Marathon Checklist

A complete marathon checklist covering training, gear, nutrition, taper, race day, and recovery.

Training Plan Basics

- [ ] Choose a training plan that matches your current fitness and gives at least sixteen weeks for beginners.
- [ ] Build a consistent running base before increasing mileage, raising weekly volume by no more than about ten percent.
  Capping weekly mileage increases prevents overuse injuries like shin splints and tendonitis.
- [ ] Schedule one weekly long run and extend it gradually to roughly twenty miles before tapering.
- [ ] Include easy runs, rest days, and at least one cross-training or strength session each week.
- [ ] Add tempo or speed work only after a solid base, keeping most miles at an easy conversational pace.
- [ ] Log your runs to track progress, fatigue, and any recurring aches.
  Persistent pain is a sign to rest or see a professional, not to push through.
- [ ] Get medical clearance before starting intense training, especially with prior injuries or health conditions.

Gear and Shoes

- [ ] Buy running shoes fitted to your gait and break them in over many training miles.
- [ ] Choose moisture-wicking apparel and seamless socks tested on long runs to prevent chafing and blisters.
- [ ] Decide on a hydration system—handheld bottle, belt, or vest—and practice with it.
- [ ] Apply anti-chafe balm to common hotspots and protect against blisters with proven products.
- [ ] Have a running watch or app set up to track pace, distance, and splits.
- [ ] Prepare weather-appropriate layers, a hat or visor, and sunglasses for varied conditions.
  Plan a throwaway layer for cold starts you can shed early.
- [ ] Replace shoes nearing the end of their mileage well before race week, never on race day.
  Aim to run in your race-day shoes for 30 to 50 miles beforehand to break them in safely.

Nutrition and Hydration

- [ ] Practice your fueling strategy on long runs, testing gels, chews, or real food you tolerate.
- [ ] Plan to take in carbohydrates regularly during long efforts to maintain energy.
- [ ] Learn the on-course fluids and fuel the race will provide and train with similar products.
  Practicing with the race's official brand prevents gastrointestinal distress on course.
- [ ] Hydrate consistently in daily life, adjusting for heat, sweat rate, and electrolyte needs.
- [ ] Eat a familiar, balanced diet rich in carbohydrates as your mileage builds.
- [ ] Avoid new foods, supplements, or untested fuel in the final weeks.
  Stomach issues from new products are a common reason runners struggle late in a race.
- [ ] Dial in a pre-run breakfast during long runs so race morning feels routine.

Taper Week

- [ ] Reduce weekly mileage significantly while keeping some runs at goal pace to stay sharp.
- [ ] Prioritize sleep and recovery, treating rest as part of your training, not a break from it.
- [ ] Continue eating well and gradually emphasize carbohydrates in the final days.

- [ ] Resist the urge to add last-minute workouts or test new training ideas.
- [ ] Keep legs loose with light movement, gentle stretching, and easy walks.
- [ ] Manage taper restlessness by reviewing logistics and visualizing your race.
  Feeling antsy or slightly sluggish during taper is normal and expected.
- [ ] Avoid crowds, illness exposure, and risky activities that could derail race day.

Race Week and Gear Bag

- [ ] Study the course map, elevation, aid-station locations, and your start corral or wave.
- [ ] Pick up your race packet and bib in advance, confirming timing chip and pins.
- [ ] Plan travel, parking, and arrival time to reach the start with margin to spare.
- [ ] Lay out your full race-day outfit and pin your bib the night before.
- [ ] Pack a gear bag with extra layers, fuel, body glide, bandages, sunscreen, and dry clothes for after.
- [ ] Charge your watch and phone, and load any pacing plan or playlist.
  Download your playlist offline and test the watch race screen so nothing depends on signal at the start.
- [ ] Confirm bag-check rules and post-race meeting points with friends or family.
  Cell service often jams at large finishes; pick an exact landmark in advance to meet up.

Race-Day Morning

- [ ] Wake early enough to eat your tested breakfast two to three hours before the start.
- [ ] Hydrate steadily without overdoing it, sipping fluids in the hours before the gun.
- [ ] Dress for the conditions, using a throwaway layer if the start is cold.
  Use an old sweatshirt or thrifted top you can discard in charity bins right before the gun.
- [ ] Arrive early, use the restroom before lining up, and budget for long bathroom lines.
- [ ] Do a light warm-up with easy movement and dynamic stretches near your corral.
- [ ] Start conservatively and hold your planned pace rather than chasing the early crowd.
  Going out too fast is the most common race-day mistake.
- [ ] Stick to your fueling and hydration plan, taking on calories and fluids before you feel depleted.

Post-Race Recovery

- [ ] Keep walking after you finish to cool down gradually rather than stopping abruptly.
- [ ] Rehydrate and eat carbohydrates with some protein within about an hour of finishing.
- [ ] Change into dry, warm clothes and add layers to avoid post-race chills.
- [ ] Prioritize sleep and gentle movement in the days that follow to aid recovery.
- [ ] Stretch lightly, consider easy walks or swims, and avoid hard running for a week or two.
- [ ] Watch for unusual pain, swelling, or symptoms and seek medical care if anything feels wrong.
  Listen to your body; recovery is when adaptation and healing happen.
- [ ] Reflect on what worked and what to adjust, then ease back into training gradually.