NSPCC

Sub 4 hour marathon training plan

Reaching your personal best

Like any athlete, you can only reach your full potential if you train smart. Many people think, the harder the better. So they train too hard, then they end up feeling tired, they get ill or they injure themselves. The way to avoid this and perform at your best is to train smart. Plan all your training sessions. Understand what each one is trying to achieve. And, when you get started, be mindful of how each session should feel in its effort and intensity. Here's a guide for just that.

Is this plan suitable for me?

This plan for experienced runners. You'll already train regularly, and now you want either to beat the marathon in 4 hours for the first time or beat your personal best. Ask yourself if the plan matches your current fitness level, and take care to see that it fits your availability to train each week. Be honest. Think carefully about your work, family and social commitments. While you want to challenge yourself, your training should be enjoyable and stress free.

Type of session	Perceived effort level (1-10)*	Heart rate	How it should feel: the talk test
Recovery	6-6.5	60-65%	You can speak in complete sentences, totally conversational. You're relaxed and enjoying the session.
Easy	6.5-7	65-70%	You're in control and very much at a conversational level but you'll feel slightly flushed with a gradual build up of muscular fatigue.
Steady	7-8	70-80%	You can speak in short sentences but you have a slight pause in your breath.
Threshold	8-8.5	80-85%	You can speak 4-5 words. Your breathing is more laboured and you know you're working. We call this: controlled discomfort.
Hard	8.5-9	85-90%	You can say only 2-3 words maximum and you're out of breath, but you know you could still do more if you had to.

*Perceived effort =
 1 represents no effort and
 10 represents maximum effort

EVERY CHILDHOOD IS WORTH FIGHTING FOR

fullpotential

WC	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Week 1	**Yoga or pilates**	**Workout run** 10 mins warm up, 5 x 5 mins at threshold effort with 90 secs recovery jog between efforts, 10 mins cool down + stretch	**Run** 30 mins easy run **Conditioning** 30 mins conditioning work	**Cross-training** 45 mins easy cross-training + stretch	**Rest**	**Workout run** 10 mins warm up, 4 x 6 mins at threshold effort over undulating terrain with a 90 secs recovery, 10 mins cool down	**Long run** 105 mins run, alternating easy and steady effort + stretch
Week 2	**Yoga or pilates**	**Workout run** 10 mins warm up, 6 x 5 mins at threshold effort with 90 secs recovery jog between efforts, 10 mins cool down + stretch	**Cross-training** 30 mins easy cross-training **Conditioning** 30 mins conditioning work	**Cross-training** 45 mins easy cross-training + stretch	**Rest**	**Workout run** 10 mins warm up, 4 x 6 mins at threshold effort over undulating terrain with a 90 secs recovery, 10 mins cool down	**Long run** 120 mins run, alternating easy and steady effort + stretch
Week 3	**Yoga or pilates**	**Workout run** 10 mins warm up, 6 x 5 mins at threshold effort with 60 secs recovery jog between efforts, 10 mins cool down + stretch	**Recovery** 30 mins recovery run **Conditioning** 30 mins conditioning work	**Run** 45 mins steady effort undulating run + stretch	**Rest**	**Workout run** 10 mins warm up, 4 x 8 mins at threshold effort over undulating terrain with a 90 secs recovery, 10 mins cool down	**Long run** 105 mins run, alternating easy and steady effort + stretch
Week 4	Rest	**Workout run** 10 mins warm up, 3 x 10 mins at threshold effort with 90 secs recovery jog between efforts, 10 mins cool down + stretch	**Recovery** 30 mins recovery run **Conditioning** 30 mins conditioning work	**Cross-training** 45 mins easy cross-training + stretch	**Rest**	**Workout run** 10 mins warm up, 3 x 10 mins at threshold effort with a 90 secs recovery between sets, 10 mins cool down	**Long run** 135 mins run, alternating easy and steady effort + stretch
Week 5	**Pilates**	**Recovery** 30 mins recovery run **Conditioning** 30 mins conditioning work	**Workout run** 10 mins warm up, 6 x 3 mins at hard effort with 90 secs recovery jog between efforts, 10 mins cool down + stretch	**Cross-training** 45 mins easy cross-training + stretch	**Workout run** 10 mins warm up, 3 x 10 mins hard effort with a 90 secs recovery between sets, 10 mins cool down	Rest	**Long run** 150 mins run, alternating easy and steady effort + stretch
Week 6	**Yoga or pilates**	**Workout run** 15 mins easy, 15 mins threshold, 15 mins easy	Rest	**Workout run** 40 mins easy run, include 6 x 2 mins at hard effort, with a 75 secs recovery jog in the middle	**Rest**	**Run** 20 mins easy run + strides	**Half marathon race**
Week 7	**Stretch or yoga**	**Conditioning** 30 mins conditioning work	**Run** 45 mins easy run	**Workout run** 10 mins warm up, 4 x 10 mins at threshold effort with 90 secs recovery jog between efforts, 10 mins cool down + stretch	**Rest**	**Run** 35 mins easy run	**Long run** 165 mins run, alternating easy and steady effort + stretch

