

## Ep #232: Half Marathon Training for Beginners



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Jill Angie**

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Welcome to *The Not Your Average Runner Podcast*. If you're a woman who has never felt athletic but you still dream about becoming a runner, you are in the right place. I'm Jill Angie, a certified running and life coach, and I teach women how to start running, feel confident, and change their lives. And now I want to help you.

Hey, Rebels. So spring is just around the corner now. Are you excited? Okay, actually, who am I kidding? Spring is months away. But right now is actually the time to start thinking about your race schedule for the year, if you haven't done so already.

And a lot of you are going to be dreaming about making that jump to the half marathon distance. Whether it's your first one ever or maybe it's a comeback race after you took some time off. So today, we're going to talk about how to know when you're ready to start training for a half marathon.

Now, I'm sure that most of you know exactly what a half marathon is, but if you're listening right now and you're confused or curious, or I don't know, you're just bored on a long car trip, a half marathon is 13.1 miles. And that is, of course, half the distance of a full marathon which is 26.2 miles. And it's 10 miles farther than a 5K, which is 3.1 miles.

Now, a lot of people think that the word marathon is a synonym for race. And you've been a runner for a while, or at least you've been kind of circling the running world for a while, so you know, I'm sure, that it's not. But honestly, I can't tell you how many non-runners have come up to me and said, "Hey, how did your 5K marathon go last weekend?"

And it makes me laugh, because obviously a 5K and a marathon, two different things. But I always know what they mean anyway. When somebody says that to you, you can always take a moment to educate them and say, hey, a marathon is actually a very specific race distance. So

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the 5K is a race, the marathon is a race, but 5Ks and marathons are not the same thing.

Anyway, half marathon is just like a 5K, only you have to run an extra 10 miles to get to the finish line. I know that sounds far. And I mean, honestly, it is kind of far. Drive 10 miles someday and you'll be like, oh, yeah, that's actually pretty far. But I promise it is really possible for almost anyone.

And it's just a matter of doing the right kind of training. Learning how to stick to your commitments, getting your brain in the place of keeping your commitments to yourself. Because there's going to be plenty of days when you just don't feel like it. Plenty of days when you think I don't know if I can do this, maybe I should just stay home or delay it to another day.

If you want to finish that race, you're going to have to do the training anyway. You're also going to have to figure out getting yourself properly fueled, how you're going to fit the training into your schedule, get a self-care regimen in place to keep your body in peak running form. But those are all just things that you need to figure out. They're easily figured out, right?

So, today I kind of want to touch on how do you know when you are ready. When you are ready to start, because so many of my clients are like, well, I just started running last month, and I signed up for a half marathon three months from now. How do I train? And I'm always like, okay, let's back it up a little bit. Because training can actually take several months if you're brand new to running or if you're just coming back to running after a year or more off.

And if you don't approach it in the right way, you're going to end up getting injured or just having a really shitty race experience. So, if you start training before you're ready it's not going to be super fun. So today, again, I want to

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give you some guidelines on how you know when you're ready, and then what you can expect during your training.

So readiness, I like to divide it into two categories. There's physical readiness, is your body ready? And then there's mental readiness, is your mind ready? Because, again, if you've been listening to the podcast for a while, you know running is about 80% mental. So we've got to make sure we take care of the mental readiness part in addition to the physical.

But let's tackle the physical first. There's four gates, or obstacles, or hurdles, I guess, that you need to have crossed before you start half marathon training when it comes to physical readiness.

Now, number one, you should have been running for at least six months. Okay? And I know that sounds like a long time. But what it does is it gives your body time to get used to regular running and to figure out a really good routine so that when you increase your mileage you've already got a lot of the logistics figured out. And by the way, if you're going to have some developing injuries, they're probably going to start showing up in that first six months, and then you can address them before you move on.

So six months of running before you officially start training for your first half marathon. And this also applies if you've taken time off. If you've taken like a year or two off from running or more, again, I want you running for six months before you start that official half marathon training plan.

Okay, the second thing is, in the past three months you should have done a 5K distance at least 12 times. Now, that doesn't mean you need to have done 12 5K races in three months, right? That's a lot. But you've run that three mile 5K distance at least a dozen times over the past 12 weeks.

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And that might mean for the past month, you've been running three miles three times a week, right? That's three times four is 12, right? So 12 three milers in a month is fine, as long as you're not getting injured. Or you could say I've done three miles every weekend for the past three months. And again, 12 weeks times three miles, that's 12, 5Ks.

