

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.
- ☐ 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.

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.
- ☐ 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.
Set two alarms for race morning to avoid oversleeping.
- ☐ Confirm bag-check rules and post-race meeting points with friends or family.

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.
- ☐ 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.