Marathon 2007 Training

ROAD
Marathon coaches measure success not by how many runners they get to the starting line, but by how many of them finish. With the help of 10 supercoaches who have gotten more than half a million marathoners across the line, we've collected the best tips, strategies, and training plans to prepare you for your first—or fastest—26.2-miler this fall.

BY BOB COOPER PHOTOGRAPHS BY MEREDITH JENKS
MORE PEOPLE ARE RUNNING MARATHONS than ever before. In 2006, there were 410,000 marathon finishers in the United States—an increase of 40 percent from 1995. Not surprisingly, this boom has been followed by a surge in marathon-training plans, ranging from low-milage beginner programs to supertough elite schedules. Each has its virtues and drawbacks, but if you took the time to compare them all, you wouldn't have enough time to actually train. So we did the work for you. We assembled a panel of 10 leading coaches whose marathon-training programs are the most road-tested in America, yielding more than half a million successful marathon finishers over the years. Here we present their collective wisdom on the eight most important components of marathon training—from the initial mileage buildup to the final mileage taper. And with their input, we offer two 16-week training schedules for varying abilities—plans you won't find anywhere else. So whether you're a marathon rookie or a veteran with visions of qualifying for Boston, we've got everything you need to know to prepare for—and complete—your best 26.2-miler.

COLLECTIVE WISDOM
Mileage Buildup
GRADUALLY INCREASING WEEKLY MILEAGE is the cornerstone of all marathon-training programs. Most plans have you roughly doubling your mileage from 10 to 30 miles per week at the beginning to 30 to 70 miles at the high-mileage week—just before the taper. All but one of our panelists suggest that you achieve this buildup by gradually adding a little distance to nearly every run each week.

Galloway, the exception, only ups the distance on Sundays, when long runs are scheduled. "I've found that runners who increase their mileage by lengthening midweek and weekend long runs have a higher rate of injury," he says.

If you were to plot the mileage of most marathon-training schedules on a graph, it would show a straight, slowly rising line followed by a short, steep plunge during the taper. But reality is never that smooth. "Expect peaks and valleys—periods of improvement and stagnation," says Connelly. And if you miss a day or two of training, just go back to the schedule. "If you miss a whole week, backtrack the same amount of time that you skipped," say the Finkes. "If you miss more than two weeks, adjust your goals or switch to a later marathon."

SUPERCOACH STRATEGY
* Make sure that some of your miles are terrain- and environment-specific to the marathon you've chosen," say the Finkes. "Find out about the marathon's hills, altitude, and average temperature, then do a few of your training runs in similar conditions, even if that means driving to some hills.*
COLLECTIVE WISDOM

The Long Run

Many runners dread the long run more than they should. Our expert panelists generally call for just a few (three to five) runs above 16 miles, typically spaced a week or two apart in the middle weeks of the buildup. If you start your runs early in the morning to beat the summer heat, stay well fueled with sports drinks and other fast-acting carbs, and run with a partner or training group, you'll likely get through all your long runs with few problems.

But how long is long? Most of our panelists suggest pacing at 20 miles, although Galloway has some runners cover 26 to 29 miles. But you don't have to run all those miles on a Galloway plan, as he recommends walk breaks. "Walk breaks give you control over fatigue, and they reduce injury risk," he says. They range from one minute after every two minutes of running for 12-minute-pace runners to 30 seconds after each four minutes of running for eight-minute-pace runners. The rest of our panelists, however, endorse walk breaks only for slower runners.

When you are running, your long-run pace should most often be comfortable and conversational—between marathon goal pace for slower runners and two minutes per mile slower than goal pace for faster runners. (See "Find the Time," page 79.)

SUPERCOACH STRATEGY®  "Alternate slow-paced long runs with ‘fast-finish’ long runs—run the last few miles at marathon pace or slightly faster," says McMillan. "Start with a 30-minute fast finish, then add 30 minutes each time, up to 90 minutes, three weeks before the race. This helps you hit marathon pace even when you're tired."
Motivation

Half the battle of marathon training isn’t the running itself, it’s finding the resolve to run—day after day. Our panelists agree that first you have to make the commitment, set a realistic goal, and decide on a training plan. Then you have to run a mile—just one at first. Committing yourself every day to running that first mile (or 10 minutes) of each run, they say, will almost always ensure you’ll keep going.

All of our pros encourage training with others. “Running partners make the journey easier, more exciting, and more fun,” says Finanger. “An iPod can only take you so far,” Powers adds. But even with support from regular training partners, you still need to be your own toughest boss. That means posting your training schedule where you’ll see it often, treating workouts as unbreakable appointments, and tracking your progress in a running log. Finally, there’s the good old carrot-and-stick approach. “Tell yourself you can have something you want, as long as you complete your workout first,” say the Finkes. That may mean getting a massage, buying a new pair of shoes, going out to dinner, or just indulging in a bowl of ice cream.

