OURLOOP ATHLETE RESOURCES

A BEGINNER'S RUNNING HANDBOOK

COUCH TO 5K.

Your pace. Your progress. Your loop.

A step-by-step guide to building endurance, fueling well, and running confidently in every season.

12	3	3.1
WEEKS	RUN DAYS / WEEK	MILES AT THE FINISH

WELCOME TO THE LOOP

Every runner has a starting line.

This is yours. The OURLOOP Couch to 5K handbook helps absolute beginners build stamina through manageable walk-run intervals, strength training, balanced nutrition and weather-smart choices.

What matters most?

Progress, not pace. Walk breaks count. Repeating a week counts. Completing 3.1 miles in a way that feels right for you is the finish-line goal.

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THE OURLOOP SPIRIT

Movement belongs to everyone. This guide reflects OURLOOP's focus on making sport and community impact more accessible.



MY REASON FOR STARTING

I want to try running because...

BEFORE WEEK 01

Start safe. Start where you are.

This plan is for adults new to running who can already walk comfortably for about 20-30 minutes. Start smaller if needed.

READY FOR WEEK 1?

- [ ] I can comfortably walk 20-30 minutes.
- [ ] I have shoes that fit and feel good.
- [ ] I can choose three nonconsecutive run days.
- [ ] I know a safe route or treadmill option.

NOT THERE YET?

Try a walking-only preparation phase first:

1. **Start at your level**
   Walk 10-15 minutes, 3-4 times a week.
2. **Add time gradually**
   Increase as walking feels comfortable, not by a fixed deadline.
3. **Begin the plan**
   Move to Week 1 once 20-30 minutes feels manageable.

When to seek individual medical advice

Speak with a healthcare professional before starting if you have known heart or lung disease, substantial joint problems, exertional chest symptoms, unexplained dizziness or breathlessness, or pregnancy-related exercise concerns. Seek emergency help for chest pain, fainting or severe difficulty breathing.

THE PAIN RULE

Normal: modest effort, heavier breathing and mild temporary muscle soreness. **Not normal:** sharp or worsening pain, a limp, unusual weakness, dizziness or chest pressure. Stop and seek appropriate evaluation.

> The training schedule is general fitness education, not a substitute for individualized medical assessment. Training can take more than 12 weeks, and that is okay.

HOW TO TRAIN

Easy is the winning pace.

Beginner runners build endurance best by staying consistent and keeping most training comfortable.

3
RUN/WALK DAYS

2
STRENGTH DAYS

1+
FULL REST DAYS

Your weekly rhythm

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
Run / walk	Strength A	Run / walk	Easy walk or mobility	Run / walk	Strength B / light cross-train	Rest

The talk test

During the jogging portions, you should be able to speak in full sentences or short phrases without gasping. If not, slow down or take an extra walk break.

Effort guide: 3-4 out of 10

Easy-to-moderate effort is the aim for most runs. A 10 means maximum effort; this is not the goal.

FIVE NON-NEGOTIABLES

- Warm up and cool down every time.
- Run at your own easy pace.
- Keep at least a day between runs.
- Repeat any week that feels too hard.
- Rest for pain or illness; never make up missed miles.

WHAT IF I MISS A SESSION?

Resume when ready rather than stacking workouts. After a week away, repeating your last comfortable week is reasonable. After several weeks away, return to an earlier stage.

THE RUNNING ROUTINE

Before. During. After.

5	EASY	5
MIN WALK WARM-UP	JOG / WALK SET	MIN WALK COOLDOWN

A repeatable session routine

01 **Warm up**
Walk for 5 minutes, gradually picking up pace. Add gentle ankle circles, marching, calf raises and easy leg swings if comfortable.

02 **Move by the timer**
Alternate jogging and walking as shown for your week. Run slowly enough to keep breathing under control.

03 **Cool down**
Walk 5 minutes until your breathing settles. Optional gentle stretches: calves, quadriceps, hip flexors and hamstrings.

Running form: comfortable beats perfect

- Look forward, not straight down.
- Let shoulders and hands relax.
- Swing arms naturally by your sides.
- Use short, comfortable steps.

- Land naturally rather than reaching far forward.
- Breathe through nose, mouth or both.
- Do not force a foot-strike pattern.
- Slow down whenever your form becomes tense.

> Total workout time = the main interval set listed for the week + 10 minutes for warm-up and cooldown. Optional drills and stretches add a little more.

Your first-run gear checklist

- [ ] Comfortable running shoes
- [ ] Breathable running socks
- [ ] Clothing that does not chafe
- [ ] Phone or interval timer
- [ ] Reflective item / light if dark
- [ ] Water access if weather requires it

12-WEEK ROADMAP

From first steps to 3.1 miles.

