

INTERMEDIATE · 8 WEEKS · 4 DAYS/WEEK

Intermediate 5K Training Plan

For runners who can already complete 25–30 minutes of continuous running. This plan layers in structured speed work on top of an easy-pace aerobic base, using the same pace system developed by exercise physiologist and coach Jack Daniels.

Understanding easy pace (and the other paces)

Easy pace is the foundation of this entire plan. It should feel comfortable enough to hold a full conversation — roughly a 5 or 6 out of 10 effort. Most runners run their easy days too fast; if in doubt, slow down. Every pace above easy exists to be used sparingly, in specific workouts, not as your default.

Easy (E)	Conversational effort, roughly 5–6/10. Used for the majority of your running: warm-ups, cool-downs, recovery jogs between intervals, and most weekly mileage. If you can't talk in full sentences, you're not running easy.
Threshold (T)	"Comfortably hard," roughly 7–8/10 — about the effort you could sustain for 25–30 minutes if racing. You could speak in short phrases, not full sentences. Used for tempo runs.
Interval (I)	"Hard," roughly 9/10 — close to current 5K race effort. Talking isn't really possible. Used in short repeats with jog recovery to build aerobic power.
Repetition (R)	Fast and relaxed, not a full sprint. Used in short bursts (strides) with full recovery to sharpen running form and leg speed, not to build fitness directly.

Don't have exact paces for T, I, and R yet? You don't need them to start — effort and the talk test work fine. If you want precise numbers, use a recent race result with a VDOT pace calculator (searchable online) to generate your personal training paces.

How this plan is structured

The days below (Monday / Wednesday / Friday / Sunday) are a suggested spacing, not a requirement — move them to fit your week. The rule that matters is not stacking two running days back-to-back. The one close pairing here is Sunday's long run into Monday's easy run, which is fine since both are easy effort; if you'd rather have a full rest day after your long run, just shift Monday's run to Tuesday.

4 runs per week: Two easy days, one workout day (threshold or intervals), and one long easy run. Rest or cross-train the other 3 days.

Strides: 8–10 second relaxed accelerations at R effort, with full recovery walk/jog between each. Not a hard sprint — more like turning up the treadmill briefly, then easing back down.

Progression: Weeks 1–2 build your easy base. Weeks 3–4 introduce threshold work. Weeks 5–6 add intervals. Weeks 7–8 sharpen and taper into race week.

Missed a workout? Skip it and move on — don't stack two hard days back to back to make up for it.

The 8-week schedule

WEEK 1 · Base

Day	Workout
Monday	25 min easy (E)
Wednesday	20 min easy (E), then 4 x 20 sec strides (R), full recovery between
Friday	25 min easy (E)
Sunday	35 min continuous easy (E)

WEEK 2 · Base

Day	Workout
Monday	28 min easy (E)
Wednesday	22 min easy (E), then 5 x 20 sec strides (R)
Friday	25 min easy (E)
Sunday	38 min continuous easy (E)

WEEK 3 · Threshold intro

Day	Workout
Monday	25 min easy (E)
Wednesday	10 min easy warm-up, 10 min continuous at threshold (T) effort, 8 min easy cool-down
Friday	25 min easy (E)
Sunday	40 min continuous easy (E)

WEEK 4 · Threshold

Day	Workout
Monday	25 min easy (E)
Wednesday	10 min easy warm-up, 15 min continuous at threshold (T) effort, 8 min easy cool-down
Friday	25 min easy (E), then 5 x 20 sec strides (R)
Sunday	40 min continuous easy (E)

WEEK 5 · Intervals intro

Day	Workout
Monday	25 min easy (E)
Wednesday	10 min easy warm-up, 5 x 3 min at interval (I) effort with 2 min easy jog recovery, 8 min easy cool-down
Friday	25 min easy (E)
Sunday	42 min continuous easy (E)

WEEK 6 · Intervals

Day	Workout
Monday	25 min easy (E)
Wednesday	10 min easy warm-up, 6 x 3 min at interval (I) effort with 2 min easy jog recovery, 8 min easy cool-down
Friday	10 min easy warm-up, 12 min at threshold (T) effort, 8 min easy cool-down
Sunday	42 min continuous easy (E)

WEEK 7 · Sharpen

Day	Workout
Monday	22 min easy (E)
Wednesday	10 min easy warm-up, 6 x 800m at interval (I) effort with equal-time jog recovery, 8 min easy cool-down
Friday	20 min easy (E), then 6 x 20 sec strides (R)
Sunday	35 min continuous easy (E)

WEEK 8 · Taper & race

Day	Workout
Monday	18 min easy (E)
Wednesday	10 min easy warm-up, 4 x 400m at interval (I) effort with full recovery, 8 min easy cool-down
Friday	Rest, or 15 min very easy shakeout
Sunday	Race day — 5K, go get it

A note on effort discipline

The single biggest mistake at this level isn't running too little — it's running easy days too hard. If your easy runs creep up toward threshold effort, you never fully recover, your hard workouts suffer, and injury risk climbs. Keep the easy days genuinely easy so the hard days can actually be hard.