SUPERCOACH STRATEGY© “Have everything beside your bed—running clothes, shoes, and anything else you need for your workout—the night before morning runs,” says Paul. “Then all you have to do is roll out of bed, dress, and go.”

Stay on Course

Our panelists’ main recommendations on how to stay healthy while marathon training can be summed up in one word: “chill.” Icing, ice baths, and finishing runs with a cooldown top their lists. So do taking rest days, getting massages, and stretching.

Collaborative Wisdom

Cross-Training

For some of our panelists, “supplemental training”—aerobic cross-training activities like cycling and swimming, and gym work like lifting and core exercises—is an acceptable option only on nonrunning days, as long as the workouts are short (less than an hour) and low-intensity. The idea is to focus your energies on your running days, since those are the workouts that are ultimately going to get you across the marathon finish line. Others require cross-training workouts—two or three a week for Galloway and Pierce. “Cross-training offers most of the advantages of running more miles without the pounding that can lead to fatigue and injury,” says Pierce. According to Pierce, doing 30 to 60 minutes of strenuous aerobic activities, such as swimming or biking, allows your running muscles to recharge while you still reap cardiovascular and muscular benefits, helping you become fitter even when you’re not running.

There is, however, wide agreement among our experts as to which cross-training activities are best for runners, with swimming, cycling, strength training, walking, yoga, and aqua-running topping the list in roughly that order. “Swimming improves circulation and strengthens the upper body, with no stress on the legs,” says Paul. Cycling focuses on the legs, but emphasizes different muscles than running and gets you out on your favorite roads and trails. As for gym workouts, mix low-impact cardio on an elliptical or stairclimber with upper-body strength training (choose light weights with high reps to boost muscle endurance) and core exercises. “Core work improves stride efficiency, lessens fatigue, and reduces injuries,” the Finkes say.

SUPERCOACH STRATEGY© “Pushups work the upper body, and crunches work the core,” says Finanger. “So try ‘flapjacks.’ Do 10 pushups from your knees, flip over like a flapjack, do 10 crunches, and then keep going back and forth without a break. Do flapjacks two or three times a week and build up from three to six sets.”
COLLECTIVE WISDOM

Training Terms

Here we define a few terms from our experts that are common to both training plans.

- **CROSS-TRAIN (XT):** Whether it's a swim, bike ride, gym workout, or exercise class, this is the day to do anything but run. Maintain an easy to moderate effort for these sessions.

- **EASY:** This is a comfortable, conversational pace that's best for short, easy runs; long, slow runs; and warmup and cooldown jogging—almost all of the running you'll do while marathon training. During weekend long runs, beginners can take walk breaks.

- **QUALITY:** This is harder running, performed over short distances with rest intervals of jogging or walking between. If you aren't breathing hard and leaving your comfort zone, you're not running hard enough.

- **TEMPO:** On these even-paced, moderately hard runs, the effort should be hard enough that conversation is somewhat difficult. Run hard, but in full control. (See "Perfect Tempo," page 37, for more.) Note: The distances shown on tempo-run days include a 1.5-mile warmup jog and 1-mile cooldown jog, so subtract 2.5 miles to determine the tempo pace segment of that run.

- **WARMUP AND COOLDOWN:** Every tempo run and quality workout should begin with a warmup jog of about 1.5 miles (or 15 minutes) and end with a cooldown jog of about one mile (or 10 minutes)—longer if you need it. The warmup jog should begin at a very easy pace or a walk and the cooldown jog should end that way.

**YOUR FIRST DAY**

Here is when to start your 16-week training plan for six of the big fall marathons.

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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
<td>11/18</td>
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**THE ROOKIE PLAN**

Dan Finager's Rookie Plan reflects the training principles endorsed by our expert panelists and was designed for first-time marathoners who seldom run or race beyond six miles.