Repeat the workout three times each week with at least one non-running day in between. Week 12 follows a separate race-week schedule.

WEEK	MAIN WORKOUT	EVERY SESSION
01	30 sec jog + 90 sec walk, 10 rounds	5 min walk + main set + 5 min walk
02	1 min jog + 2 min walk, 8 rounds	5 min walk + main set + 5 min walk
03	90 sec jog + 2 min walk, 7 rounds	5 min walk + main set + 5 min walk
04	2 min jog + 2 min walk, 7 rounds	5 min walk + main set + 5 min walk
05	3 min jog + 2 min walk, 6 rounds	5 min walk + main set + 5 min walk
06	5 min jog + 2 min walk, 4 rounds	5 min walk + main set + 5 min walk
07	8 min jog + 2 min walk, 3 rounds	5 min walk + main set + 5 min walk
08	10 min jog + 2 min walk, 3 rounds	5 min walk + main set + 5 min walk
09	15 min jog + 2 min walk + 10 min jog	5 min walk + main set + 5 min walk
10	20 min jog + 2 min walk + 10 min jog	5 min walk + main set + 5 min walk
11	25–30 min continuous easy jog	5 min walk + main set + 5 min walk
12	Mon 20–25 min easy · Wed 20 min easy · Sun 5K	Two easy workouts + 5K event

READ THIS BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Jogging times refer to easy effort, not a specific speed. Weeks 1-11 use the same session on all three run days. In Week 12 you jog twice and complete your 5K on the third day. A run/walk 5K counts.

01 / FOUNDATION

WEEK 01

Start where you are

01

The goal is simply to finish three comfortable sessions. Your jog can be barely faster than a walk.

YOUR THREE RUN SESSIONS — MAIN SET 20 MIN • ABOUT 30 MIN TOTAL

JOG + WALK INTERVAL

0:30 / 1:30

RUN WALK

× 10

REPEAT THE PAIR

THIS WEEK'S LOG

- ☐ 01 RUN — Date: _____ Effort 1-10: ____
- ☐ 02 RUN — Date: _____ Effort 1-10: ____
- ☐ 03 RUN — Date: _____ Effort 1-10: ____

STRENGTH / MOBILITY

☐ Session A ☐ Session B

COACH'S CUE

Leave your watch pace alone. A successful first week ends with energy to spare.

WEATHER-SMART TIP

Choose a familiar, flat route or treadmill. Keep the first week predictable.

WEEKLY REFLECTION - WHAT FELT EASIER?

THIS WEEK'S WIN

I showed up for my first three sessions.

START — THE 5K FINISH LINE

01 / FOUNDATION

WEEK 02

Find your rhythm

02

Settle into a conversational jogging effort. Your walk breaks should let your breathing recover.

YOUR THREE RUN SESSIONS — MAIN SET 24 MIN • ABOUT 34 MIN TOTAL

JOG + WALK INTERVAL

1:00 / 2:00

RUN WALK

×8

REPEAT THE PAIR

THIS WEEK'S LOG

- [ ] **01 RUN** — Date: _____ Effort 1-10: ____
- [ ] **02 RUN** — Date: _____ Effort 1-10: ____
- [ ] **03 RUN** — Date: _____ Effort 1-10: ____

STRENGTH / MOBILITY

- [ ] Session A
- [ ] Session B

COACH'S CUE

Keep shoulders relaxed and hands loose. You do not need to force a stride length.

WEATHER-SMART TIP

If it is windy, use an out-and-back route or treadmill; adjust pace rather than pushing.

WEEKLY REFLECTION - WHAT FELT EASIER?

THIS WEEK'S WIN

One full minute of easy running feels possible.

START — THE 5K FINISH LINE

01 / FOUNDATION

WEEK 03

Trust the intervals

03

A slightly longer jogging interval challenges your stamina without demanding speed.

YOUR THREE RUN SESSIONS — MAIN SET 24 MIN 30 SEC • ABOUT 34 MIN 30 SEC TOTAL

JOG + WALK INTERVAL

1:30 / 2:00

RUN WALK

×7

REPEAT THE PAIR

THIS WEEK'S LOG

- ☐ **01 RUN** — Date: _____ Effort 1-10: ____
- ☐ **02 RUN** — Date: _____ Effort 1-10: ____
- ☐ **03 RUN** — Date: _____ Effort 1-10: ____

STRENGTH / MOBILITY

☐ Session A ☐ Session B

COACH'S CUE

If your breathing feels strained, slow the jog before changing the schedule.

WEATHER-SMART TIP

On rain days, watch for slick painted road lines and puddles hiding uneven pavement.

