

fitbie

Beginner's Guide to Running for Weight Loss

A breakthrough plan to lose weight and start running—no experience necessary



» By Sarah Lorge Butler with Leslie Bonci and Budd Coates, Runner's World

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iven the choice between moving a lot more or eating a lot less, it's more fun to do the former. And when running is going well, it feels great. The miles fly by, and you torch roughly 100 calories for every mile you run.

Dieting? Well, it's a drag. It's all about deprivation and what you can't have. Cut this, eliminate that. It's about subtraction, saying no.

With running you're adding a new sport, new friends, and new experiences to your life. You're engaging in something human beings have done since the dawn of time.

According to evolutionary biologists, the first humans were long-distance athletes, running across the grasslands, stalking dinner. Dinner was some form of lean meat. And there was no pulling in at the Dairy Queen for dessert afterward.

Dieting, at least among the masses, is a relatively recent phenomenon. Some 47% of Americans are trying to lose weight at any given time, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. But when 2 out of every 3 adults in the United States is overweight, that's somewhat understandable.

So think about how you would rather lose weight and what you would like to tell people. What would you rather tell yourself? That you're learning a new sport? Or that you're on a diet?

The plan detailed here builds up gently. It starts with walking only, building up to 30 minutes at a time. Then it adds some running: One minute at first. When you're ready, 2 minutes. Then 3, 5, 7, minutes. At a rate you determine, those 30 minutes of walking morph into 30 minutes of nonstop running. In other words, take as long as you need. We've found that although it may take some time, once you're a runner, you will want to stay a runner.



Stage 1: Get Moving!

This program starts with walking. Before you can try running, you need to be able to complete four nonstop walks, each one 30 minutes long, in a week. You might be able

to do that this week without a problem. In that case, once you've done four walking workouts, you're ready to proceed to the next stage.

Or you might need to start at less than 30 minutes, depending on the kind of shape you're in and how much extra weight you're carrying around.

At what kind of pace should you walk? Pick something comfortable—steady, not aggressive. Aim for a pace that's a little faster than your stroll-down-the-driveway-in-my-slippers-to-get-the-newspaper walk but slower than your might-miss-my-connecting-flight walk. Don't sweat the pace; just get out and do it.

You do not want to be huffing and puffing. If you are, you're going too fast. This is punitive. You're not supposed to finish each workout feeling like you need a nap! Your breathing is an instantaneous check of your effort level. Take the "talk test": If you can get a few sentences out, you're fine. If you need to pause for a breath between words, take your foot off the gas until you can talk comfortably.

STAGE 1 WORKOUT

- » Walk for 30 minutes.
- » Total workout time: 30 minutes.
- » Do this workout at least three or four times in a week before moving on to the next stage.





STAGE 2 WORKOUT

- » Walk for 4 minutes. Run for 1 minute.
- » Repeat that sequence 4 more times.
- » End with 4 minutes of walking.
- » Total workout time: 29 minutes, 5 of which are running.
- » Do this workout at least three or four times in a week before moving on to the next stage.

Stage 2: It Starts with a Single Step

The pages of *Runner's World* are filled with the words of writers singing the praises of running. We think it's pretty cool too. When running feels good, it feels great. Of course, when you're just starting, it feels hard.

Really hard. Exhausting, even. It's work. Feels great? You've got to be kidding.

For now it's going to feel like a major effort. But even while you're exerting yourself, know what you're doing: Your heart is getting stronger, your lungs are breathing more deeply. You may see your blood pressure, cholesterol, and triglycerides drop. You're building muscles everywhere, especially in your legs, but also in

your core due to all your deep breathing. You're increasing bone density. Then there are the "soft" benefits: the calm, the sense of achievement, the sounder sleep at night.

When you're starting out, you need to run slowly. Very slowly. How slow is slow? Try this: Make your run no faster than your walk. Yep, that's right: No faster than your walk. At

this point, you have to set aside any preconceived notions you have about running. If the Presidential Physical Fitness testing of your youth still haunts you, fear not. No one is standing by with a stopwatch. This run does not have to be fast, nor should it be. And in these 1-minute running segments, you're not required to cover a set distance.

