

FREE PROGRAMME · RUNNING

# YOUR FASTEST 5K

An eight-week plan for runners who can already cover 5 km and want to run it faster. Four sessions a week, each with a clear job.

8 WEEKS | 4 RUNS A WEEK | INTERMEDIATE

HOW THE PLAN WORKS

# NEXT LEVEL

You have been running for a while and the 5 km is comfortable. Now you want it quicker. Every week has four runs: one fast session, one tempo, one long and one easy.

That mix is the point. The fast work raises your top speed, the tempo teaches you to hold a hard pace, and the long and easy runs build the aerobic base that both of those depend on. Skip the easy ones and the hard ones stop working.

## THE LANGUAGE

**TIME TRIAL**
A flat-out, evenly paced 5 km. Your starting point and your finish line.

**TEMPO RUN**
A sustained run close to threshold. Builds the ability to hold a hard pace.

**FARTLEK**
Swedish for speed play: alternating fast and easy running, without stopping.

**LONG RUN**
Longer and slower. Builds your aerobic base and endurance.

**VO2 MAX**
The most oxygen your body can use. Higher means a higher ceiling.

**THRESHOLD**
The hardest pace you could hold for about an hour, where fatigue starts to build quickly.

**INTERVALS**
Short, fast repeats with rest between. Builds speed and VO2 max.

**HILL REPEATS**
Hard efforts uphill, jogging down to recover. Strength and power for running.

**EASY RUN**
Gentle running that keeps fitness ticking over and speeds recovery.

**AEROBIC BASE**
Your endurance foundation, built mostly from easy running.

HOW HARD IS EACH RUN?

# HIT THE RIGHT EFFORT

Your week 1 time trial sets your targets. Divide the time by five to get your **5k pace** per kilometre; everything else is set from that pace, from effort (RPE, 1 to 10) or from heart-rate zone.

| SESSION | EFFORT | PACE GUIDE |
|---|---|---|
| **INTERVALS** | RPE 8–9 | Your 5k pace, or a few seconds per km quicker |
| **HILL REPEATS** | RPE 8 | Hard, by effort. The hill sets the pace, not your watch. |
| **FARTLEK** | RPE 8 / 3 | Fast sections near 5k pace, easy sections as recovery jogs |
| **TEMPO** | RPE 7 · Zone 4 | Comfortably hard. Roughly 15 to 25 seconds per km slower than 5k pace |
| **LONG RUN** | RPE 3–4 · Zone 2 | Conversational. Well over a minute per km slower than 5k pace |
| **EASY RUN** | RPE 2–3 · Zone 1–2 | As slow as you like. If in doubt, slower |

**Example.** A 25:00 time trial is 5:00 per km. Intervals at about 4:55 to 5:00 per km, tempo around 5:15 to 5:25, long and easy runs at 6:15 or slower. Our free pace calculator does the sums.

Four runs a week, with a rest day between most of them: Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Sunday works well.

BEFORE EVERY RUN

# WARM UP, COOL DOWN

Five to ten minutes of light jogging, broken up with the circuit below. Then stretch when you finish.

## WARM-UP · TWICE THROUGH

| | |
|---|---|
| **Air squats** | 8 |
| **Lunges** | 8 each leg |
| **Leg swings** | 8 each leg |
| **High knees** | 20 |
| **Heel flicks** | 20 |

Rest 20 seconds after the first round. Before intervals or hills, add 3 or 4 short, relaxed strides.

## COOL-DOWN · AFTER EVERY RUN

| | |
|---|---|
| **Hip flexor, quad, hamstring, calf** | 10–15 s each leg |
| **Chest, posture reach, upper back, triceps, shoulder** | 10–15 s each arm |

**Check first.** If you have an injury or illness that running could affect, speak to your GP before you begin. Run in proper running shoes, and never skip the warm-up before the fast sessions: that is when most running injuries happen.



WEEKS 1 TO 4

# BUILD THE ENGINE

## WEEK 1

Find your baseline

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | TIME TRIAL | 5 km, as fast as you can hold evenly. Note the time: it sets your targets. |
| 2 | TEMPO | 20 min at tempo effort |
| 3 | LONG RUN | 60 min easy |
| 4 | EASY RUN | 30 min easy |

## WEEK 2

4 runs

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | INTERVALS | 5 × 800 m at 5k pace, 2 min easy jog or walk between |
| 2 | TEMPO | 25 min at tempo effort |
| 3 | LONG RUN | 65 min easy |
| 4 | EASY RUN | 35 min easy |

## WEEK 3

4 runs

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | FARTLEK | 30 min: 1 min fast, 1 min easy, repeated |
| 2 | TEMPO | 30 min at tempo effort |
| 3 | LONG RUN | 70 min easy |
| 4 | EASY RUN | 40 min easy |

## WEEK 4

4 runs

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | INTERVALS | 6 × 800 m at 5k pace, 2 min easy between |
| 2 | TEMPO | 35 min at tempo effort |
| 3 | LONG RUN | 75 min easy |
| 4 | EASY RUN | 45 min easy |

WEEKS 5 TO 8

# SHARPEN AND RACE

## WEEK 5

4 runs

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | HILL REPEATS | 8 × 400 m uphill, hard. Jog back down to recover. |
| 2 | TEMPO | 30 min at tempo effort |
| 3 | LONG RUN | 80 min easy |
| 4 | EASY RUN | 30 min easy |

## WEEK 6

4 runs

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | INTERVALS | 7 × 800 m at 5k pace, 2 min easy between |
| 2 | TEMPO | 35 min at tempo effort |
| 3 | LONG RUN | 85 min easy |
| 4 | EASY RUN | 35 min easy |

## WEEK 7

Biggest week

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | FARTLEK | 40 min: 2 min fast, 1 min easy, repeated |
| 2 | TEMPO | 40 min at tempo effort |
| 3 | LONG RUN | 90 min easy |
| 4 | EASY RUN | 40 min easy |

## WEEK 8

Taper, then race

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | INTERVALS | 5 × 800 m at 5k pace, 2 min easy between. Sharp, not tiring. |
| 2 | TEMPO | 20 min at tempo effort |
| 3 | EASY RUN | 30 min easy. Fresh legs for the weekend. |
| 4 | 5K PB | Same course as week 1 if you can. Go out at your target pace, not faster. |

# IF IT WAS EASY, EVERYONE WOULD BE DOING IT.

WANT IT BUILT AROUND YOU?

I'm Tom, Head Coach at TC Coaching. In **Project Legacy™** a team builds your training around your diary, your data and your goal: training from me, nutrition from Adam Glover, rehab from Gaz McNamara. Got a new PB? Tag **@coaching.tc**.

APPLY FOR COACHING

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