WEEKLY REFLECTION - WHAT FELT EASIER?

THIS WEEK'S WIN

I can stay relaxed for 90 seconds of jogging.

START — THE 5K FINISH LINE

01 / FOUNDATION

WEEK 04

Make consistency yours

04

You are now spending half of the main session jogging. Keep every interval easy.

YOUR THREE RUN SESSIONS — MAIN SET 28 MIN • ABOUT 38 MIN TOTAL

JOG + WALK INTERVAL

2:00 / 2:00

RUN WALK

×7

REPEAT THE PAIR

THIS WEEK'S LOG

- [ ] **01 RUN** — Date: _____ Effort 1-10: ____
- [ ] **02 RUN** — Date: _____ Effort 1-10: ____
- [ ] **03 RUN** — Date: _____ Effort 1-10: ____

STRENGTH / MOBILITY

- [ ] Session A
- [ ] Session B

COACH'S CUE

Repeat this week if the final intervals still feel extremely demanding. That is smart training.

WEATHER-SMART TIP

In darker months, wear reflective material and use a light, not just dark-colored clothing.

WEEKLY REFLECTION - WHAT FELT EASIER?

THIS WEEK'S WIN

I built four weeks of steady movement.

START — THE 5K FINISH LINE

02 / ENDURANCE

WEEK 05

More running, same easy pace

05

Longer intervals build aerobic endurance. The talk test matters more than speed.

YOUR THREE RUN SESSIONS — MAIN SET 30 MIN • ABOUT 40 MIN TOTAL

JOG + WALK INTERVAL

3:00 / 2:00

RUN WALK

×6

REPEAT THE PAIR

THIS WEEK'S LOG

- ☐ 01 RUN — Date: _____ Effort 1-10: ____
- ☐ 02 RUN — Date: _____ Effort 1-10: ____
- ☐ 03 RUN — Date: _____ Effort 1-10: ____

STRENGTH / MOBILITY

☐ Session A ☐ Session B

COACH'S CUE

Eat normally during the day. A banana or toast before a run is optional if you are hungry.

WEATHER-SMART TIP

If afternoon temperatures rise, choose a cooler window and carry water when needed.

WEEKLY REFLECTION - WHAT FELT EASIER?

THIS WEEK'S WIN

Three minutes of continuous jogging.

START — THE 5K FINISH LINE

02 / ENDURANCE

WEEK 06

Settle into five

06

Your longest jogging stretch increases to five minutes. Begin each segment gently.

YOUR THREE RUN SESSIONS — MAIN SET 28 MIN • ABOUT 38 MIN TOTAL

JOG + WALK INTERVAL

5:00 / 2:00

RUN WALK

×4

REPEAT THE PAIR

THIS WEEK'S LOG

- ☐ 01 RUN — Date: _____ Effort 1-10: ____
- ☐ 02 RUN — Date: _____ Effort 1-10: ____
- ☐ 03 RUN — Date: _____ Effort 1-10: ____

STRENGTH / MOBILITY

☐ Session A ☐ Session B

COACH'S CUE

A short stride and relaxed posture help preserve energy. Walk breaks are part of the plan.

WEATHER-SMART TIP

Cold air plus wind can feel harsh. Add light gloves and a wind-resistant layer if needed.

WEEKLY REFLECTION - WHAT FELT EASIER?

THIS WEEK'S WIN

I have jogged for five minutes straight.

START — THE 5K FINISH LINE

02 / ENDURANCE

WEEK 07

Build staying power

07

Resist the urge to speed up. Extend the time you can jog while still speaking in phrases.

YOUR THREE RUN SESSIONS — MAIN SET 30 MIN • ABOUT 40 MIN TOTAL

JOG + WALK INTERVAL

8:00 / 2:00

RUN WALK

×3

REPEAT THE PAIR

THIS WEEK'S LOG

- ☐ 01 RUN — Date: _____ Effort 1-10: ____
- ☐ 02 RUN — Date: _____ Effort 1-10: ____
- ☐ 03 RUN — Date: _____ Effort 1-10: ____

STRENGTH / MOBILITY

☐ Session A ☐ Session B

COACH'S CUE

Use an easy playlist or quiet running route and check effort at the midpoint of each interval.

WEATHER-SMART TIP

On humid days, effort will feel harder at the same pace; slow down or move indoors.

WEEKLY REFLECTION - WHAT FELT EASIER?

THIS WEEK'S WIN

Eight minutes of continuous jogging.

START — THE 5K FINISH LINE

02 / ENDURANCE

WEEK 08

Double-digit minutes

08

Ten-minute jogging blocks are a significant endurance step. Go especially easy at the start.