**WEEK** | **M** | **T** | **W** | **T** | **F** | **S** | **TOTAL**
--- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | ---
1 | XT 0-30 min | Easy 3-4 miles | Easy 2-3 miles | Rest | Easy 4-5 miles | Easy 2-3 miles | 14-19 miles
2 | XT 0-30 min | Easy 3-4 miles | Easy 2-3 miles | Rest | Easy 5-6 miles | Easy 2-3 miles | 15-20 miles
3 | XT 0-30 min | Quality* 4-5 miles | Easy 2-3 miles | Rest | Easy 6-7 miles | Easy 2-3 miles | 17-22 miles
4 | XT 0-45 min | Quality* 4-5 miles | Easy 3-4 miles | Rest | Easy 7-8 miles | Easy 2-3 miles | 20-25 miles
5 | XT 0-45 min | Quality* 5-6 miles | Easy 3-4 miles | Rest | Easy 8-9 miles | Easy 2-3 miles | 22-27 miles
6 | XT 0-45 min | Quality* 5-6 miles | Easy 3-4 miles | Rest | Easy 10-11 miles | Easy 2-3 miles | 25-30 miles
7 | XT 0-60 min | Quality* 6-7 miles | Easy 3-4 miles | Rest | Easy 11-12 miles | Easy 3-4 miles | 28-33 miles
8 | XT 0-60 min | Quality* 7-8 miles | Easy 3-4 miles | Rest | Easy 13-14 miles | Easy 3-4 miles | 32-37 miles
9 | XT 0-60 min | Quality* 7-8 miles | Easy 4-5 miles | Rest | Easy 10-11 miles | Easy 3-4 miles | 30-35 miles
10 | XT 0-90 min | Quality* 7-8 miles | Easy 4-5 miles | Rest | Easy 15-16 miles | Easy 2-3 miles | 35-40 miles
11 | XT 0-90 min | Quality* 7-8 miles | Easy 4-5 miles | Rest | Easy 17-18 miles | Easy 2-3 miles | 35-40 miles
12 | XT 0-90 min | Quality* 7-8 miles | Easy 4-5 miles | Rest | Easy 14-15 miles | Easy 3-4 miles | 35-40 miles
13 | XT 0-90 min | Quality* 7-8 miles | Easy 4-5 miles | Rest | Easy 20 miles | Easy 2-3 miles | 38-43 miles
14 | XT 0-60 min | Quality* 6-7 miles | Easy 3-4 miles | Rest | Easy 14-15 miles | Rest | 28-33 miles
15 | XT 0-45 min | Quality* 5-6 miles | Easy 3-4 miles | Rest | Easy 10-11 miles | Rest | 22-27 miles
16 | XT 0-30 min | Easy 4 miles | Easy 2 miles | Rest | Rest | Marathon | 35 miles

*On Quality days, mix and match from the following menu of workouts—or be creative and make up your own. The effort level should be moderately hard—no sprinting—and go easier in the first three and last three weeks of the plan. Always sandwich workouts with a warmup and cooldown.

- **Fartlek:** Pick up the pace for segments of 30 seconds to four minutes, interspersed with easy-paced segments of similar duration. Go by time or run them between buses; street signs, or other landmarks during your run.

- **Kenyan Outbacks:** These are like tempo runs—a few miles at a challenging pace—but with the second half much faster than the first. For example: Run an out-and-back route with the "out" in 20 minutes and the "back" in 17 minutes.

- **Track ladders:** Do a track workout up and down the distance ladder. Early in the buildup, the ladder range can be 200 to 800 meters; later it can rise to 800 to 1600 meters. Example: Run 200, 400, 800, 400, and 200. Include an equal amount of slow jogging to recover between each faster repeat.

- **Yasso 800s:** In the early weeks of the schedule run six 800-meter repeats with 400-meter recovery jogs. Increase the number to 10 during peak training. (See "Yasso 800s," page 79, for more on Yasso 800s.)

- **Hill repeats:** Focus on form, not speed. In the early weeks, run four to six times up a moderate hill of 100 to 200 meters at an easy effort. Walk or jog down. In the middle of the training plan, simply do some tempo and long runs on hilly routes. Late in the buildup, run three to eight hill repeats of 100 to 400 meters at a medium to hard effort.
THE VETERAN PLAN

Susan Paul's Veteran Plan integrates the collective wisdom of our marathon experts and is for runners who have done at least a half-marathon and can easily run 13 miles.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>M</th>
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**Pace:** Start about 45 seconds per mile slower than marathon goal pace and gradually speed up to finish right on marathon goal pace.

**Pace-Plus:** Run 20 to 50 seconds slower per mile than marathon goal pace.

**Hills:** Do 6 to 8 repeats of a 200- to 400-meter hill at tempo-run effort... Jog down.

**Quality #1:** 5×1000 meters at 5-K race pace with 2-minute rec. walk/jog.

**Quality #2:** 6×800 meters at 10-K race pace with 90-second rec. walk/jog.

**Quality #3:** Three sets: 1×1200 meters at 10-K race pace (1-minute rec.), 1×400 at 5-K race pace (3-minute rec.).

**Quality #4:** 4×1600 meters at 10-K race pace with 3-minute rec. walk/jog.

**Quality #5:** 8×800 meters at 10-K race pace with 90-second rec. walk/jog.

**Quality #6:** 400 meters at 5-K pace (30-second rec.), 800 at 10-K pace (90-second rec.), 1200 at 10-K pace (2-minute rec.), 1600 at 10-K pace (3-minute rec.), 2400 at 10-K pace (6-minute rec.), 4000 at 5-K pace.

