

FREE PROGRAMME · RUNNING

YOUR FIRST 5K

A twelve-week plan for complete beginners. From a few minutes of jogging to running the whole 5 km, one small step a week.

12 WEEKS | 3–4 RUNS A WEEK | BEGINNER

HOW THE PLAN WORKS

START FROM ZERO

If you are new to running and want to get to 5 km, this is for you. Each week sets out three or four runs. Do them in order, and do not skip ahead.

Running is about the most convenient training there is: shoes on, out the door. This plan strips it back to basics and builds your engine gradually, so it feels hard enough to change you and easy enough to keep coming back.

THE FOUR PACES

EASY
Breathing controlled. You could chat in full sentences the whole way. RPE 3–4.

STEADY
A little quicker. Breathing deeper; a couple of sentences at a time. RPE 5–6.

QUICK OR HARD
80 to 90% effort. Fast, breathing heavy, talking kept to a minimum. RPE 7–8.

SPRINT
Flat out, for a very short time, then full rest. RPE 9–10.

THE RUN TYPES

TIMED RUN
A set time or distance at the pace given.

RUN / WALK
Run for as long as you can in the range given, then walk briskly for the same time. Stopped at 6 minutes? Walk for 6.

INTERVALS
Repeats of harder running with walking or jogging in between.

WORKOUT
Running mixed with squats and lunges, to build the legs that carry you.

BEFORE YOU START

SET UP TO SUCCEED

STRUCTURE

Weeks 1–5: three runs a week, never on back-to-back days. Monday, Wednesday, Friday, or Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday.

Weeks 6–12: four runs a week. Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Sunday works well; the Sunday and Monday runs are both easy, so you are never stacking hard days.

REST DAYS

As important as the runs. They are when you recover and adapt, and they keep injury away.

Keep moving on them: hit your step count, or do some stretching or yoga.

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; they cut the risk of injury more than anything else you can buy. And warm up before every run.

WARM-UP · TWICE THROUGH

Squats	8
Lunges	8 each leg
Leg swings	8 each leg
High knees	20
Heel flicks	20

Rest 20 seconds after the first round.

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

PRE-WEEK · FIND YOUR START

WHERE ARE YOU NOW?

Run for as long as you can at a very comfortable pace. Stop when you need to, then find your starting point below.

YOU RAN	YOU ARE	START AT
Under 5 minutes	New runner	Week 1
5–10 minutes, or 1 km	New runner, with a base	Week 1, top of each range
10–20 minutes, or 2 km	Casual runner	Week 4
20–25 minutes, or 3 km	Regular runner	Week 6

WEEK 1

3 runs

1	INTERVALS	3–5 min easy, 3 min walk	× 4–6
2	INTERVALS	1–3 min quick, 3 min walk	× 3–5
3	RUN / WALK	5–10 min easy, then walk the same time	ONCE

WEEK 2

3 runs

1	INTERVALS	20 s sprint, 60–90 s walk	× 6–10
2	RUN / WALK	5–10 min easy, then walk the same time	ONCE
3	WORKOUT	Run 1 min hard, 10 squats · run 2 min easy, 20 squats · run 3 min easy, 30 squats · walk 3–5 min. Then back down: 3, 2, 1.	UP AND DOWN

WEEKS 3 TO 5

BUILD THE HABIT

WEEK 3

3 runs · aim for the top of each range

1	INTERVALS	3–5 min easy, 3 min walk	× 4–6
2	INTERVALS	1–3 min quick, 3 min walk	× 3–5
3	RUN / WALK	5–10 min easy, then walk the same time	ONCE

WEEK 4

3 runs

1	INTERVALS	20 s sprint, 60–90 s walk. Aim for 1–2 more than in week 2. Then a 10 min brisk walk.	× 6–10
2	RUN / WALK	8–15 min easy, then walk the same time	ONCE
3	WORKOUT	Run 1 min hard, 10 squats · run 2 min steady, 15 squats, 10 lunges · run 3 min easy, 10 squats, 10 lunges · 20 s sprint on the spot · walk 3 min. Then back down: 3, 2, 1.	UP AND DOWN

One month done. You should be feeling fitter, and recovering faster between sets and between runs. Over the next month you build speed and running endurance, and from week 6 you run four times a week.