YOUR THREE RUN SESSIONS — MAIN SET 36 MIN • ABOUT 46 MIN TOTAL

JOG + WALK INTERVAL

10:00 / 2:00

RUN WALK

×3

REPEAT THE PAIR

THIS WEEK'S LOG

- [ ] **01 RUN** — Date: _____ Effort 1-10: ____
- [ ] **02 RUN** — Date: _____ Effort 1-10: ____
- [ ] **03 RUN** — Date: _____ Effort 1-10: ____

STRENGTH / MOBILITY

- [ ] Session A
- [ ] Session B

COACH'S CUE

If this week feels like a big jump, repeat Week 7 or complete two rounds first.

WEATHER-SMART TIP

Pay attention to wet, cold clothing after sessions; change promptly after returning home.

WEEKLY REFLECTION - WHAT FELT EASIER?

THIS WEEK'S WIN

I reached ten minutes of continuous jogging.

START — THE 5K FINISH LINE

03 / RUN LONGER

WEEK 09

Link the longer efforts

09

The goal shifts from repeated intervals to sustained easy movement, not a faster pace.

YOUR THREE RUN SESSIONS — MAIN SET 27 MIN • ABOUT 37 MIN TOTAL

EASY JOG + WALK + JOG

15:00 + 10:00

JOG / WALK 2:00 / JOG

27 min

MAIN SET

THIS WEEK'S LOG

- [ ] 01 RUN — Date: _____ Effort 1-10: _____
- [ ] 02 RUN — Date: _____ Effort 1-10: _____
- [ ] 03 RUN — Date: _____ Effort 1-10: _____

STRENGTH / MOBILITY

☐ Session A ☐ Session B

COACH'S CUE

Run conservatively for the first five minutes. If needed, add a brief extra walk break.

WEATHER-SMART TIP

Use a treadmill for unsafe air quality, ice, lightning, or severe heat.

WEEKLY REFLECTION - WHAT FELT EASIER?

THIS WEEK'S WIN

Fifteen minutes of continuous jogging.

START — THE 5K FINISH LINE

03 / RUN LONGER

WEEK 10

Own your effort

10

You can now spend most of the workout jogging. Stay at a pace you could sustain longer.

YOUR THREE RUN SESSIONS — MAIN SET 32 MIN • ABOUT 42 MIN TOTAL

EASY JOG + WALK + JOG

20:00 + 10:00

JOG / WALK 2:00 / JOG

32 min

MAIN SET

THIS WEEK'S LOG

- [ ] **01 RUN** — Date: _____ Effort 1-10: _____
- [ ] **02 RUN** — Date: _____ Effort 1-10: _____
- [ ] **03 RUN** — Date: _____ Effort 1-10: _____

STRENGTH / MOBILITY

- [ ] Session A
- [ ] Session B

COACH'S CUE

If you develop a limp or localized pain, stop instead of trying to push through the interval.

WEATHER-SMART TIP

Practice at least one session outdoors if your planned 5K will be outside and conditions are safe.

WEEKLY REFLECTION - WHAT FELT EASIER?

THIS WEEK'S WIN

Twenty continuous minutes of easy jogging.

START — THE 5K FINISH LINE

03 / RUN LONGER

WEEK 11

Run by feel

11

Complete up to 30 comfortable minutes. Brief walk breaks are fine if you need them.

YOUR THREE RUN SESSIONS — MAIN SET 25-30 MIN • ABOUT 35-40 MIN TOTAL

CONTINUOUS EASY JOG	
25-30 MINUTES	**EASY** WALK BREAKS OK

THIS WEEK'S LOG

- [ ] **01 RUN** — Date: _____ Effort 1-10: _____
- [ ] **02 RUN** — Date: _____ Effort 1-10: _____
- [ ] **03 RUN** — Date: _____ Effort 1-10: _____

STRENGTH / MOBILITY

- [ ] Session A
- [ ] Session B

COACH'S CUE

You do not need to cover 5K in 30 minutes. You are building toward finishing the distance.

WEATHER-SMART TIP

Try the shoes, socks, and clothing combination you plan to use for your event.

WEEKLY REFLECTION - WHAT FELT EASIER?

THIS WEEK'S WIN

I can move comfortably for 30 minutes.

START — THE 5K FINISH LINE

04 / FINISH LINE

WEEK 12

Your 5K week

12

Reduce training load and arrive rested. Finish the 5K at your own pace, with planned walk breaks if useful.