Either way, however you get it in I want to make sure that within a three month period you've done at least three miles at least 12 times. And that's going to help adapt your body. It means that your body will be adapted to that distance.

And this kind of leads me into item number three. That three miles that you're running needs to not feel super hard. Like when you go out for that three mile run, you don't say to yourself, "Oh God, I wonder if I'm going to finish it this time." Three miles needs to be a distance that feels pretty comfortable to you. So don't start training for a half until that three miles feels comfortable.

Okay, so just to recap, six months of running as a base. In the second half of that six months you should have done at least 12 three mile distances. And that three miles needs to not feel super difficult. Okay? And I don't mean, when I say it doesn't need to feel super difficult, I don't mean that it's going to be like easy peasy, prancing in the daisies, right? But that 5K, three mile distance needs to be a distance and an effort level that you feel very confident about, very comfortable doing.

And then number four, if you have any developing injury, so during that six months of running, that's when we're going to start to suss out any issues that your body might have like plantar fasciitis or some sort of pain in your hips or your knees or whatever. If you have those developing injuries in that six month period, training for a half is going to make it worse. It's going to aggravate it.

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So you've got to make sure that you get your body sorted out before you increase your mileage. So go to a sports doctor, go to a physical therapist, talk to them about the pain and discomfort that you're feeling and get physical therapy so that your body is ready to start that training. Okay?

Because if something hurts at three miles, it's going to hurt even more at six miles. And pushing through the pain is never ever a good idea. So you got to get that shit figured out before you make it worse. And I know this is not information that makes a lot of people happy because they're like, well, I already signed up for my half marathon. What am I supposed to do now?

And yeah, you may be in a position where, hey, I'm going to walk most of that half marathon. Or I'm going to ask for a deferral until next year. But I promise you, if you just say well, I'm just going to train no matter what. I'm going to make it work, that's how injuries happen. And that's how we get to the point of having a really terrible race. And I don't want that for you.

I'd rather have you defer your race to the next year. I'd rather have you just decide you're going to walk the race than show up and push yourself through the training even though you're injured and then end up either injuring yourself more or having to drop out of the race or being in pain the whole time. But follow my guidelines, six months of running before you even start training for that race and you should be in really, really good shape.

Okay, those are the four physical criteria. Now I want to talk about the mental piece because honestly, you can be physically ready and not mentally ready. And if your brain isn't in the right space, training is not going to be a fun experience and you might end up using the whole thing as a way to beat yourself up. And the inner mean girl, she's going to have a field day.

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So if running three miles right now, you've been running for six months, you've done 12 three mile distances in the past three months, you don't have any injuries, right? If that three mile run feels like an eternity, half marathon training is probably not a great idea for you right now. You need to be enjoying that three miles before you decide to jump in and literally triple, quadruple your running time.

If you're bored with a 45 minute run, a two hour or a three hour run is definitely not going to be fun. Okay? So if you hate running or you like running maybe two miles at a time because you're like, I'm all in for 30 minutes, but tap me out after that. If you hate running, but you want to do a half because you have something to prove or because everyone else is doing it, just don't. Please don't. Figure out a different way to be a badass.

Show up to that race and volunteer, cheer your friends on, whatever. But don't train for a half marathon if you really don't love running because you're going to be doing a lot of running and I don't want you to suffer. So signing up for a half because all your friends are doing it and you don't want to be left out, but you hate working out for more than an hour, you're going to resent every step of that training. You're probably going to hate your friends, race day is going to suck.

So decide ahead of time, do I want to do a half marathon because I just love running? Or do I want to do a half marathon because everyone else is doing it? And if it's the second, volunteer at the race, be their training buddy, come out and show up and do a couple miles with them or three miles with them when they're training to keep them company, cheer them on at the finish line. But please don't train for the half marathon.

Get your mind right. You got to get your mind, you've got to understand why you want to do this thing because it's going to be a big time commitment. So how do you get your mind right? First of all, I've alluded to this already, but you got to ask yourself why do you want to do it.

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And make sure your why, your reason for committing to this major thing is rock solid. Because if it's not, those hours and hours of training are going to be like a weight around your neck dragging you down. You're going to start to resent running, you're going to want to quit. I don't want that for you.