WEEK 5

3 runs

1	INTERVALS	10 min easy, 3 min rest	× 2–4
2	INTERVALS	5 min quick, 3 min walk	× 3–5
3	RUN / WALK	10–20 min steady, then walk the same time	ONCE

WEEKS 6 AND 7

FOUR RUNS A WEEK

WEEK 6

4 runs

1	TIMED RUN	15–20 min easy	ONCE
2	RUN / WALK	8–15 min steady, then walk the same time	ONCE
3	INTERVALS	Run 5 min easy, then 45 s hard + 10 squats, × 4 · run 5 min steady, then 10 squats, 10 lunges, 20 s sprint on the spot, 90 s walk or jog, × 4 · 5 min cool-down jog	ONCE
4	LONG EASY RUN	20–30 min easy. Aim for the top of the range by running slower than usual.	ONCE

WEEK 7

4 runs

1	TIMED RUN	15–20 min easy	ONCE
2	RUN / WALK	8–15 min steady, then walk the same time	ONCE
3	WORKOUT	5 min easy warm-up · 3 min quick, 90 s jog recovery, × 5 · 5 min cool-down	ONCE
4	LONG EASY RUN	20–30 min easy. Slower, longer.	ONCE

Easy means easy. The long run is the one people rush. Slower than feels right, and longer, is the whole point: it builds the engine that carries you to 5 km.

WEEKS 8 AND 9

THE FINAL THIRD

WEEK 8

4 runs

1	TIMED RUN	20 min easy	ONCE
2	RUN / WALK	10–20 min steady, then walk the same time	ONCE
3	INTERVALS	Run 5 min easy, then 45 s quick + 10 squats, × 2 · run 5 min steady, then 10 squats, 10 lunges, 20 s sprint on the spot, 90 s walk or jog, × 2 · 5 min cool-down jog	ONCE
4	DISTANCE RUN	**3.2 km** (2 miles) steady	ONCE

Two months done. You can now run 3.2 km with reasonable comfort, even if it did not feel all that comfortable. Take a minute to notice how far that is from week 1.

WEEK 9

4 runs

1	INTERVALS	20 min steady, 3 min rest	× 2
2	INTERVALS	3–5 min quick, 3 min walk	× 4–6
3	RUN / WALK	10–20 min steady, then walk for **half** that time	ONCE
4	LONG EASY RUN	25–35 min easy. Slower, longer.	ONCE

WEEKS 10 AND 11

CLOSING IN

WEEK 10

4 runs

1	TIMED RUN	3.2 km easy	ONCE
2	THRESHOLD RUN	A steady pace you can hold for 15–20 min	ONCE
3	WORKOUT	45 s quick + 20 lunges, 2 min jog recovery, × 5 · run 5 min steady, then 10 squats, 10 lunges, 20 s sprint on the spot, 90 s walk or jog, × 2 · 5 min cool-down jog	ONCE
4	DISTANCE RUN	**4 km** at a comfortable pace	ONCE

WEEK 11

4 runs

1	TIMED RUN	15–20 min easy	ONCE
2	RUN / WALK	5–10 min quick, then walk for half that time	ONCE
3	INTERVALS	5 min easy · 3 min quick, 90 s jog recovery, × 5 · 5 min cool-down	ONCE
4	DISTANCE RUN	**4 km** steady	ONCE

WEEK 12 · 5K WEEK

THE BIG DAY

Rest and recovery, on and between your running days, are what make you feel ready when the day comes. Keep this week light.

WEEK 12			4 runs
1	TIMED RUN	20 min easy	ONCE
2	RUN / WALK	10–20 min steady, then walk the same time	ONCE
3	TIMED RUN	3.2 km steady, two days before your 5k	ONCE
4	YOUR 5K	The distance you have been working towards. Take the first kilometre easy; if you feel good, build from there.	ONCE

YOU DID IT

TWELVE WEEKS. FIVE KILOMETRES.

I'd love to hear how it went. Tag **@coaching.tc**, or drop me a message. And if you are ready for the next one, our free **5k PB guide** picks up where this leaves off.

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.

APPLY FOR COACHING

MORE FREE GUIDES