Stage 3: Timing Is Everything

As you've seen so far, this running plan is all about gradual. It takes you from walking for 30 minutes to running for 30 minutes in 12 stages. You'll find 6 of these stages here. For stages 7 to 12 check out the book *Run Your Butt Off!* (runyourbuttoffbook.com).

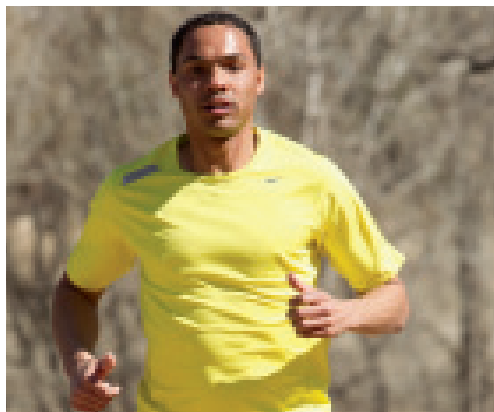
But just because there are 12 stages doesn't mean you have to do this in 12 weeks. You set the pace. You move on when you're ready. You can stretch this program out over the course of 6 months if that suits you better.

It's common with new runners and exercisers that something happens to subvert their week, and they fall off the wagon. The mistake is to try to climb back on at the exact same place where you fell off or, worse, to try to increase the intensity without having done your homework. Make sure you've laid the groundwork before you try to build up.

The same rules apply from the previous stage: Go very slowly. If you're huffing and puffing, you're going too fast. And run no faster than your walk.

Got it? Good.

EXTRA CREDIT: If you're used to doing another activity, keep it up! The more active you are, the more calories you burn. Don't think that just because you're starting to run you have to quit



STAGE 3 WORKOUT

- » Walk for 4 minutes. Run for 2 minutes.
- » Repeat that sequence four more times.
- » End with 3 minutes of walking.
- » Total workout time: 33 minutes, 10 of which are running.
- » Do this workout at least three or four times in a week before moving on to the next stage.

all your other activities. Runners just call other sports cross-training, and they're good for you. They work muscle groups that you might not hit with running and give you a mental break in our routine. Plus, you might notice that walking and running are already helping those other endeavors: Maybe you're not so exhausted anymore after a long set of tennis.

Stage 4: Sticking with It

If you're doing these workouts correctly, there won't be a big shift in speed from the walk to the run. You're running about the pace of a brisk walk, and you shouldn't be getting out of breath. Some people start to jog and get all embarrassed by their slow pace. And their jiggling. But really, you shouldn't be shy. People whom you think are passing judgment usually aren't. If you sense that someone is taking a long look at you as you run by, it's probably because he or she admires your effort.

A lot of new runners think that running

is an exclusive club, that they don't belong to if they can't achieve a certain speed. That's nonsense, and it's self-defeating. Don't worry about anyone else but you. You're the one taking control of your health, which puts you in a select group. Pretty soon you'll be the authority, the one people are coming to for advice. Plus, if you can stick it out for 12 weeks or so, you'll get faster without even trying or realizing it. It's simply a natural development as you grow more fit.

You're halfway there! If you can run for 15 minutes at a time, that's a big deal. And if you do this workout four times a week, you'll be running for an hour this week. That probably didn't seem too likely a few weeks back, did it?



STAGE 4 WORKOUT

- » Walk for 3 minutes. Run for 3 minutes.
- » Repeat that sequence four more times.
- » End with 3 minutes of walking.
Total workout time: 33 minutes, 15 of which are running.
- » Do this workout at least three or four times in a week before moving on to the next stage.

Stage 5: The Race Is On!

Really want to jump-start your motivation? Sign up for a race. Yes, you. You can enter a race. Why not?

Don't sign up for one happening this weekend. It shouldn't be next weekend, either. It could be a month from now or 4 months or even a year, but start scouting. Pick a 5-K (which is about 3.1 miles) and put it on your calendar. You have to find some way to keep yourself accountable in your training. Some people are internally motivated, and that's amazing. They set their minds to doing something and they do it. The rest of us need the carrot or the stick. Or both. We need someone or something watching over us, nagging us, cajoling us into being our best selves.

