AKRON MARATHON
RACE SERIES
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Summa Health™

FirstEnergy®
MARATHON HALF | RELAY

FIRST-TIME MARATHON GUIDEBOOK

Running your first Akron Full Marathon? Use this book as a guide so you arrive on race day ready to celebrate along the Blue Line.

AKRONMARATHON.ORG

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GETTING STARTED
STEP 1 - DEVELOP A PLAN

Before you Commit

It is advised to run 2-3 days a week for 1 year before starting a marathon training plan to reduce your risk of injury. If you are new to running, consider choosing an 8k, 10k, or Half Marathon the first year.

Training for a marathon requires time. Be sure you can commit to the time required to properly train. Typical plans require training 4-6 days, including a long run, each week.

Determine which training plan you will use

There are thousands of training plans to follow. Here are some tips to help you choose which plan will work best for you.

1. Decide how many days per week you would like to train, 4,5,6?

2. Determine how long you want your furthest run to be before the race. This can vary anywhere from 16 miles to 22. If you are prone to injury, keep the long run to 16-18 miles. If you need more confidence going into race day, the long run could be 20-22 miles.

3. A good training plan is one that has 3-4 weeks of building mileage, both the long run and the weekly total, followed by 1 week as a recovery week where the mileage decreases.

Page 4 contains a beginner marathon training plan which will guide you through the entire Akron Marathon Race Series.

Purchase the necessary gear to get you started

running shoes / moisture wicking clothing / rain gear
hydration pack/ running belt/ hand carry bottle

Create a plan for when and where you will run
Choose a friend or running group to join

Determine how you will track your runs

Training apps make tracking your workouts easy. They track your daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly mileage. They can also track your heart rate, elevation, and training zones. One app to consider is the Asics Runkeeper App.

Set a realistic goal

For your first marathon, it is best to remove the stress of having a time goal. Your goal should be "to finish".

Other resources available at AkronMarathon.org/training:
places to train / local training groups / training tips

Full Marathon Series Training Plan
Recreational

2023

Week	Date	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Weekly Total
1	5/22	3 m	2 m	3 m	6 m	14 miles
2	5/29	3 m	3 m	3 m	7 m	16 miles
3	6/5	3 m	4 m	3 m	8 m	18 miles
4	6/12	3 m	3 m	3 m	6 m	15 miles
5	6/19	3 m	4 m	3 m	8k + 2m	17 miles
6	6/26	3 m	4 m	3 m	10 m	20 miles
7	7/3	3 m	5 m	3 m	12 m	23 miles
8	7/10	3 m	4 m	3 m	8 m	18 miles
9	7/17	3 m	6 m	3 m	14 m	26 miles
10	7/24	4 m	6 m	3 m	16 m	29 miles
11	7/31	4 m	5 m	4 m	8 m	21 miles
12	8/7	3 m	6 m	4 m	13.1 m	26 miles
13	8/14	4 m	7 m	4 m	17 m	32 miles
14	8/21	4 m	8 m	5 m	18 m	35 miles
15	8/28	4 m	8 m	5 m	12 m	29 miles
16	9/4	5 m	8 m	5 m	20 m	38 miles
17	9/11	5 m	7 m	5 m	14 m	31 miles
18	9/18	4 m	6 m	3 m	8 m	21 miles
19	9/25	3 m	4 m	2 m	26.2 m	35 miles

m=mile   Race Day!   Blue Line Striders Group Run

It is advised to have been consistently running 3-4 miles 3 times a week for 1 year prior to starting this training plan.

Adapted from Hal Higdon training plans.

Plans are only guidelines which should be adapted based on individual needs.

Choose any 4 days of the week that works with your schedule. It is advised to put a rest day after your long run. The other 2 days of the week can be rest days or cross training days (biking, elliptical, swimming, etc.)

Akron Marathon assumes no liability for training plans. It is advised to consult your doctor before starting a new training plan.

STEP 2 - BASE TRAINING

If you have a few weeks/months before your training plan starts, then now is a good time to build a base of easy mileage and incorporate strength training into your workout routine.

Base Mileage

Base mileage is consistently running 3-6 times a week, the distance can vary. You want to keep year heart rate and breathing rate controlled. This base mileage is important to build strength to help reduce the risk of injury. It is also important in developing the cardiovascular system.

Strength Training

Strength training develops strong muscles that can withstand the demands of training and help protect the joints. Strength training can also offset muscle imbalances caused by training and daily living. Strength training should be incorporated 2-3 times a week during the "off season" to build strength and 1-2 times a week during training to maintain strength. Strength training can be body weight exercises, not requiring any weights, or can be weight/band exercises. Areas to focus on include the core, hips/glutes/back/abdominals, and the muscles of the front and back of the upper and lower leg.

