

## Ep #295: Half Marathon Training For Beginners



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Jill Angie**

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## Ep #295: Half Marathon Training For Beginners

Welcome to *The Not Your Average Runner Podcast*. If you've never felt athletic but you still dream about becoming a runner, you are in the right place. I'm Jill Angie, your fat running coach. I help fat women over 40 to start running, feel confident, and change their lives. I have worked with thousands of women to help them achieve their running goals and now I want to help you.

Hey runners. So spring is here, at least in Philly, and it is officially half marathon training season. Andy and I had a cheer section a couple of weeks ago at the Philly Love Run, and there were so many of you listeners there on the course. We had the best time hugging folks, taking selfies, screaming our heads off. It was amazing.

And then in April, inside the Run Your Best Life training program we are focusing on getting all of our future half marathon runners set up for success. We have a whole training system in there, it's really awesome. It comes not just with a training plan, but with the whole process for getting your mind right, for working through the tough runs, planning out your race day strategy, all that good stuff.

So, basically, since half marathons are on my mind right now I thought today would be a great day to revisit a topic I did on half marathon training for beginners a couple years ago, because I know a lot of you are thinking about making that jump to the half marathon distance. And whether it's your first one ever, or maybe it's a comeback race after you took some time off, we're going to dive in. We're going to talk about how to know when you're ready to start training for a half marathon.

Now, I am sure that most of you know exactly what a half marathon is, but if you are listening right now and you're confused or curious, or you're bored on a long car trip, basically a half marathon is 13.1 miles. And that is, of

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course, half of the distance of a full marathon, which is 26.2 miles. And it is 10 miles farther than a 5k, which is 3.1 miles. That's a lot of numbers.

Now, a lot of people think that the word marathon is a synonym for race. And if you've been a runner for a while or at least you've been kind of circling the running world for a while you know, I'm sure, that marathon and race do not mean the same thing. But honestly I can not tell you how many non runners have come up to me and said, "So how did your 5k marathon go last weekend?" And I laugh every time because a 5k and a marathon are two very different things.

But I always know what people mean when they say that, so when that happens I usually just take a moment to educate them and say, hey, a marathon is actually a specific race distance. A 5k is a race, a marathon is a race, a half marathon is a race, but they are not the same distance. Anyway, a half marathon is exactly like 5k, only you have to run an extra 10 miles to get to the finish line.

I know that that sounds kind of far and, honestly, it is kind of far. Drive 10 miles someday and you'll be like, "Oh yeah, that's pretty far." But I promise it really is possible for almost anybody. It is just a matter of doing the right kind of training. It's learning how to stick to your commitments, it's getting your brain in the place of keeping your commitments to yourself. There's going to be plenty of days when you 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 maybe I should delay to another day."

Now, if you want to finish that race, you're going to have to do the training. And you're also going to have to figure out how to get yourself properly fueled, how to fit it into your schedule, how to get a self-care regimen in place. But before you get stressed out or overwhelmed, I want you to know that all those things are simply not even problems to figure out, they're just

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things that you need to figure out. And I am here to help you do that, okay? And I promise they're easily figure outable.

So before we dive in I want to touch on how you know when you are ready to start training. When you're 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 in three months. So how do I train?" And I'm always like, all right, let's back it up a little bit because training for a half marathon takes several months, okay? And if you're brand new to running, or you're just coming back to running after a year or more off, that training time span becomes even longer.

And if you don't approach it in the right way, you're just going to end up getting injured, having a really shitty race experience. So if you start training before you're ready, it's not going to be fun. So today, I'm going to give you some guidelines on how to know when you're ready, and then what to expect during your training.

Now, I like to divide readiness into two different categories, there's physical readiness, is your body ready? And then there is mental readiness, is your mind ready? Because again, if you have been listening to the podcast for a while, you know that running is 80 to 90% mental. So we've got to make sure that we take care of the mental readiness part in addition to the physical, but let's tackle the physical first, it's the easy part.

There are four checkpoints that you need to have crossed before you start half marathon training when it comes to the physical readiness part of it. Now, number one, you should have been running for at least six months, and preferably up to a year. 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 those logistics figured out.

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And by the way, if you're going to have some developing injuries, and most runners have at least some injuries in their lifetime, those injuries are probably going to start showing up in the first six to 12 months. And then you can address them before you start moving into half marathon training.