Check to make sure at least 500 people have entered your race, and if you can find one with north of 1,000 entrants, that's even better. The more runners, the merrier. When you have a lot of people around you, you can be sure that someone will be slower than you. Someone will even be walking the whole way. Because that's the number-one fear of every person who enters a race for the first time: What if I'm last? Trust us. If you pick a big enough race and run even just a few minutes of it, you will not be last.

This is a pivotal week. What's going on in this workout? Well, as you're doing every week, you're increasing the run segment. And 5 minutes is a long time to run without stopping. This workout asks you to do that 4 times. So at the risk of sounding redundant, approach the run very slowly. You want to be able to get through all four running segments; you can't go charging out of the gate for the first one and quit after two. Pace yourself. Also, the walking portion decreases

this week. If you're pushing too hard during the 5 minutes of running, those 150 seconds of walking are going to feel like they're over before you've had a chance to catch your breath. So keep the run controlled, really slow down on the walk, and see how it goes.



STAGE 5 WORKOUT

- » Walk for 2 minutes and 30 seconds. Run for 5 minutes.
- » Repeat that sequence 3 more times.
- » End with 3 minutes of walking.
- » Total workout time: 33 minutes, 20 of which are running.
- » Do this workout at least three or four times in a week before moving on to the next stage.

Stage 6: A Jog, Not a Sprint

For a while—a long time, it seems—we only appreciate exercise when it’s over. We feel virtuous for having done it, and we’re glad we pushed ourselves out the door. Whew.



STAGE 6 WORKOUT

- » Walk for 3 minutes. Run for 7 minutes.
- » Repeat that sequence 2 more times.
- » End with 3 minutes of walking.
- » Total workout time: 33 minutes, 21 of which are running.
- » Do this workout at least three or four times in a week before moving on to the next stage.

Check that off the day’s to-do list. But there comes a point when the actual “during” portion of exercise isn’t so bad, either. You’re out there and you start running, and it feels much easier than you anticipated it would before you started. You feel like you’ve got a good stride going. In fact, it’s downright invigorating. It goes by quickly, and you’re sort of sorry it has to end.

Not there yet? It will happen.

You’ve probably heard people talking how endorphins cause the famous “runner’s high.” Scientists still debate the role of endorphins; some think anandamide, another chemical the body produces that the brain feasts on, might be the cause. Whatever the body chemistry reason, many people experience a sense of well-being during and after a run. For some it’s a mild sensation. For others it’s more intense.

Taking the running portion slowly and building up gradually will minimize the discomfort you’ll feel. The hope is that soon enough, you’ll cross over from one of those people who can’t wait for exercise to end and join those who can’t wait for it to begin.

With this workout you’re doing more than 20 minutes of running in each session. The walking is down to 12 minutes. Over last week and this week, the balance has shifted in favor of running. Give yourself some credit for how far you’ve come!

Now You’re Ready to Run Your Butt Off!

Here’s the thing: The more you run, the more weight you lose, and the easier it is to... keep running. It’s hard to get the momentum going at first. But once you get on track, consistent, and committed, the more calories you’ll shed and the less you’ll weigh. It takes effort to pick your feet up and run, and you can go longer. Then you’ll get a little faster, go a little farther, and torch even more calories. Your heart and lungs are better conditioned already. And when there’s less of you to move, they don’t have to work quite so hard. You feel better even though you’re doing more. It’s a happy circle.

To get the rest of the 12-week plan, visit runyourbuttoff.com.

WEEK 1

RUNNERS^{WORLD} 12-WEEK TRAINING LOG

DAY		DISTANCE	TIME	NOTES: Heart Rate, Weather, Temperature, Mood
M				
Tu				
W				
Th				
F				
Sa				
Su				
TOTAL				

*"You only get cheered in running. Every other sport, you get booed."
— Bill Rodgers, 4-time winner of both the Boston and New York City marathons*

WEEK 2

RUNNER'S WORLD 12-WEEK TRAINING LOG

DAY	DISTANCE	TIME	NOTES: Heart Rate, Weather, Temperature, Mood
M			
Tu			
W			
Th			
F			
Sa			
Su			
TOTAL			

A rule of thumb: The shorter the race or workout, the more thorough the warmup needs to be.
— Runner's World training tip

WEEK 3

RUNNER'S WORLD 12-WEEK TRAINING LOG

DAY		DISTANCE	TIME	NOTES: Heart Rate, Weather, Temperature, Mood
M				
Tu				
W				
Th				
F				
Sa				
Su				
TOTAL				