A few exercises to consider: squats/lunges/bridges/planks/calf raises/toe raises/clam shells.

Link to strength training videos

Cross Training

Cross training is any activity that is not running. Some examples of cross training include swimming, biking, hiking, rowing, and elliptical. Cross training is a great substitute for running during recovery days or when you start to have pain that could lead to injury. Cross training works different muscles than running so it can help prevent both overuse and muscle imbalance injuries.

STEP 3 - START TRAINING PLAN

Depending on how many weeks your training plan is, you will start anywhere from the beginning of April to the middle of June.
Use your training plan as a guide. Try to fit in your runs each week but give yourself the flexibility to skip some runs if life become hectic, you become sick, or if your body just needs an extra day to recover.
If you need to miss a few days of training, then do not "make up" the missed mileage, simply pick back up with the plan when you are able. If you miss over a week of training you may need to make some adjustments to the plan to ease yourself back into training by reducing the mileage for the next week or two.

The Warm Up and the Cool Down

Warm up: Before your run, take some time to slowly increase your heart rate and muscle ROM (range of motion). This can be done with walking, easy running, and dynamic, active, stretches. Think of the warm up as slowly preparing your body for the demands of the workout. You are transitioning your body from a state of rest to a state of activity. A warm up should last at least 8-10 minutes. For a long run, the warm up could be the first mile or two of your run/walk. Just run/walk at a slower pace to give your body time to adjust to the activity.

Cool down: If a warm up is a transition from rest to activity, then a cool down is the transition from activity back to rest. You want to slowly lower your heart rate through slow running or walking and static, passive stretching. A cool down helps aid in recovery so you can be ready for your next workout. A cool down should last at least 5-10 minutes.

More information found under Summa Health Training Articles
akronmarathon.org/training/

The Long Run

The long run is arguably the most important run on the training plan. It prepares the body to handle 26.2 miles. It develops muscle strength and endurance, the cardiovascular system. and mental stamina.

With this being your first marathon, intentionally run your long run slower than you think necessary. You want the pace to feel easy and your breathing should be controlled. The long run should simulate the course on race day. With there being hills on the Akron Marathon course, especially on the back half, it is advantageous to incorporate hills into your long runs. Even better, if you live in the Akron area, train on the course itself! Whether you plan to run the entire marathon or do a run/walk combination you should do your long runs in the same manner. The long run is also the best time to try out what you plan to wear on race day, your pre-race fueling, and how you plan to fuel during your race.

The long run can seem daunting, especially at the beginning of the training cycle. Try to focus on the training week you are in, instead of worrying about future runs. You will be prepared for those 16-20 mile runs when you get to that point in the training plan. Most training plans only add 1-2 miles a week to your long run....you can do that!

Mental Training

Yes, you have to train your body to be prepared for 26.2 miles, but you also need to train your brain. There will be ups and downs during training and on race day. You need to develop a plan to get you through the "down" or hard phases, and they are just phases....they WILL pass. Everyone is motivated by different things so you need to know what motivates you. During the hard phases:

1. Remind yourself why you wanted to complete the marathon.
2. Focus on your running form. Evaluate how you are doing in that moment. Is your breathing controlled? Are your arms relaxed?
3. Develop a simple saying, mantra, to repeat to yourself. Some examples include: "run strong", "run relaxed", "keep showing up", "just finish", "take it one mile at a time", "stay present".
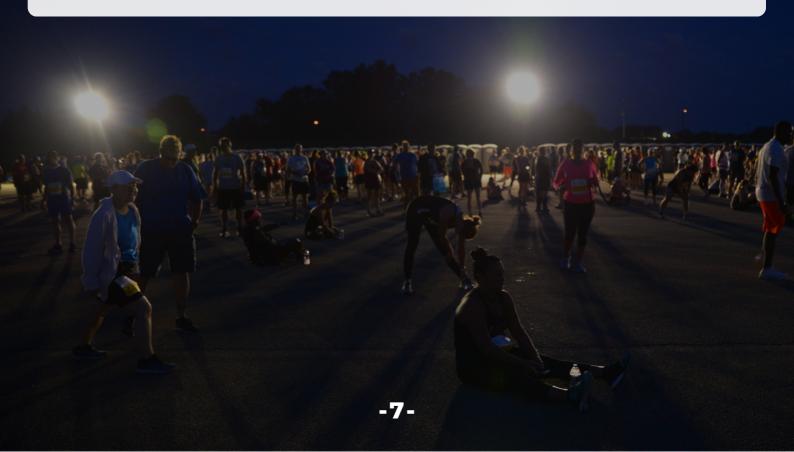
Running Form

Below are a few key areas related to running form to focus on in order to improve efficiency and to reduce risk of injury.