So here are some examples of reasons of why's that are going to get you through the training and across the finish line. First of all, if you love running so much you want to do it all the time, like you think about it when you're not doing it. When you're driving down the road and you see somebody else running, you're like, oh, I want to be doing that right now.

When you're three miles is over, you're feeling kind of sad and you're like, oh, I want to do more, right? You can't wait to get out there and do it again. If that is you, half marathon training is for you, your brain is where it needs to be.

If you're like, hey, I just want to see what I'm capable of. I'm in for some discomfort, I want to push myself out of my comfort zone, a half marathon is a great challenge for the body and the mind. And if you're the person who likes a challenge, you're going to be really proud of yourself when you're done. So your brain is probably ready for half training.

Maybe you're like, actually I want to do a full marathon someday. And obviously, if you're going to do a full marathon, you're going to be running a lot of 13 mile distances on the way to that goal. So yeah, if a marathon is your end goal, then you're probably ready mentally to start half marathon training.

If you are committed to stepping outside your comfort zone to see if you can change your story about yourself. If you tend to beat yourself up a lot for not being good enough, or not being athletic, or whatever it is, and you're like, I want to change this story and I'm going to start doing some things that kind of scare me a little bit so that I can see what I'm capable of,

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then, boom, I think your brain is probably moving in the right direction for half marathon training.

And maybe you just love running and everybody's talking about half marathons and you're like, I want to see what all the fuss is about. I don't necessarily have this burning desire to become a long distance runner for the rest of my life, but I just want to find out what all of this crazy talk is about. Because sometimes we can't imagine ourselves doing something because we just don't understand how awesome it is.

And I can tell you, if you're a runner, finishing that first half marathon is a real rush of confidence and pride. So if you love running, if three miles doesn't feel like a burden and you hadn't really thought about half marathon training but everybody keeps talking about it, then maybe your brain is kind of getting into the right spot.

This has happened a bunch of times in Run Your Best Life. So I have a coaching program called Run Your Best Life, which is my ongoing membership for my clients that have taken the Rebel Runner Roadmap. So the graduates of the Rebel Runner Roadmap get to join, if they choose, get to join a program called Run Your Best Life and we do lots of live coaching in that group.

And once a month we have a live call that is dedicated just to half marathon and full marathon training topics. And there are women that come to that call who have never done either distance, have no real intention to do it, they just kind of like to listen and see what other runners in the group are working on and talking about.

The funny thing is, some of those women get so excited and inspired hearing about everybody else's success, that after a few months of coming to those calls, guess what? They're like, maybe I'm ready for a half marathon.

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It just starts with this thought of like, huh, maybe that's a thing I could do. Well, if she can do it, maybe I could do it. Or wow, you know what? That looks like fun. Or I would love to feel as proud of myself as she does. So if you've had any of those thoughts, again, you might be ready to start planning out some half marathon training.

So I'm going to give you a few important things to consider when you're planning your training. If you love running but you hate running alone, and maybe none of your training partners or your running buddies are into this marathon thing, or half marathon thing, so you're kind of facing doing those long runs alone. If you sign up for a half, you're going to need to find some sort of community.

And it might be joining a local Galloway group. It might be recruiting different people, different running buddies to run parts of your long training runs with you. And you don't necessarily need to have somebody with you the whole time, or the same person for the whole thing.

I have tons of clients who will have their spouse, friends, or kids come out do a couple miles in the middle or at the end. Or they'll actually be like, hey, can you meet me halfway and bring me fresh water? Just so they kind of have something to look forward to. So they'll do most of it alone, but they get a little bit of contact with family and friends in the middle or at the end.

Now, this is an important one, if you are thinking I'm going to train for a half marathon so I can lose weight, I want to stop you right now. First of all, if it's the only reason you're doing a half marathon, you're going to be very disappointed. Because most of the time when people train for long distance races, they either stay the same weight or they gain weight.

And there's a lot of reasons for that. But the main reason is that our brains are like, oh, I just ran 10 miles, I can eat an entire pizza, right? So if you're somebody who's working on weight loss and you think oh, a half marathon

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is going to help me with that, it probably won't. And you might even plateau during that time.

And here's the thing though, there's nothing wrong with that. The benefits that you get from training for that half marathon, the mental benefits, the physical benefits are just amazing. And you have your whole life to work on counting calories if that's what you want to do.