*"Eat every 3 to 4 hours to keep your energy level up and your brain thinking clearly. Start with a decent breakfast, even if it's in your car."
— Liz Applegate, Ph.D., Runner's World nutrition columnist*

WEEK 4

RUNNER'S WORLD 12-WEEK TRAINING LOG

DAY		DISTANCE	TIME	NOTES: Heart Rate, Weather, Temperature, Mood
M				
Tu				
W				
Th				
F				
Sa				
Su				
TOTAL				

"One of the enjoyable things about running is the camaraderie. You're sort of stuck together, so it forces you to have conversations."
— Ed Hochuli, NFL referee

WEEK 5

RUNNER'S WORLD 12-WEEK TRAINING LOG

DAY		DISTANCE	TIME	NOTES: Heart Rate, Weather, Temperature, Mood
M				
Tu				
W				
Th				
F				
Sa				
Su				
TOTAL				

There's plenty of advice on how to become a better runner, but try to focus on what's manageable. Remember: You started running to feel better, not to become stressed.
— Runner's World training tip

WEEK 6

RUNNER'S WORLD 12-WEEK TRAINING LOG

DAY		DISTANCE	TIME	NOTES: Heart Rate, Weather, Temperature, Mood
M				
Tu				
W				
Th				
F				
Sa				
Su				
TOTAL				

*Set a measurable target, whether it's cutting your 5-K time by 30 seconds or losing 5 pounds.
— Runner's World training tip*

WEEK 7

RUNNERS^{WORLD} 12-WEEK TRAINING LOG

DAY		DISTANCE	TIME	NOTES: Heart Rate, Weather, Temperature, Mood
M				
Tu				
W				
Th				
F				
Sa				
Su				
TOTAL				

*"Vary the pace on every run—even easy runs. This can be as simple as pushing the pace for 5 minutes or doing short 'pickups' midrun. It will expose your muscles to a fuller range of motion."
— Ian Dobson, 26, competitor at the '08 Olympics in the 5000 meters*

WEEK 8

RUNNER'S WORLD 12-WEEK TRAINING LOG

DAY		DISTANCE	TIME	NOTES: Heart Rate, Weather, Temperature, Mood
M				
Tu				
W				
Th				
F				
Sa				
Su				
TOTAL				

*On low-motivation days, review your training log to reaffirm your progress.
— Runner's World training tip*

WEEK 9

RUNNER'S WORLD 12-WEEK TRAINING LOG

DAY	DISTANCE	TIME	NOTES: Heart Rate, Weather, Temperature, Mood
M			
Tu			
W			
Th			
F			
Sa			
Su			
TOTAL			

"Before a race, I focus on my goal and the hard training I've done. It motivates me to let it all out that day. For me, races are the celebration of my training."

— Dan Browne, '07 National Champion in the 5-K and 20-K

WEEK 10

RUNNERS^{WORLD} 12-WEEK TRAINING LOG

DAY		DISTANCE	TIME	NOTES: Heart Rate, Weather, Temperature, Mood
M				
Tu				
W				
Th				
F				
Sa				
Su				
TOTAL				

“Running in old shoes is like driving on bald tires. You might make the next town, but then again, you might have a blowout.”

— J.D. Denton, a.k.a. “The Shoe Guy”

WEEK 11

RUNNER'S WORLD 12-WEEK TRAINING LOG

DAY		DISTANCE	TIME	NOTES: Heart Rate, Weather, Temperature, Mood
M				
Tu				
W				
Th				
F				
Sa				
Su				
TOTAL				

"It doesn't matter how fast you are—if the aerobic strength isn't there, your speed is useless. You can't maintain a fast pace and still have a kick."

— Shayne Culpepper, '07 U.S. indoor mile champion and '04 Olympian in the 5000 meters

WEEK 12

RUNNER'S WORLD 12-WEEK TRAINING LOG

DAY		DISTANCE	TIME	NOTES: Heart Rate, Weather, Temperature, Mood
M				
Tu				
W				
Th				
F				
Sa				
Su				
TOTAL				

Talk to yourself. Athletes who use instructional and motivational self-talk before an event perform better than those who don't.
— Runner's World training tip