Stride: Concentrate on short quick strides instead of long strides. Long strides, where the foot makes contact in front of your body, oftentimes landing on your heels, is like putting on the breaks with each foot strike. You want your foot to land directly under your body so it can propel you forward. You also want to listen to your foot strike. Can you hear it? Try to run so soft that you can barely hear your foot hit the ground.

Arms/Shoulders: You want to run with little tension being held in your hands, arms, or shoulders. Your arms should be bent at about an 80-90 degree angle. Pretend you are holding a potato chip between your thumb and pointer finger, don't break the chip, this helps remind you to relax your hands. Your shoulders should be relaxed and down away from your ears. Every few miles during a long run it may help to shake out your arms to remove some built up tension.

Chest/head: Your chest and head should be up, looking about 50 feet in front of you. This is especially important while running up hills when we tend to hunch over and drop our head. You can think about a string running straight through your torso up through your head pulling you up towards the sky. "Run tall" is a training que you can use during your run.

Hydration

Before run/race hydration:
Starts 24 hours before you start. Frequently take in fluids throughout the day before. 2-4 hours before the start, consume 10-24oz of fluid, or more if you are dehydrated. 20-30 minutes before the start take in another 8oz of fluids.

During run/race hydration:
A good motto to follow for hydrating during a run/race is "early and often". You want to start drinking early during the run, within the first 15-20 minutes. You also want to drink often, every 10-15 minutes on average. How much you drink will depend on your sweat rate. According to ACSM, the goal with hydration is to lose no more than 2% of your body weight (weigh yourself nude before and after a few training runs, subtracting the fluids you consumed during the run, to determine your sweat rate. From there you can calculate how much fluid to consume to maintain no more than 2% drop in body weight). If you are a salty sweater, you finish a run with white (salty) film on your face, taking in fluids with electrolytes (Potassium, Sodium) is important. Overdrinking plain water, especially for salty sweaters, could lead to hyponatremia, low blood sodium levels. It is best to carry your own hydration so you can control when and how much fluid you consume.

After run/race hydration:
Replenishing the fluids lost during the long run or race should be your focus the first 2 hours after you finish. How much you drink is based on the amount of body weight lost during the race. The goal is to consume a mixture of sports drink and water totaling 16-24oz of fluid for each pound lost.

Choosing a Sports Drink

The following recommendations are based on American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) guidelines. The guidelines were simplified and based around a 12oz serving size.

When looking for a sports drink here are some items to consider:

1. Drink contains around 20-30 grams of carbohydrates per 12-ounce serving

2. Drink contains around 160-230mg sodium per 12-ounce serving

3. Sugar type – Different brands of sports drink use different sugar sources and combinations. If you get an upset stomach with one brand/sugar source, try a different one until you find which sugar combo works best for your stomach.

Lemon Lime Gatorade will be provided at all Akron Marathon Race Series events. In a 12-ounce serving there are: 80 calories, 160mg sodium, 45mg potassium, 22 grams carbs. The sugars used are sucrose (sugar) and dextrose.

Nutrition

Before run/race nutrition:
Plan to get up and eat 3-4 hours before the start. Choose a meal high in carbs, moderate in protein and low in fat and fiber. Eat 1-4 grams of carbohydrate per kilogram of bodyweight (to convert pounds to kg divide by 2.2). A 150 pound-person should eat between 70-280 grams of carbohydrate. If you are within 2 hours of the race, eat 1 gram of carbohydrate per kilogram of bodyweight.

During run/race nutrition:
If running for more than 1 hour, then taking in some carbohydrates during the run may be beneficial. If running 2 hours or more, then aim to take in 30-60 grams of carbohydrate per hour either through a sports drink and/or an easily digestible carbohydrate source such as a gel or chew. Always drink water and not sports drink with your carbohydrate source. Gels or chews need to be diluted down so they can be absorbed without causing stomach issues. Always train using the same carbohydrate source you will use on race day to make sure it agrees with your stomach.

After run/race nutrition:
Carbohydrates: Your body stores carbohydrates as glycogen. When you exercise you start to deplete your glycogen stores. You should take in 1 to 1.5 grams of carbohydrate per kg bodyweight as soon as possible after a long run or race.
Protein: During a long run or race, you do some damage to your muscle tissue. Protein provides the nutrients needed to repair the damaged muscle tissue. Shortly after a long run or race try to consume 20-30 grams of protein. Examples include: protein bar, turkey sandwich, chocolate milk, cottage cheese, peanut butter, eggs.