**Quality #7:** 2×1600 meters at marathon goal pace with 3-minute rec. walk/jog.

CUMULATIVE KNOWLEDGE

**Fueling Up**

Proper nutrition and hydration during marathon training is most important the night before and the day of your long runs. All experts stress the importance of using your long training runs to develop an appropriate eating and drinking plan. "Figure out what combination of foods and liquids works for you," says Higdon. "Then you can eat and drink the same things during the marathon."

This trial-and-error approach also applies to your prerun fueling, which should emphasize easily digestible foods that are high in carbohydrates and lower in fat and fiber (see "Works for You," page 57). Then there's postrun eating. "Within 15 minutes after a long run, take in a carb-protein drink like a recovery sports shake," says McMillan. "In the next half hour, eat a carb-protein food like an energy bar. And within two hours after the run, eat a meal. This routine will help you recover much faster."

Since you'll most likely be doing your long runs on hot summer weekends, make sure you have fluids available to you along the way. Sports drinks contain carbs to keep you energized and electrolytes to help replenish the minerals lost through sweat. So either carry some with you or stash it somewhere along your course (see "Drink Up," page 105).

**SUPERCOACH STRATEGY™** "Taking energy gels with a sports drink can put too much sugar in the GI tract at once, causing stomach cramps or diarrhea," says Paul. "Wash the gels down with plain water."
**FIND THE TIME** How to pick your perfect pace  
Our panelists offered three ways to choose a realistic marathon time goal, which will help you decide how fast to train and how fast to run on race day.

**TUNE-UP RACES** @ Run one or two all-out tune-up races in the weeks before the marathon taper to get a time that can be converted to a sensible marathon goal time. Try Greg McMillan’s “McMillan Running Calculator” (at mcmillanrunning.com) to convert your race times to marathon-equivalent times. Just remember that the longer the race, the more accurate the “conversion”—and the more time you need to allow between the tune-up race and the marathon itself (at least two weeks for a 5K; four weeks for a half-marathon).

**YASSO 800s** A number of our panelists suggested doing this workout to help you determine a realistic marathon pace. Three or four weeks before the marathon, do a track workout of 10 x 800 meters with a 400-meter jog. You should be spent after the last repeat. The average of your 800 times is a good barometer of how fast you can run in the marathon—but in hours and minutes instead of minutes and seconds.

**MAGIC MILES** Jeff Galloway has his runners do a “magic mile”—an all-out mile on the track after a warmup—once every three or four weeks. Multiply that time by 1.5, he says, and you get a good marathon-pace goal.

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**COLLECTIVE WISDOM**

**Tune-up Races**

TUNE-UPS CAN BE RACES OR TRAINING RUNS AT ANY DISTANCE SHORTER THAN THE marathon that help you gauge your fitness before race day. While our panelists differ on the details of how many tune-ups you should run, they all agree that tune-ups are valuable. “If possible, do your tune-ups at the same time of day as the marathon, run them on a similar course, wear the shoes and clothes you plan to race in, and eat and drink the same things,” says Connelly. “By leaving nothing untested, the only surprises in the marathon will be pleasant ones.”

You can do one or two tune-up races before your taper or treat a couple long runs as tune-ups. Tune-up options range from racing a 5K in the place of a track workout to running a half-marathon as a long-run substitute. There’s no need to taper for tune-up races, so just train through them according to your schedule.

**SUPERCOACH STRATEGY** “Beginners shouldn’t do any all-out races before the marathon,” says Higdon, “because experienced marathoners can run an all-out half-marathon at least four weeks before the marathon in place of a long run. Race it, then convert the time to a marathon equivalent.” (See “Find the Time,” above.)

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**COLLECTIVE WISDOM**

**The Taper**

REST BECOMES THE PRIMARY FOCUS in the last two to four weeks before the marathon, after the last long run, when mileage drops to only a few miles a day in the last few days before the race. Why taper? “You need fresh legs to perform well, especially in a race as long as the marathon,” says Pierce. “There is strong scientific evidence for this. Tapering increases aerobic enzymes and muscle glycogen, and even produces changes in the brain that let you recruit more muscle mass. And of course, it lets you mentally recharge after all the training.”

Of all of our panelists, McMillan’s approach to the taper is the most different. “A long, significant taper takes your body out of its training routine and often causes runners to get stale,” he says. “I prefer to keep the engine revved with faster workouts while resting the body with only a slight reduction in mileage.” Retaining faster workouts is actually part of most of the panelists’ schedules. Seven panelists, in fact, schedule a light speed workout just five days before the marathon. “It wakes up your body and mind,” says Connelly, “and opens up the lungs and arteries.”

**SUPERCOACH STRATEGY** “Run one marathon-goal-pace mile at the beginning and end of your high-intensity workouts in the first two weeks of a three-week taper,” says Powers, “and one goal-pace mile at the beginning of a high-intensity workout the last week. This makes it easier to run race pace in the early miles of the marathon.”

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