	10 mins jog	Try to jog all the way non-stop. Don't worry about pace.
Wed	Rest		Wed	Rest	
Thurs	Easy 10 mins walk/jog		Thurs	Easy 10 mins walk/jog	
Fri	Rest		Fri	Rest	
Sat	Rest	Double rest day before. Sunday's longer session.	Sat	Rest	
Sun	Easy 10-15 mins walk/jog	Don't forget to stretch afterwards.	Sun	Easy 10-15 mins walk/jog	Repeat last Sunday's session but try to jog as much as possible.



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Week 5 Building (3)

Day	Training	Training notes
Mon	Rest	2 rest days after Sunday's efforts.
Tues	Rest	
Wed	Easy 10 mins jog	Keep the pace very easy but try and jog non-stop.
Thurs	Rest	
Fri	Easy 10-15 mins walk/jog	Take a walking break if you need to.
Sat	Rest	
Sun	Easy 15 mins jog	Target: non-stop jogging!

Week 6 Recovery and consolidation

Day	Training	Training notes
Mon	Rest	Easy recovery week.
Tues	Easy 10 mins jog	Easy session.
Wed	Rest	
Thurs	10-15 mins jog	All jogging.
Fri	Rest	
Sat	Rest	
Sun	Easy 10 mins jog	Don't worry about the pace, just be relaxed.

Week 7 Moving up

Day	Training	Training notes
Mon	Rest	
Tues	10 mins jog	
Wed	Rest	
Thurs	15 mins jog	
Fri	Rest	
Sat	Rest	
Sun	20 mins jog	Take a walking break if necessary but try and keep moving all the time.

Week 8 Non-stop training!

Day	Training	Training notes
Mon	Rest	Recovery from Sunday's longer session.
Tues	10-15 mins easy jog	
Wed	Rest	
Thurs	15 mins jog	
Fri	Rest	
Sat	Rest	
Sun	20 mins jog	Repeat last Sunday's session but try and make it non-stop jogging!



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Week 9 Extending longer runs (1)		
Day	Training	Training notes
Mon	Rest	
Tues	15 mins easy jog	
Wed	Rest	
Thurs	Rest	
Fri	15 mins jog	
Sat	Rest	
Sun	20-25 mins non-stop jog	Building up longest session.

Week 10 Extending longer runs (2)		
Day	Training	Training notes
Mon	Rest	
Tues	Rest	
Wed	20 mins jog	First longer midweek session.
Thurs	Rest	
Fri	10-15 mins easy jog	
Sat	Rest	
Sun	25-30 mins jog	

Week 11 Peak week		
Day	Training	Training notes
Mon	Rest	Final higher mileage week before taper.
Tues	15 mins jog	
Wed	Rest	
Thurs	20 mins jog	
Fri	Rest	
Sat	Rest	
Sun	Minimum 30 mins jog	Last long session.

Week 12 Taper week and RACE!		
Day	Training	Training notes
Mon	Rest	
Tues	10 mins jog	Jogging all week, keep the pace easy throughout.
Wed	Rest	
Thurs	15 mins jog	
Fri	Rest	Double rest before Sunday's big target.
Sat	Rest	
Sun	RACE DAY!	The big one! Enjoy your event!



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● Conclusion

● Well done!

You have come to the end of the schedule, and your fitness has improved dramatically from little or no cardiovascular (CV) activity, to being able to complete a 5k event under your own steam. Along the way, you have made significant health and fitness gains, and equally importantly, you have progressed safely. By maintaining your training, you will be making a major contribution to your long-term health and fitness, and this schedule can also serve as a foundation and springboard to increase your fitness levels further. Now you've completed your first race, you may be tempted to step up and try to improve your finishing time. See the realbuzz.com guides '5k intermediate' or the selection of 10k plans that will help you progress to the next level . . . Enjoy your training!

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