Choosing a Carbohydrate Source

The following recommendations are based on American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) guidelines.

1. Carbohydrate sources should contain around 20 grams of carbohydrates which can be easily diluted in 8-12oz of water to bring the carbohydrate concentration to 6-8%.

2. Different brands of energy gel use different sugar sources and combinations. If you get an upset stomach with one brand/sugar source, try a different one until you find which sugar combo works best for your stomach.

3. There are many options to choose from: gels, chews, waffles, even gummy bears or a honey packet could be an option to consider. Play with various combinations to see what works best for you.

GU will be provided at all Akron Marathon Race Series events for half and full marathon distances. 1 GU packet contains 55-125mg sodium, 20mg caffeine, 22-23g carbohydrates, 30-40mg potassium, 20mg calcium. The sugar source is maltodextrin and fructose.

Recovery

The training you do temporarily breaks down your body. It is during recovery that your body repairs itself to be stronger than before. The best way to recover after a hard training run is doing a cool down, proper nutrition and hydration, and sleep.

Other recovery techniques to consider include:
1. Drain your legs - elevate your legs using a wall/fence/tree for 5-10 minutes shortly after a run.
2. Ice bath or cold shower - soak in a cold bath or shower for 5-10 minutes shortly after a run.
3. Stretching
4. Foam rolling

Injury Prevention Tips

1. Warm up & cool down for each run - See page 6
2. Incorporate recovery techniques - See above
3. Incorporate strength training - see page 5
4. Follow your training plan - while listening to your body - see below
5. Run on different surfaces - see below
6. Add flexibility exercises into your weekly routine. Yoga is a great option for runners/walkers to improve both strength and flexibility.

The training plan is to be used as a guide. It is not set in stone. If your body needs another day of rest following a hard run or if life stress is high, it is ok to take an extra day to recover. You can also switch a scheduled run into a cross training day.

Training on asphalt or concrete for each training run puts a lot of stress on the body. Switch up your running surface so some runs are on concrete/asphalt and others are on grass or crushed limestone such as the Towpath Tail.

STEP 4 - RACE DAY PREP

Taper

About three weeks before race day you will start to reduce the weekly training miles and decrease the length of the long run. The taper helps your body absorb the training, recover, and get prepared for race day. It is easy to go stir crazy during this time so focus on sticking to your training plan. You will NOT lose your fitness during this time.

Race Week Hydration and Nutrition Tips
(Based on ACSM guidelines)

1. Race Week Nutrition: 1 to 2 days before a race it is advised to follow a high carbohydrate, moderate protein and low healthy fat diet. Below are some examples of foods that fall into these categories. Try to consume carbohydrates with each meal and snack.
   - Protein: chicken breast, white fish, egg whites, powdered peanut butter, Tofu.
   - Low fiber carbohydrate: potatoes, white rice, white pasta, white breads, pretzels, fruit juice, carrots.
   - Healthy fats: avocado, olive oil.
2. Pre-Race Hydration: Starts 24 hours before the bell rings. Frequently take in fluids throughout the day before the race. 2-4 hours before the start, consume 10-24oz of fluid, or more if you are dehydrated. 20-30 minutes before the start of the race take in another 8oz of fluids.

STEP 5 - RACE DAY

Race day is simply a celebration of all the training you put in to get to this day. You have the plan you developed and rehersed during your long runs. Now is the time to execute that plan.

THE START
Keep your pace controlled. It is easy with the excitement of the start line, and the first 1/2 mile being slightly downhill, to start much faster than you trained for. Keep your pace at or slower than the pace of your long runs.

Don't weave in and out of runners the first few miles. There are thousands of runners at the start. Settle into place instead of trying to weave in and out of people as this uses unnecessary energy.

FLUID STATIONS
There are 16 fluid stations along the Akron Marathon course. At each station there is lemon lime Gatorade served in green cups followed by water served in white cups. When you grab the cup from the volunteer, cover the top of the cup with your hand, and cinch the top closed creating a small space on the edge of the cup you can drink from without splashing.

Stick to your plan! If your race strategy is to do a run/walk method, then stick to that plan from the beginning of the race. It is easy to get caught up in the energy of the race and forget to stop for your walking segment or think you can go without it.

Enjoy the Experience!
Smile at and high five the spectators along the course. If you are going through a hard phase, fake a smile. Even a fake smile will help you feel better. Enjoy various bands, block parties, entertainment groups, and comradery of your fellow runners.

See you at the Finish Line! Don't forget to smile and throw those hands in the air for your finisher photo!