YOUR THREE RUN SESSIONS — THIS WEEK IS DIFFERENT: EASY, EASY, THEN YOUR 5K

TWO EASY RUNS
MON + WED
20-25 MIN / 20 MIN

5K
SUNDAY EVENT

THIS WEEK'S LOG

- [ ] 01 **MON - EASY 20-25 MIN** — Date: _____ Effort 1-10: _____
- [ ] 02 **WED - EASY 20 MIN** — Date: _____ Effort 1-10: _____
- [ ] 03 **SUN - YOUR 5K** — Date: _____ Finished!: _____

STRENGTH / MOBILITY
☐ Session A ☐ Session B

COACH'S CUE
Do not make up missed runs, test new shoes, or try hard workouts this week.

WEATHER-SMART TIP
Check the full race-time forecast and pack a dry layer for after the finish.

WEEKLY REFLECTION - WHAT FELT EASIER?

THIS WEEK'S WIN
I completed my first 5K — my way.

START — THE 5K FINISH LINE

BUILD A STRONGER BASE

Strength day A.

Two short strength sessions each week support running by building muscle capacity, balance and control. Start with one set if needed; progress to two.

THE ROUTINE

After a 3-5 minute easy warm-up, complete the movements below with controlled technique. Rest about 45-90 seconds between sets. Nothing should cause sharp pain.

EXERCISE	AMOUNT	BEGINNER FORM CUE
Chair or bodyweight squat	2 × 8-12	Sit back to a chair or comfortable depth; stand tall.
Glute bridge	2 × 10-12	Press through your feet; lift your hips without arching.
Calf raise	2 × 12-15	Rise slowly onto toes, then lower with control.
Bird dog	2 × 8 / side	Reach opposite arm and leg; keep hips level.
Incline push-up	1-2 × 8-12	Use a sturdy wall or counter; keep body aligned.

DON'T HAVE EQUIPMENT?

A stable chair, a wall or counter, and a little floor space are enough. A yoga mat is optional.

HOW HARD?

Finish most sets feeling you could do another 2-3 controlled repetitions. Use less range of motion if needed.

Technique first, load later

If these feel easy for multiple sessions, add a few repetitions or gentle resistance. Avoid max-effort strength workouts that leave your legs too sore for the next run.

FORM CHECK

Stable breathing. Smooth movement. Comfortable range of motion. Stop if pain changes your movement or persists.

BUILD A STRONGER BASE

Strength day B & recovery.

Use this second day to practice movement quality. Keep it lighter if your legs are fatigued from running.

EXERCISE	AMOUNT	HOW TO DO IT
Low step-up	2 × 8 / leg	Step onto a low, stable step; control the descent.
Hip hinge	2 × 10	Push hips back with a neutral back; stand tall.
Side-lying leg raise	2 × 10 / side	Keep hips stacked; raise slowly without twisting.
Resistance-band row	1-2 × 10	Pull elbows back; squeeze shoulder blades gently.
Dead bug	2 × 8 / side	Keep lower back comfortable while alternating limbs.

The recovery toolkit

Sleep & fuel

Most adults benefit from roughly 7-9 hours of sleep. Eat regular balanced meals and include enough energy to support exercise.

Active recovery

On non-running days, an easy walk or gentle mobility session is fine. A full rest day is also a valid choice.

KNOW THE DIFFERENCE

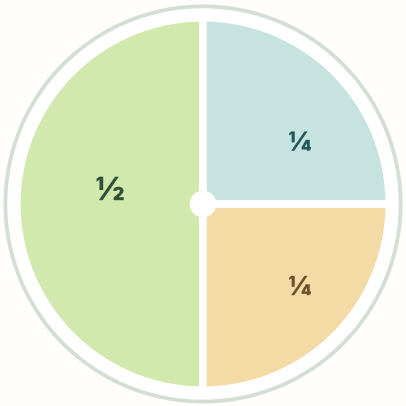
Manageable soreness: mild, general and improving over the next day or two. **Warning signs:** sharp/localized pain, swelling, limping, repeated pain in the same location, or symptoms that worsen with activity. Stop running and consider clinical evaluation.

> When sick with fever, chest symptoms or marked fatigue, skip running and return gradually after recovery. Do not make up missed sessions.

FUEL THE JOURNEY

Eat to feel good. Run to feel strong.

You don't need restrictive dieting, complicated macros, or supplements to finish your first 5K. Aim for regular, nourishing meals and enough fuel to support training.



A simple meal framework

½ plate: vegetables and fruit for fiber, vitamins and minerals.

¼ plate: rice, potatoes, pasta or grains for energy.

¼ plate: fish, eggs, poultry, tofu or beans for protein.

Add healthy fats and adjust portions for your needs. The plate is a flexible visual, not a strict requirement.