So I just want you to make sure that you understand the implications that training for a half marathon may have on your weight loss journey, okay? It's not out of the question, sometimes people are able to lose weight when they're training for a half marathon because they're super disciplined with their food and they make sure that they're not eating back all of the fuel that they just burned off, but it's a bit of a challenge.

So I just want to make sure that that expectation is clear. So if you're like, I'm going to train for a half marathon because it's going to help me lose weight, it's probably not. You're probably going to be disappointed. So think that through ahead of time, okay?

If your why for doing a half marathon is to make somebody else happy, girl, you are not responsible for anyone else's feelings. Okay? Make sure you want to do that race for yourself. If somebody else benefits from it, that's awesome. But you have to have solid reasons in you to do the training.

If you're just like, oh, my partner, my spouse is saying she's not going to do or he's not going to do this half marathon unless I do it with them. So I'm just going to do it because I don't want them to complain about it. Well, everybody's going to be miserable. There's probably going to be some fights.

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So really, you're not responsible for anyone else's feelings. Half marathon, if you want to do it, do it for yourself. And if somebody else benefits, again, if you're doing it because your bestie said, hey, I'd love to have a training partner. And you're thinking, yeah, you know what? I think that might be a fun thing, I'm all in. So she benefits because she gets a training partner, but you're still doing it for you. Okay? All right.

Please don't do a half marathon, if you legit don't have time to train. And actually, most people do have the time, most people. They think they don't because they're not willing to prioritize running over other things. But I want you to be realistic because in the second half of that training you're going to need to have like three, maybe four hours carved out every other weekend so that you can do your long run and do your self-care afterwards.

So if you truly do not have that time or you know you're not willing to give that time up to running instead of something else, half marathon training is not for you. So be honest with yourself. Be honest about how much time you actually have because again, a lot of people think they have less time. But then when they look at the amount of time they spend on Facebook or Instagram, guess what? There's an extra 30 minutes here, an extra 20 minutes there.

But really be honest with yourself, what are you willing to give up so that you can get in your training runs? Do you have a support system if you need childcare? Or most people do their long training runs on the weekend, but you might work every weekend. And so you might have to say, well, okay, I'm going to have to do my long training runs during the week. Do I have childcare? Do I have everything set up support wise, so that I can make that happen?

And finally, be brutally realistic about your current situation. So if the race that you want to do is a month from now and you've never run more than six miles, you're going to have to wait for another one. You cannot fast

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track your training the way you can cram for an exam, all right? And cramming for an exam is also a terrible idea. But you can cram information in on an overnight study session for a test, you cannot cram your training in, you really can't.

You're going to need at least two weeks before race date to taper, which means bringing your mileage way down before that race. So your longest run is going to be no closer to your race date than two weeks out. So if your race is a month from now and six miles is the longest you've ever gone, you don't have time. Actually, if your race is two months out and you've only gone six miles once in your life, you also don't have time. You can't fast track it, all right?

Don't underestimate the need for proper training. Half marathon training for a beginner is at least a four month process. And that is after you have built up your base. Any faster than that and you're going to risk getting injured, especially if you are larger bodied. You really need that time to get your body used to being on its feet and moving for a few hours at a time.

So a solid training plan that eases you up in mileage, we're not going to jump up to miles on our long run every single week, right? You want to go up one mile every other week after you've built that six mile base or six month base. So get yourself a solid training plan. You could always join one of my programs because I always have half marathon plans available in them that are meant for beginners.

Because if you just wing it and you kind of like randomly run here and there with no systematic approach, it's pretty much a guarantee that you're going to fail or get injured. So make sure you have an appropriate plan, follow that motherfucker like it's your Bible. Get a coach or someone experienced to help you when you aren't sure what to do next.

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Definitely join the Not Your Average Runner Facebook group and ask questions there. Half marathon training takes time and planning and commitment. It's not a whim. You're going to need a support system around you. Whether it's your family, your friends, your coach, training group, coworkers, whatever it is. Make sure you've got that in place before you take that plunge to sign up for your first half.

All right Rebels, I hope this has been a helpful episode for you. If you liked it, please share it on Instagram, let people know. I love you, stay safe and get your ass out there and run.

Oh, and one last thing, if you enjoyed listening to this episode, you have to check out the Rebel Runner Roadmap. It's a 30 day online program that will teach you exactly how to start running, stick with it, and become the runner you've always wanted to be. Head on over to [rebelrunnerroadmap.com](http://rebelrunnerroadmap.com) to join. I'd love to be a part of your journey.