# Plan: your first 5K

*Last reviewed: October 17, 2026*




**Go from walking to running a 5K (3.1 miles) in 10 weeks with three run-walk sessions and two short strength sessions a week. Your longest session grows by no more than about 10% at a time.**

**Why it matters:** New runners get hurt more often than experienced ones, and sudden jumps in run length raise the risk (see "Running injuries"). This plan builds gradually, mixes walking with running, and arrives at race day rested.

## Who it suits

- People who can walk briskly for 30 minutes but don't run yet, or haven't run in a long time.
- Anyone who wants a gentle, structured start to running.
- **Not walking 30 minutes yet?** Walk briskly three to four days a week, building to 30 minutes, then start week 1.

## What it costs

| Item | Commitment |
| --- | --- |
| Running | 3 sessions a week, 20 to 33 minutes each |
| Strength | 2 short sessions a week, about 20 to 25 minutes |
| Total time | About 2 to 3 hours a week |
| Equipment | Comfortable running shoes and a watch or phone timer |
| Difficulty | Beginner |

## How the sessions work

- **Run-walk:** run easily for the time shown, then walk for the time shown, and repeat until the session time is up.
- **Easy pace:** you can talk in full sentences. If you can't, slow down or walk more. Slow is fine.
- **Warm up** with 5 minutes of brisk walking before each session. It counts toward the session time.
- **Strides:** short bursts of about 20 seconds at a quick, relaxed pace near the end of an easy run. Faster than your race pace, but not an all-out sprint. Walk or jog slowly until you've fully recovered before the next one.
- **Space your runs:** for example Monday, Wednesday and Saturday, with strength on two other days.
- **Log each run** in the **cardio log** (Plan my workouts, then Today's workout, then Cardio). It totals your weekly miles and shows your longest run.

## The 10-week plan

| Week | Run-walk pattern | Sessions 1 and 2 | Session 3 (longest) |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Run 1 min, walk 2 min | 20 min | 20 min |
| 2 | Run 2 min, walk 2 min | 20 min | 22 min |
| 3 | Run 3 min, walk 2 min | 22 min | 24 min |
| 4 (easier week) | Run 3 min, walk 2 min | 20 min | 20 min |
| 5 | Run 5 min, walk 2 min | 24 min | 26 min |
| 6 | Run 8 min, walk 2 min | 25 min | 28 min |
| 7 | Run 10 min, walk 1 min | 25 min | 30 min |
| 8 (easier week) | Run 12 min, walk 1 min | 25 min | 28 min |
| 9 | Run without walking | 25 min | 33 min |
| 10 (race week) | Easy running | 20 min, then 15 min with three 20-second strides | Race day |

**Repeat a week** if it felt too hard. Moving on a week later is better than getting hurt.

## Strength, twice a week

A short session twice a week lowers injury risk and starts the base for heavier lifting later (see "Running injuries" and "Strength training for endurance athletes").

- **Leg press:** 2 sets of 10 to 15.
- **Machine chest press and seated cable row:** 2 sets of 10 to 15.
- **Single-leg calf raise:** 2 sets of 10 to 15 on each leg.
- **Plank:** hold 20 to 40 seconds, twice.

Use weights you could lift a few more times. Rest from strength in race week. After the race, "Plan: your first 10K" builds to heavier lifting.

## Race week and race day

- **Race week** is lighter on purpose, about 40% of week 9 (see "Tapering before a race").
- **Eat a normal breakfast** 2 to 4 hours before the start. You don't need gels or carb loading for a 5K (see "Fueling for endurance events").
- **Drink to thirst** (see "Hydration, sodium and race day").
- **Start slower than you think.** Walking breaks in the race are fine.
- **Your race may take longer** than your longest training session. That one step up is normal on race day after a lighter week.

## After the race

- Take a few easy days, then keep running three days a week.
- Next goals: a 10K, or a faster 5K by adding one harder session a week (see "Endurance training basics").

## Related guides

- A 10-minute warm-up
- Soreness or injury?
- Plan: your first half marathon

## Related articles

- Endurance training basics
- Running injuries
- Tapering before a race
- Fueling for endurance events
- Hydration, sodium and race day