Nutrients that help runners

NUTRIENT	ROLE	EASY FOOD SOURCES
Carbohydrates	Main workout fuel	Oats, rice, bread, potatoes, fruit
Protein	Supports muscle repair	Eggs, yogurt, fish, beans, tofu, chicken
Fats	Support overall health	Nuts, seeds, olive oil, avocado
Iron	Supports oxygen transport	Meat, lentils, beans, fortified foods
Calcium & D	Support bone health	Dairy, fortified alternatives, tofu

ONE IMPORTANT REMINDER

A beginner 5K program is not a reason to skip meals or aggressively restrict food. If you have allergies, diabetes, a history of disordered eating, or other nutrition needs, get individualized advice.

FUEL THE JOURNEY

Before, during & after a run.

For most 20-40 minute easy sessions, normal meals and water are enough. Extra fuel depends on hunger, timing, weather and personal needs.

BEFORE

If hungry, try a banana, toast, applesauce or a small bowl of oats 30-90 minutes ahead. Avoid a heavy unfamiliar meal right before running.

DURING

Most short easy runs don't need energy gels or sports drinks. Drink when needed; take extra care in heat and humidity.

AFTER

A normal balanced meal works well: protein plus carbs. Examples include eggs and toast, yogurt and fruit, or rice with chicken or tofu.

Hydration without overthinking it

1. **Before**
   Drink regularly across the day. You do not need to force large amounts of water immediately before running.
2. **During**
   For short runs in mild weather, follow thirst and comfort. In heat, plan water access and drink more as needed; don't ignore thirst or weakness.
3. **After**
   Rehydrate gradually and eat normally. For prolonged or very sweaty sessions, food containing sodium or an electrolyte beverage may be useful.

SNACK PAIRS

- Banana + yogurt
- Toast + nut butter
- Rice + tofu
- Fruit + cottage cheese

WATCH FOR

Dizziness, nausea, confusion, unusual weakness, or worsening headache in hot conditions: stop, cool down and get help as appropriate. Confusion or collapse is an emergency.

> Urine color can provide a rough clue but is not a perfect hydration test. Avoid both dehydration and drinking far beyond thirst. Individual needs vary.

A FLEXIBLE 7-DAY EXAMPLE

What a week of fueling can look like.

Mix and match these ideas. Portions, snacks, timing and ingredients should change with hunger, preferences, allergies, budget and activity.

DAY	BREAKFAST	LUNCH	DINNER
MON	Oatmeal, banana, nuts	Chicken or tofu quinoa bowl	Salmon or beans, rice, broccoli
TUE	Eggs, whole-grain toast	Turkey or hummus wrap	Chicken or tofu stir-fry
WED	Greek yogurt, berries, granola	Tuna or chickpea sandwich	Turkey or bean chili
THU	Overnight oats with fruit	Lentil soup and whole-grain bread	Fish or tofu tacos
FRI	Peanut-butter toast, fruit	Bean and rice bowl	Chicken or chickpea pasta
SAT	Veggie omelet, toast	Quinoa and roasted vegetables	Homemade burrito bowl
SUN	Whole-grain pancakes, eggs	Chicken or tofu salad and bread	Baked potato, protein, vegetables

ADD SNACKS IF YOU NEED THEM

- Fruit + nuts or nut butter
- Hummus + crackers
- Yogurt + granola
- Cheese or fortified alternative + toast

A SMART SHOPPING FORMULA

Pick 2-3 proteins, 2 grains or starches, several fruits and vegetables, plus a few shelf-stable snacks. Repeat simple meals when life is busy.

> This is an illustrative meal plan, not a prescribed calorie target or a weight-loss plan. Fuel more when training or hunger increases.

PRINT & PLAN

Grocery list & meal prep.

Use this worksheet to make fueling easier. Shop for familiar foods you enjoy and can prepare consistently.

PROTEIN + DAIRY / ALTERNATIVES

- [ ] Eggs / yogurt or fortified alternative
- [ ] Chicken / fish / tofu / beans
- [ ] Other: _____
- [ ] Other: _____

CARBS + STARCHES

- [ ] Oats / whole-grain bread
- [ ] Rice / pasta / potatoes
- [ ] Other: _____
- [ ] Other: _____

PRODUCE

- [ ] Bananas / berries / apples
- [ ] Leafy greens / broccoli
- [ ] Other: _____
- [ ] Other: _____

PANTRY + EXTRAS

- [ ] Nuts / seeds / olive oil
- [ ] Hummus / nut butter
- [ ] Other: _____
- [ ] Other: _____

My simple prep plan

Meals to prepare: _____

_____

Run-day snacks: _____

Water plan: _____

BUDGET-FRIENDLY PICKS

Frozen vegetables, canned beans, oats, rice, eggs and seasonal fruit can make balanced meals affordable. Rinse canned foods if you prefer lower sodium.

