

The 5K Walking Plan: From the Couch to the 5K!

Notes, Tips, Clarifications, and Things to Keep in Mind

This program is intended for people who want to walk the 5K race at a steady, strong pace and who consider themselves, or who would like to become “Fitness Walkers.” If your goal is to walk the 5K at a leisurely pace, then you probably don’t need a formalized “program” to do it. Just lace up your shoes—good shoes that are meant for walking—and walk 3 or 4 times per week. Start with 10 or 15-minute walks if you haven’t been active at all up until this point. Work your way up to 20 minutes or 30 minutes. Ultimately, you’ll want to assure yourself that you can walk continuously for 3.1 miles, which will likely take an hour or more. If your goal for the 5K is more performance-oriented, or if you are using this race as a chance to kick-start a fitness program, then having a plan and schedule will help guide your efforts.

Mondays are designated as “rest days,” since the Sunday workouts are long. Rest and recovery are crucial aspects of any training program. Your muscles need time to recover from your efforts, and by being well-rested, you’re not only less likely to become injured, but you’re also more likely to look forward to your next workout. Daily training, except for professional athletes, can be extremely draining emotionally as well as physically.

Tuesdays and Thursdays are set aside for walks of certain times, and they lengthen as the program progresses. These walks should be done at a comfortable pace: not breathless and too fast, but also not a stroll! If you’re walking with a partner, you should be able to converse fairly comfortably.

Wednesdays are “wild!” If your walk on Tuesday went well, then feel free to take another walk of about the same time. You can also choose to “cross-train,” labeled “XT” on the schedule. Cross-training is any other physical activity. It could be riding a bike, swimming, taking a yoga class or doing a yoga DVD at home, lifting weights, roller-skating, flying a kite . . . There are many possibilities! Use this day to explore other ways to be active.

Fridays are rest days to give your body a chance to gear up for the weekend workouts, which tend to be more challenging.

Saturdays’ walk is measured in distance as opposed to time so you can get a feel for how far you can walk and the pace that you can maintain for that distance. Remember that a 5K race is 3.1 miles. Like the other scheduled walks, Saturday walks gradually build up in mileage to prepare you for the race distance.

Sundays are designated for longer walks, and you shouldn’t be overly concerned with the distance you cover. Use this day to walk in a different place, perhaps a new neighborhood or on trails without mile markers. Walk as slowly as you need to, and pause to rest when you need to, but keep going! Build up to walking continuously for one hour. These days are good chances to walk with a friend, spouse, child or other fitness buddy.

Above all, have fun! Be proud of yourself for taking on this challenge!



DATES		MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT	SUN
10/1	10/7	Rest or Walk	Walk 15 minutes	Rest or Walk/XT	Walk 15 minutes	Rest	Walk 1 mile	Walk 20-40 minutes
10/8	10/14	Rest or Walk	Walk 15 minutes	Rest or Walk/XT	Walk 15 minutes	Rest	Walk 1.5 miles	Walk 30-60 minutes
10/15	10/21	Rest or Walk	Walk 15 minutes	Rest or Walk/XT	Walk 15 minutes	Rest	Walk 1.75 miles	Walk 35-60 minutes
10/22	10/28	Rest or Walk	Walk 20 minutes	Rest or Walk/XT	Walk 20 minutes	Rest	Walk 2 miles	Walk 40-60 minutes
10/29	11/4	Rest or Walk	Walk 20 minutes	Rest or Walk/XT	Walk 20 minutes	Rest	Walk 2.25 miles	Walk 45-60 minutes
11/5	11/11	Rest or Walk	Walk 25 minutes	Rest or Walk/XT	Walk 25 minutes	Rest	Walk 2.5 miles	Walk 50-60 minutes
11/12	11/18	Rest or Walk	Walk 25 minutes	Rest or Walk/XT	Walk 25 minutes	Rest	Walk 2.75 miles	Walk 55-60 minutes
11/19	11/25	Rest or Walk	Walk 30 minutes	Rest or Walk/XT	Walk 30 minutes	Rest	Walk 3.1 miles	Walk 60 minutes
11/26	12/2	Rest or Walk	Walk 30 minutes	Walk 30 minutes	Walk/XT	Rest	Jingle Bell Walk 'n Run	Rest!