

BEGINNER · 9 WEEKS · 3 DAYS/WEEK

Couch to 5K Training Plan

A gradual walk-run progression for brand-new runners, built around one core idea: everything here is done at an easy, conversational effort. Speed comes later — consistency comes first.

Understanding “easy pace”

Easy pace isn't a specific speed — it's an effort level. You should be able to hold a full conversation while running. If you're breathing too hard to talk, you're going too fast. Slow down, even if that means a walk. There is no pace requirement on this plan, only a time or interval to complete.

This plan follows a core training principle used by coaches at every level, including exercise physiologist Jack Daniels: the vast majority of running should be easy. Easy running builds your aerobic base, strengthens tendons and joints gradually, and keeps injury risk low — which matters most in these first nine weeks. Every “run” interval below should feel easy. If it doesn't, slow your run pace down or extend your walk breaks. Progress, not pace, is the goal.

How to use this plan

The days below (Monday / Wednesday / Friday) are just a suggested spacing, not a requirement. Run on whatever three days fit your week — the only rule that matters is not running on back-to-back days. Give yourself at least one rest or cross-train day between each session.

Warm-up: Start every session with a 5-minute brisk walk before the intervals begin.

Cool-down: End every session with a 3–5 minute easy walk.

Stuck on a week? Repeat it. There's no penalty for taking a week twice — the only rule is that every run feels easy.

The 9-week schedule

"Run" and "walk" refer to time intervals, all at easy, conversational effort. Shift the days below to fit your week — just keep at least one rest day between sessions.

WEEK 1 · ~20 min per session

Day	Workout
Monday	8 rounds of: 60 sec easy run, 90 sec walk (~20 min)
Wednesday	8 rounds of: 60 sec easy run, 90 sec walk (~20 min)
Friday	8 rounds of: 60 sec easy run, 90 sec walk (~20 min)

WEEK 2 · ~21 min per session

Day	Workout
Monday	6 rounds of: 90 sec easy run, 2 min walk (~21 min)
Wednesday	6 rounds of: 90 sec easy run, 2 min walk (~21 min)
Friday	6 rounds of: 90 sec easy run, 2 min walk (~21 min)

WEEK 3 · ~20 min per session

Day	Workout
Monday	2 rounds of: 90 sec run, 90 sec walk, 3 min run, 3 min walk
Wednesday	2 rounds of: 90 sec run, 90 sec walk, 3 min run, 3 min walk
Friday	2 rounds of: 90 sec run, 90 sec walk, 3 min run, 3 min walk

WEEK 4 · ~24 min per session

Day	Workout
Monday	3 min run, 90 sec walk, 5 min run, 2.5 min walk, 3 min run, 90 sec walk, 5 min run
Wednesday	3 min run, 90 sec walk, 5 min run, 2.5 min walk, 3 min run, 90 sec walk, 5 min run
Friday	3 min run, 90 sec walk, 5 min run, 2.5 min walk, 3 min run, 90 sec walk, 5 min run

WEEK 5 · time varies by session

Day	Workout
Monday	5 min run, 3 min walk, 5 min run, 3 min walk, 5 min run
Wednesday	8 min run, 5 min walk, 8 min run
Friday	20 minutes continuous easy running — your first!

WEEK 6 · time varies by session

Day	Workout
Monday	5 min run, 3 min walk, 8 min run, 3 min walk, 5 min run
Wednesday	10 min run, 3 min walk, 10 min run
Friday	25 minutes continuous easy running

WEEK 7 · 25 min per session

Day	Workout
Monday	25 minutes continuous easy running
Wednesday	25 minutes continuous easy running
Friday	25 minutes continuous easy running

WEEK 8 · 28 min per session

Day	Workout
Monday	28 minutes continuous easy running
Wednesday	28 minutes continuous easy running
Friday	28 minutes continuous easy running

WEEK 9 · 30 min per session / race day

Day	Workout
Monday	30 minutes continuous easy running
Wednesday	30 minutes continuous easy running
Friday	30 minutes continuous easy running, or a full 5K — whichever comes first. This is race week!

After week 9

Congratulations — you're a 5K runner. From here, keep running 3–4 easy days a week to hold onto your fitness, and when you're ready to run faster (not just farther), our Intermediate 5K Training Plan builds on this same easy-pace foundation with structured speed work.