



TAPERING FOR YOUR MARATHON OR HALF MARATHON RACE

WHAT IS THE TAPER & WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

What is it?

The taper refers to the practice of reducing exercise in the days and weeks just before an important race. Getting the taper correct is key to making the most of your training and aiding your performance in the race itself.

It's not a good idea to train hard right up to race day or you'll find that your legs are too fatigued to run a good race. The taper is an important time to allow the body time to recover so that you don't blow all those weeks of excellent training.

How long should it be?

Generally, your taper for the marathon should be 3-weeks and 2-weeks for a half marathon race, but these timings may vary depending on levels of fatigue.

How does it work?

Tapering for a marathon or half marathon involves a planned reduction in training volume during the final weeks while still maintaining your exercise routine. It's not a case of just switching off and putting your feet up!

Why should I taper?

The aim is to reduce fatigue, allow your body time to repair and muscles to heal while building energy stores ready for the big day.

KEY AREAS TO FOCUS ON:

Stick with your exercise routine:

Try to keep a similar routine to avoid feeling sluggish. Keep doing your interval sessions, tempo runs and race pace practice but reduce the overall volume and allow plenty of recovery during this period.

Your body likes a rhythm and a routine.

You need good energy for race day:

We want to freshen up your legs, so you feel good on race day so don't be tempted to run hard and long during the taper phase. For the marathon, we suggest you should gradually cut your overall total weekly mileage over a 3-week taper.

Recovery is key:

Make sure you focus on good nutrition and hydration and getting extra sleep to help your body repair. Try to get a sports massage and do some extra stretching.



MARATHON TAPER:

As long as your training has gone well and you're not carrying any injuries, we suggest you follow the following taper guide:

- **4-weeks to go: Longest long run**
- **3-weeks to go: Start to Taper**
 - **Distance:** Run 75% of your best training week
 - **Sessions:** Keep your training routine the same. Just slightly reduce your easy runs and harder intervals.
 - **Long Run:** This should be your last long run, around 16-18 miles including some easy miles and some race pace practice, but don't overdo it.
- **2-weeks to go: Further reduce**
 - **Distance:** Run 50% of your best training week
 - **Sessions:** Reduce the number of intervals in half but maintain your paces.
 - **Long Run:** Reduce your long run to about 10-12 miles, including some race pace practice.
- **1-week to go:**
 - **Distance:** Run 25-30% of your best training week
 - **Sessions:** Reduce the number of intervals in half but maintain your paces.
 - **Long Run:** Reduce your long run to about 8-miles, including some race pace practice.
- **Race Week:**
 - **Distance:** Run only 20% to 30% of your best training week.
 - **Sessions:** Run 2 or 3 short, easy runs but include a few short bursts just to turn your legs over before the big day.

HALF MARATHON TAPER:

As long as your training has gone well and you're not carrying any injuries, we suggest you follow the following taper guide:

- **3-weeks to go: Longest long run**
- **2-weeks to go: Further reduce**
 - **Distance:** Run 50% of your best training week
 - **Sessions:** Reduce the number of intervals in half but maintain your paces.
 - **Long Run:** Reduce your long run to about 8-9 miles, including some race pace practice.
- **1-week to go:**
 - **Distance:** Run 25-30% of your best training week
 - **Sessions:** Reduce the number of intervals you do in half but maintain your paces.
 - **Long Run:** Reduce your long run to about 6-miles, including some race pace practice.
- **Race Week:**
 - **Distance:** Run only 20% to 30% of your best training week.
 - **Sessions:** Run 2 or 3 short, easy runs but include a few short bursts just to turn your legs over before the big day.



IT'S IMPORTANT THAT YOU

Don't stop training: If you shut down completely and don't do any training, then very often your legs will feel heavy on race day.

Don't try to play catch up: There is very little physiological improvement to your fitness to be made in the last couple of weeks before your race, so don't try to catch up on any extra training that you may have missed as this will just be detrimental to your race day performance.

Don't change your diet: Please do not be tempted to diet during the taper. Your body needs all the nutrients for growth, repair and energy so eat well and aim to keep sensibly hydrated at all times.

Don't do more cross training or start some home DIY: It's important to relax and rest as much as possible, so try to have some early nights and this will help you to have good physical and mental energy on the big day.

RACE WEEK TOP TAPER TIPS:

Only positive thoughts: As race day approaches, it's quite normal to feel nervous, have some self-doubt, think that you're losing fitness or feel some aches and pains in the body ... take a moment to remind yourself of all the great training you've done. You're almost there, so try to relax and start to get excited for an amazing race day.

Keep moving: During race week, enjoy one or two easy effort, short runs or walks to keep your legs loose and to help calm your nerves.

Avoid doing anything different: Race week is not the time to try out new kit or shoes, fit in more cross training or conditioning or take up a new sport. Stick with what you know and follow your plan.

Eat well: In the 3-4 days before race day, slightly increase the amount of complex carbohydrates in your diet to top up your glycogen stores. Try and have a mid-morning and mid-afternoon carb-rich snack, such as toast with peanut butter, hummus and vegies or a bagel with jam. However, stick with the foods that you enjoy, and you know work for you, but also be careful not to comfort eat!

Keep hydrated: Stay sensibly hydrated but equally don't over-do it or have too many energy drinks. Just check that your urine is a clear-pale straw colour and then maintain this level.



Be prepared: Have your kit and travel arrangements sorted so you can relax. If you've practiced your pre-race nutrition and hydration you can follow this, then you'll feel less anxious on race day.

- Check your kit and trainers are tried and tested and your travel plans are in place.
- Make sure your pre-race evening meal and breakfast are sorted - this is particularly important if you are away from home or your race is overseas.
- If you're flying, make sure you carry your race kit & trainers in your hand luggage.
- The night before your race pin your race number to your running top, lay out your kit and double check how to get to the start.

Stay positive: You've trained really hard over the last weeks and months so believe in your training. Try to be as well-rested as possible to have good mental and physical energy for the race. Stay positive, get excited, you're ready for a great race day ... and don't forget to enjoy the whole race experience.

TAPER TAKE-AWAYS:

- Use this as a guide and adjust based on your experience and how your body feels.
- Reduce your training to allow your body time to recover and be ready for race day.
- Get extra rest and focus on good nutrition and hydration.
- Be organised with your kit, travel arrangements and race day logistics.
- Practice your pre and race day nutrition and hydration so you know what works for you.
- Believe in your training and all the hard work you've done.
- Stay positive, don't overthink it or listen to outside influences ... follow your race plan.
- Enjoy the race!

Good luck!