

Focused on a 5K: Making a Plan

A typical training routine for a 5K (3.1 miles) lasts about 8-12 weeks. Your physical activity and fitness level now will determine how quickly you progress through the weeks. For the purpose of this fact sheet we will focus on a schedule that would be appropriate for a person who currently walks 20 to 30 minutes at least three times per week.

If you do little physical activity now, set a walking goal that you can achieve. It might be walking for 10 minutes, 3 times per week. Gradually add a few minutes to your time each week, until you can walk 20 minutes, 3 times per week. At that point, you can begin the weekly schedule suggested here for walking or running the event.

Planning to run

If you are planning to run the 5K event, the American Council on Exercise provides a 12-week schedule that can help take you from walking to running. Running a 5K will take about 30 minutes depending on your speed. Follow these tips when using this training schedule.

- Do the suggested activities at least three to five days per week.
- Rest days are just as important as training days. It is wise to take off one to two days per week from training.
- It is beneficial to your health to be physically active every day so try not to be a complete couch potato on your days off. You might choose to do stretching or resistance training, or try something recreational that you enjoy such as gardening.
- When doing the intervals, you will repeat the activities for the full length of that session.
- Take time to warm up before, and cool down after, the activity for about three to five minutes.

Sample Training Guide		
Week #	Time (minutes)	Activity
1	20	Walk
2	22	Walk
3	22	Intervals: Walk 5 min, then jog 30-60 seconds, repeat
4	24	Intervals: Walk 5 min, then jog 30-60 seconds, repeat
5	24	Intervals: Walk 4 min, then jog 30-60 seconds, repeat
6	26	Intervals: Walk 4 min, then jog 30-60 seconds, repeat
7	26	Intervals: Walk 3 min, then jog 30-60 seconds, repeat
8	28	Intervals: Walk 3 min, then jog 30-60 seconds, repeat
9	28	Intervals: Walk 2 min, then jog 30-60 seconds, repeat
10	30	Intervals: Walk 2 min, then jog 30-60 seconds, repeat
11	30	Intervals: Walk 1 min, then jog 2 min, repeat
12+	30	Intervals: Gradually progress to continuous jogging.

Planning to Walk

If you walk at a brisk pace (4 miles per hour) you should finish a 5K in a little over 45 minutes. Therefore, you will want to start gradually increasing your walking time. You can follow a similar training guide as the 12 week plan for running. The same rules apply to your training, walk three to five times a week, with one to two days off each week.

Begin with a 20-minute walk. Each week, add two minutes to your walking time. After 12 weeks you will be close to walking the full 45 minutes. If you walk at a slower pace, simply add a little more time gradually or consider extending the number of training weeks. If you walk at a slower pace you'll want to work up to walking almost an hour at a time to finish the event.

If you already walk for 45 minutes at a time, consider concentrating on increasing your speed or pace. You can do this in intervals by walking quickly for a few minutes and then walking more slowly for a few minutes. In addition, adding hills (or an incline if you are on a treadmill) to your walking course can increase intensity.

More Tips

Here are more tips to incorporate into your training schedule that will help you get the most out of your activity and improve your safety:

- Check with your doctor before beginning a training program.
- Incorporate resistance training and stretching into your training for overall fitness.
- Run and walk on a track, asphalt or dirt instead of concrete whenever possible and safe.
- Practice good form. These guidelines apply to both walking and running.
 - Keep your head up with your chin parallel to the ground.
 - Keep your shoulders relaxed and move your arms naturally and freely.
 - Your heel should hit the ground first, then roll on to the ball of your foot and push off with your toes.

Sources:

- American Council on Exercise, Fit Facts: Ready to Run?, 2001, available online at http://www.acefitness.org/fitfacts/pdfs/fitfacts/itemid_83.pdf
- American Council on Exercise, Fit Facts: Training to Run Your First 5K, 2001, available online at http://www.acefitness.org/fitfacts/pdfs/fitfacts/itemid_147.pdf
- Weight-control Information Network, ***Walking: A Step in the Right Direction***, available online at <http://win.niddk.nih.gov/publications/walking.htm>
- BlueCross BlueShield Association, President's Council on Physical Fitness & Sports, and Steps to a HealthierUS, ***Walking Works: The Blue Program for a Healthier America Consumer Guide***, available online at http://www.bcbsm.com/blues/itc/pdf/ww_consumer_guide.pdf
- MayoClinic.com, ***Walking for fitness: How to trim your waistline, boost your spirits and improve your health***, available online at <http://www.mayoclinic.com/invoke.cfm?objectid=81159EEB-F5A4-47A4-9DEAA5FAA077F76D>

Lori L. Rice, M.S., C.N.
Program Coordinator
UK Cooperative Extension HEEL Program

January 2007



For information on health issues in Kentucky, log on to:
www.ca.uky.edu/heel