WEATHER-READY RUNNING

Dress for the day, not the calendar.

Temperature is only the starting point. Wind, humidity, sun, precipitation and your personal tolerance can all change what feels comfortable.

AIR TEMPERATURE	CORE CLOTHING	ADD / ADJUST
Below 20°F (below -7°C)	Thermal base, insulating layer, wind-resistant shell, warm tights	Hat, mittens/gloves, warm socks, neck/face coverage
20-39°F (-7 to 4°C)	Long-sleeve wicking top, tights, jacket as needed	Gloves and hat/headband; account for wind chill
40-59°F (4 to 15°C)	Light long sleeve or short sleeve + optional layer	Shorts or tights; optional thin gloves
60-74°F (16 to 23°C)	Breathable short sleeves and shorts/light tights	Sunglasses, sunscreen, water access
75°F+ (24°C+)	Light, loose, breathable clothing; light colors	Hat/visor, sunscreen, water; lower effort

THE LAYERING RULE

Base: moisture-wicking fabric next to skin. **Middle:** light insulation when cold. **Outer:** wind/rain protection when needed. Adjust layers so you stay warm without soaking your clothes in sweat.

A two-minute pre-run weather check

- [ ] Temperature, wind chill / heat index
- [ ] Rain, ice and thunderstorm risk
- [ ] Sunset, lighting and visibility
- [ ] AQI, route condition, indoor option

> These are general clothing suggestions rather than safe/unsafe temperature cutoffs. Severe cold, heat advisories, lightning, flooding, ice and smoke can make an indoor session the safer choice.

WINTER / COLD WEATHER

Cold can be okay. Ice is different.

The keys are appropriate layers, protected skin, safe footing and the ability to change plans quickly.

BASE

Stay dry

Choose fitted, moisture-wicking long sleeves and tights. Avoid cotton against skin.

MIDDLE

Stay warm

Add a fleece or light insulating layer if the weather requires it.

OUTER

Block wind

Use a wind-resistant shell and protect ears, hands, neck and toes.

Your winter session plan

- Check wind chill and forecasts, not only air temperature.
- Warm up indoors, then start the outdoor session at an easy pace.
- Use cleared, well-lit sidewalks or paths; avoid icy surfaces and hidden black ice.
- Shorten the workout when weather or footing increases risk.
- Change out of wet clothes promptly and warm up afterward.

STOP AND WARM UP

Persistent shivering, clumsiness, unusual fatigue or confusion can indicate dangerous cooling. Numb, waxy or pale skin can be a sign of frostbite. Move to warmth and seek medical care as needed.

INDOOR SWITCH

Choose a treadmill when freezing rain, dangerous wind chill, poor visibility or slick terrain makes running hazardous. Traction devices do not make every icy surface safe.

RAIN / WET WEATHER

A little rain? Fine. Thunder? No.

Rain can be manageable when temperatures are moderate, visibility is good and there is no lightning or flooding.

DRESS SMART

- Breathable jacket or light shell as needed
- Moisture-wicking socks
- Cap with brim to keep rain off face
- Reflective gear for gray light

MOVE SMART

- Shorten steps on slick pavement
- Avoid deep puddles and flooded paths
- Watch painted lines, grates, leaves and wet bridges
- Dry shoes at room temperature

THUNDERSTORM RULE

If you hear thunder or see lightning, stop. Shelter in a substantial building or enclosed hard-topped vehicle. Wait at least **30 minutes after the last thunder** before resuming outdoor activity.

Wet + cold is a risk combination

A wet runner can lose body heat quickly even in temperatures above freezing. Avoid long exposure in cold rain; bring a dry layer and move inside if chilled.

NO RUN IS WORTH A FLOODED ROUTE

Never run or walk through floodwater. Move indoors when heavy rain reduces visibility or creates unsafe footing.

SUMMER / HEAT & HUMIDITY

Heat changes the workout.

When it is hot or humid, a normal easy pace can feel much harder. Adjust effort, timing and location before symptoms begin.

BEAT THE PEAK HEAT

- Choose cooler hours and shaded routes.
- Reduce speed, running intervals or time.
- Use lightweight, loose, light-colored clothing.
- Wear sunscreen and a ventilated hat.
- Plan water access; take thirst seriously.

BUILD HEAT TOLERANCE SLOWLY

Over approximately 1-2 weeks, gradually introduce safe outdoor activity in warmer conditions rather than immediately running normal duration or speed. Humidity reduces sweat evaporation and increases strain.

On heat-alert days, use a cooled indoor location.