WC	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Week 8	**Conditioning** 30 mins conditioning work + stretch	**Cross-training** 60 mins easy cross-training	**Workout run** 10 mins warm up, 3 x 15 mins at threshold effort with 90 secs recovery jog between efforts, 10 mins cool down + stretch	**Cross-training** 30 mins easy cross-training **Conditioning** 30 mins conditioning work	**Workout run** 10 mins warm up, 6 x 4 mins at hard effort with a 90 secs recovery, 10 mins cool down	Rest	**Long run** 180 mins easy effort run with, last 60 mins at steady effort + stretch
Week 9	**Conditioning** 30 mins conditioning work + stretch	**Run** 45 mins easy run	**Workout run** 10 mins warm up, 3 x 17 mins at threshold effort with 90 secs recovery jog between efforts, 10 mins cool down + stretch	Rest	**Run** 45 mins easy run	**Recovery** 30 mins recovery run + stretch	**Long run** 90 mins run, alternating easy and steady effort + stretch
Week 10	**Conditioning** 30 mins conditioning work + stretch	**Workout run** 10 mins warm up, 4 x 12 mins at threshold effort with 90 secs recovery jog between efforts, 10 mins cool down + stretch	**Run** 40 mins easy run	**Cross-training** 30 mins easy cross-training **Conditioning** 30 mins conditioning work	**Workout run** 10 mins warm up, 6 x 4 mins at hard effort with a 90 secs recovery, 10 mins cool down	Rest	**Long run** 180 mins easy effort run with, last 90 mins at steady effort + stretch
Week 11	Rest	**Cross-training** 30 mins easy cross-training **Conditioning** 30 mins conditioning work	**Workout run** 10 mins warm up, 3 x 17 mins at threshold effort with 90 secs recovery jog between efforts, 10 mins cool down + stretch	**Run** 40 mins easy run	**Workout run** 10 mins warm up, 6 x 5 mins at hard effort with a 90 secs recovery, 10 mins cool down	**Recovery** 30 mins recovery run + stretch	**Long run** 150 mins easy effort run with, last 75 mins at steady effort + stretch
Week 12	**Stretch or pilates**	**Recovery** 45 mins recovery run + stretch	**Workout run** 10 mins warm up, 4 x 8 mins at threshold effort with 60 secs recovery jog between efforts, 10 mins cool down + stretch	**Cross-training** 45 mins cross-training + stretch	Rest	**Recovery** 40 mins recovery run + stretch	**Long run** 120 mins run, middle 90 mins at steady effort
Week 13	Rest	**Cross-training** 30 mins easy cross-training **Conditioning** 30 mins conditioning work	**Workout run** 10 mins warm up, 6 x 5 mins at threshold effort with 60 secs recovery jog between efforts, 10 mins cool down + stretch	**Run** 45 mins easy run	Rest	**Recovery** 30 mins recovery run + stretch	**Long run** 70 mins long run, middle 50 mins at marathon pace
Week 14	Rest	**Workout run** 10 mins warm up, 3 x 5 mins at threshold effort with 60 secs recovery jog between efforts, 10 mins cool down + stretch	Rest	**Run** 30 mins easy run + stretch	Rest	**Run** 20 mins easy run + strides	**Marathon race** ⭐