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The Couch-to-5K Running Plan

Our beginner's running schedule has helped thousands of new runners get off the couch and onto the roads, running 3 miles in just two months.

By Josh Clark

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Too many people have been turned off of running simply by trying to start off too fast. Their bodies rebel, and they wind up miserable, wondering why anyone would possibly want to do this to themselves.

You should ease into your running program gradually. In fact, the beginners' program we outline here is less of a running regimen than a walking and jogging program. The idea is to transform you from couch potato to runner, getting you running three miles (or 5K) on a regular basis in just two months. It's easy to get impatient, and you may feel tempted to skip ahead in the program, but hold yourself back. Don't try to do more, even if you feel you can. If, on the other hand, you find the program too strenuous, just stretch it out. Don't feel pressured to continue faster than you're able. Repeat weeks if needed and move ahead only when you feel you're ready.

A few minutes each week

Each session should take about 20 or 30 minutes, three times a week. That just happens to be the same amount of moderate exercise recommended by numerous studies for optimum fitness. This program will get you fit. (Runners who do more than this amount are doing it for more than fitness, and before long you might find yourself doing the same as well).

Be sure to space out these three days throughout the week to give yourself a chance to rest and recover between efforts. And don't worry about how fast you're going. Running faster can wait until your bones are stronger and your body is fitter. For now focus on gradually increasing the time or distance you run.

Run for time, or run for distance

There are two ways to follow this program, to measure your runs by time or by distance. Either one works just as well, choose the option that seems easiest for you to keep track of. If you go with the distance option, and you are not using a track to measure the distances, just estimate. It's not important to have the distances absolutely exact.

Before setting out, make sure to precede each session with a five-minute warmup walk or jog. Be sure to stretch both before and after. Read "[Stay Loose](#)" for some suggestions.

The Cool Running Couch to 5K program is now available for download in Active Trainer. It's the same program that has helped thousands of runners across the finish-line, published to your personal online training calendar. Active Trainer allows you to log your progress against the program. [Try the program today!](#)

The schedule

Bookmark this page so that you can easily return to check on your progress. You can also add daily run reminders to the Cool Running homepage. To do this, [edit your start page preferences](#).

Week	Workout 1	Workout 2	Workout 3
1	Brisk five-minute warm-up walk. Then alternate 60 seconds of jogging and 90 seconds of walking for a total of 20 minutes.	Brisk five-minute warm-up walk. Then alternate 60 seconds of jogging and 90 seconds of walking for a total of 20 minutes.	Brisk five-minute warm-up walk. Then alternate 60 seconds of jogging and 90 seconds of walking for a total of 20 minutes.
2	Brisk five-minute warm-up walk. Then alternate 90 seconds of jogging and two minutes of walking for a total of 20 minutes.	Brisk five-minute warm-up walk. Then alternate 90 seconds of jogging and two minutes of walking for a total of 20 minutes.	Brisk five-minute warm-up walk. Then alternate 90 seconds of jogging and two minutes of walking for a total of 20 minutes.
3	Brisk five-minute warm-up walk, then do two repetitions of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jog 200 yards (or 90 seconds) Walk 200 yards (or 90 seconds) Jog 400 yards (or 3 minutes) Walk 400 yards (or three minutes) 	Brisk five-minute warm-up walk, then do two repetitions of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jog 200 yards (or 90 seconds) Walk 200 yards (or 90 seconds) Jog 400 yards (or 3 minutes) Walk 400 yards (or three minutes) 	Brisk five-minute warm-up walk, then do two repetitions of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jog 200 yards (or 90 seconds) Walk 200 yards (or 90 seconds) Jog 400 yards (or 3 minutes) Walk 400 yards (or three minutes)
4	Brisk five-minute warm-up walk, then: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jog 1/4 mile (or 3 minutes) Walk 1/8 mile (or 90 seconds) Jog 1/2 mile (or 5 minutes) Walk 1/4 mile (or 2-1/2 minutes) Jog 1/4 mile (or 3 minutes) Walk 1/8 mile (or 90 seconds) Jog 1/2 mile (or 5 minutes) 	Brisk five-minute warm-up walk, then: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jog 1/4 mile (or 3 minutes) Walk 1/8 mile (or 90 seconds) Jog 1/2 mile (or 5 minutes) Walk 1/4 mile (or 2-1/2 minutes) Jog 1/4 mile (or 3 minutes) Walk 1/8 mile (or 90 seconds) Jog 1/2 mile (or 5 minutes) 	Brisk five-minute warm-up walk, then: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jog 1/4 mile (or 3 minutes) Walk 1/8 mile (or 90 seconds) Jog 1/2 mile (or 5 minutes) Walk 1/4 mile (or 2-1/2 minutes) Jog 1/4 mile (or 3 minutes) Walk 1/8 mile (or 90 seconds) Jog 1/2 mile (or 5 minutes)
5	Brisk five-minute warm-up walk, then: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jog 1/2 mile (or 5 minutes) Walk 1/4 mile (or 3 minutes) Jog 1/2 mile (or 5 minutes) Walk 1/4 mile (or 3 minutes) Jog 1/2 mile (or 5 minutes) 	Brisk five-minute warm-up walk, then: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jog 3/4 mile (or 8 minutes) Walk 1/2 mile (or 5 minutes) Jog 3/4 mile (or 8 minutes) 	Brisk five-minute warm-up walk, then jog two miles (or 20 minutes) with no walking.
6	Brisk five-minute warm-up walk, then: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jog 1/2 mile (or 5 minutes) Walk 1/4 mile (or 3 minutes) Jog 3/4 mile (or 8 minutes) Walk 1/4 mile (or 3 minutes) Jog 1/2 mile (or 5 minutes) 	Brisk five-minute warm-up walk, then: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jog 1 mile (or 10 minutes) Walk 1/4 mile (or 3 minutes) Jog 1 mile (or 10 minutes) 	Brisk five-minute warm-up walk, then jog 2-1/4 miles (or 25 minutes) with no walking.
7	Brisk five-minute warm-up walk, then jog 2.5 miles (or 25 minutes).	Brisk five-minute warm-up walk, then jog 2.5 miles (or 25 minutes).	Brisk five-minute warm-up walk, then jog 2.5 miles (or 25 minutes).
8	Brisk five-minute warm-up walk, then jog 2.75 miles (or 28 minutes).	Brisk five-minute warm-up walk, then jog 2.75 miles (or 28 minutes).	Brisk five-minute warm-up walk, then jog 2.75 miles (or 28 minutes).
9	Brisk five-minute warm-up walk, then jog 3 miles (or 30 minutes).	Brisk five-minute warm-up walk, then jog 3 miles (or 30 minutes).	The final workout! Congratulations! Brisk five-minute warm-up walk, then jog 3 miles (or 30 minutes).