Know the signs of heat illness

POSSIBLE SIGNS	IMMEDIATE RESPONSE
Heavy sweating, fatigue, headache, nausea, dizziness	Stop activity; move into shade or AC; cool skin, sip fluids if fully alert.
Faintness, persistent worsening symptoms	Stop, get help, and seek prompt medical assessment.
Confusion, seizure, collapse, altered consciousness	Call emergency services. Cool immediately while help arrives.

BE FLEXIBLE

Shorten your run/walk intervals when the heat index or conditions are unfavorable. Completing a safe indoor workout is better than forcing an outdoor session.

ALL-SEASON ADAPTABILITY

Spring, fall & the indoor option.

Changing temperatures, pollen, air quality and daylight can matter as much as the season itself.

SPRING

Layer for cooler mornings and warmer afternoons. Expect rain-slick surfaces and changing pollen levels. People with asthma or allergies should follow individualized advice.

FALL

Check sunset times, wet leaves and temperature drops. Reflective clothing, a headlamp and a clear familiar route can improve visibility.

Air quality check

Visit **AirNow.gov** before outdoor training when smoke, ozone or other pollution is a concern. As AQI worsens, reduce outdoor exertion or move to a place with clean indoor air; people sensitive to pollution may need to adjust earlier.

When the treadmill is the better route

SITUATION	SMART ALTERNATIVE
Ice, lightning, flooding	Move indoors; do the same interval session.
Extreme heat or dangerous cold	Run in a safe temperature-controlled space.
Unhealthy air quality	Prefer a well-filtered indoor location.
Dark, isolated or unsafe route	Use a better-lit route, partner or indoor option.

TREADMILL BASICS

Start walking, gradually increase to a gentle jog, and follow the same run/walk timer. A 0% incline is fine; there is no required incline or speed. Use the safety clip when provided.

> Weather plan: **keep the session, change the setting.** You build fitness through consistency, not through exposure to unsafe conditions.

THE FINISH LINE IS YOURS

Your first 5K: show up ready.

The final week is about rest, preparation and confidence, not hard training. You can finish using any combination of easy jogging and walking.

DAY	SIMPLE PLAN
Monday	Easy 20-25 minute jog or run/walk
Tuesday	Gentle mobility or a short comfortable walk
Wednesday	Easy 20-minute jog or run/walk
Thursday	Rest
Friday	Optional easy walk, prepare gear
Saturday	Rest, familiar meals, check weather and route
Sunday	5K day! Start slower than you think you need to

NIGHT BEFORE

- [ ] Shoes, socks, clothing set out
- [ ] Bib/route/time checked
- [ ] Weather backup planned
- [ ] Familiar dinner + sleep

EVENT MORNING

- [ ] Familiar light breakfast
- [ ] Arrive early; restroom
- [ ] 5-minute walk warm-up
- [ ] No new foods or gear

THE 5K PACING PLAN

Mile 1: Comfortable and controlled. **Mile 2:** Relax and keep effort steady. **Mile 3 to finish:** Keep your rhythm; pick up a little only if you feel good.

YOU DID IT

This finish is yours.

There is no minimum pace for belonging here. Your success is the commitment, the learning and the distance you covered.

OURLOOP / 5K FINISHER

3.1 MILES

One loop. One big milestone.

YOUR NAME

DATE COMPLETED

MY FINISH TIME (OPTIONAL)

Carry the momentum forward

Take an easy recovery week. Then choose your next loop: maintain three comfortable run days, build 5K consistency, or gradually extend toward a new distance.

MY REFLECTION

What surprised me most about this journey?

What will I keep doing?

OURLOOP

KEEP MOVING. KEEP CONNECTING.

Your pace.
Your people.
Your loop.

A welcoming community starts with a first step. Find more athlete resources and learn about OURLOOP's mission at **ourloop.org**.

SOURCES & FURTHER READING

NHS - Couch to 5K running plan
nhs.uk/better-health/get-active/get-running-with-couch-to-5k

CDC - Adult activity recommendations; Heat and Athletes
cdc.gov/physical-activity-basics · cdc.gov/heat-health

USDA MyPlate - Balanced eating
myplate.gov

National Weather Service - Lightning safety; CDC - Cold weather
weather.gov/safety/lightning-sports · cdc.gov/winter-weather

AirNow - Check local air quality
airnow.gov

TRAINING NOTE: This is an original, general-education 12-week beginner progression informed by widely available public-health guidance; it is not the NHS nine-week schedule or personalized medical advice. Adjust duration and effort to your health and abilities. Design uses the OURLOOP logo supplied for this edition and the complementary color palette provided by the brand owner.