

THE MARATHON

Running a marathon requires more than just turning up to the start line and running. 26.2 miles offers plenty of opportunities for things to go wrong. A good strategy and the right preparation will go a long way to avoiding any problems and ensure you have a great race.

1 VISUALISE YOUR RACE

In the days leading up to the race mentally go through how you will feel at various points on the route and how you will cope with any situation that may arise. Once every scenario has been rehearsed in your mind you'll have a much better chance dealing with whatever happens on the day.

2 NUTRITION STRATEGY

Devise a plan for staying fuelled up. How many gels or how much sports drink will you consume? And when? Make sure you stick to the plan, don't wait till you are running out of energy to start replacing your energy stores. And be sure to try products out first on training runs.

3 ARRIVE EARLY

The morning of a marathon is a stressful time for many runners. There are often very long queues for toilets, registration and bag-drop, so get there earlier than you think necessary. Anything less than an hour for a big city marathon will have you in danger of missing the start. Standing in the toilet queue five minutes before the start is not a fun place to be!

4 WHAT'S FOR BREAKFAST?

YOU MAY NEED TO HAVE BREAKFAST SEVERAL HOURS BEFORE THE START OF THE MARATHON TO GIVE YOU TIME TO TRAVEL THERE. MANY OF US ARE USED TO HAVING A SMALL BREAKFAST AND THEN GOING FOR OUR LONG RUN 30 MINUTES LATER, SO YOU BEAR IN MIND THAT MAY NEED A BIGGER OR DIFFERENT BREAKFAST. TAKING ALONG A SMALL SNACK TO HAVE BEFORE THE START COULD BE ONE OPTION – BUT TRY IT IN TRAINING FIRST.

5 START OFF EASY THE BIGGEST MISTAKE RUNNERS MAKE IS SETTING OFF TOO FAST.

YOU SHOULD HAVE A GOOD IDEA AS TO WHAT A REALISTIC PACE IS BASED ON YOUR TRAINING RUNS. DON'T EXPECT TO RUN 15 SECONDS PER MILE FASTER COME RACE DAY. EVEN THOUGH THE PACE WILL FEEL EASY AT THE START IT MAY STILL BE TOO FAST. REMEMBER IN TRAINING YOU ARE RUNNING ON TIRED LEGS FROM PREVIOUS TRAINING SESSION WHEREAS NOW YOUR LEGS ARE FRESH. THE PACE SHOULD FEEL SLOWER THAN NORMAL FOR THE FIRST FEW MILES.

6 STAY RELAXED

As the miles pass and fatigue starts to set in your running efficiency may begin to deteriorate. Tension is often held in the areas of the face, neck and shoulders and your stride length may alter. To help counteract this mentally run through your body from head to toe and try to release any tension you find in your muscles. Focus on maintaining your pace with as little energy and effort as possible.

7 BREAK YOUR SHOES IN

Everything you wear on race day should have been worn in training first. Shoes should have a least a few weeks of running in them to make sure they don't cause any problems. Clothing should have been tried in training to make sure it doesn't cause any chafing.

8 A MILE AT A TIME

When things start to feel difficult don't let your thoughts stray to how far there is to go. Focus on one mile at a time and try and keep each mile at your target pace. Don't dwell on how much pain your legs are in, switch your thinking to something positive like how well you've done so far or the encouragement from spectators

9 THE FINISH

Once you reach mile 24 the end is near and you can start to enjoy the feeling of accomplishment. Soak up the atmosphere and energy of the crowd and use that to give you that last bit of energy to carry you through the last mile.

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