So minimum six months of running before you officially start your training, preferably a year. And this also applies if you've taken time off from running, like if you've taken a year or two off. Again, I want you running consistently for at least 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, okay? That's a lot, that's like one 5k every weekend. But you need to have completed that three mile distance at least a dozen times over the past 12 weeks, three months, okay? And that might mean for the past month you've been running three miles three times a week, right? Three times four is 12.

So 12 three miles 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. So 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. It's going to help adapt your body, right, it means your body will be adapted to that distance comfortably.

And this leads me into item number three, that three miles 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 wish it was over. I wonder if I'm going to finish it. I'm never going to get to the end," right? Three miles needs to

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be a distance that feels pretty comfortable to you, okay? So don't start training for a half until that three miles feels comfortable.

So just to recap, at least six months of running as a base, in the last three months you should have done at least three miles 12 different times. And that three miles needs to not feel super difficult, okay? And I don't mean, when I say it doesn't need to be 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, and this is so important. Listen up, if you have any developing injuries during that period, that's when we're going to start to suss out any issues that your body might have like plantar fasciitis, or hip bursitis, or some sort of knee pain, right? 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, okay?

So that's why I want you comfortably running a lot before you start training for a half. You've got to make sure that we get the body adapted and suss out those injuries before you increase your mileage, okay? So go to a sports doctor, physical therapist, talk to them about any pain and discomfort that you're feeling. Get physical therapy so your body is ready to start that training.

You will thank me later if you do this, okay? Because if something hurts at three miles, it is going to hurt even more at six miles. Pushing through the pain, never a good idea. You've 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, right? Because they're like, "Well, I already signed up for my half marathon. What am I supposed to do now?" And yeah, you know what?

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You might 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 going to train no matter what, I'm going to make it work," that's how injuries happen. That's how they get worse. That's how we get to the point of you taking a year off of running because you've hurt yourself so badly that you need even more time to recover. That's how we have a terrible race. That's how we end up quitting in the middle of a race. I don't want any of that for you.

I would much rather, if you're in your like six month ramp-up period before you start your training, if you have developing injuries, I would much rather have you defer your race to the next year. Or show up and cheer everybody else on, volunteer at an aid station, or decide to walk the whole race. All of that is better than showing up and pushing yourself through the training even though you're injured and then making it worse. Or again, maybe you push through and then your hamstring pops in the middle of the race or something like that, right?

I've heard horror stories, I've seen it happen. Don't be that person, okay? So follow my guidelines. Minimum six months of running before you even start training for that half marathon, a year is better. Make sure you're injury free. Make sure that three mile distance feels really comfortable and you'll be in good shape, okay?

So those are the four physical criteria to help you know if you're ready to start training for a half marathon. 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, okay? And that inner bully is going to have a field day with you.



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So if you've been following along, right, running consistently for six months, you've done your 12 three mile distances, you don't have any injuries. If that three mile run feels like an eternity, like you're bored, when is this going to be over? This is so awful. I don't like doing this. If that's how you feel when you're running three miles, half marathon training is probably not a great idea for you right now, okay?

You've got to be enjoying that three miles before you decide to jump in and literally quadruple your running time. If you are bored with a 45 minute run, a two hour, a three hour, a four hour run is going to suck, okay? So if you hate running, or you like running but only for a couple miles at a time because you're like, I'm all in for 30 minutes, but I want to tap out after that. If that's you, don't train for a half marathon.

If you hate running and you want to do a half because you got something to prove or because everyone else is doing it, just don't do it. Please don't. Figure out a different way to be a badass. Show up to the race and volunteer, cheer your friends on, whatever, okay? But don't train for a half if you really don't love running, because you're going to be doing a lot of running. I don't want you to feel miserable.

So signing up for 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. If that's you, you're going to resent every step of that training and you're probably going to hate your friends. Race day is going to suck. So just don't do it, okay?

Decide ahead of time, do I want to do a half marathon because I just love running? Or is it 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, do a couple miles with your friends while they're training to keep them company, right? But don't do the actual half marathon. You've got to get your mind

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right before you jump in. You've got to understand why you want to do this thing because it is going to be a big time commitment, okay?

So, how do you get your mind right? Well, I've alluded to this already, but you have to ask yourself why you want to do it. And make sure that 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. And I don't want that for you.

So here are some examples of why's that are going to get you through the training and across the finish line. So first of all, if you just love running so much you want to do it all the time, 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." That's a sign that you're mentally ready to start training for a half marathon.

When your three miles is over and you're feeling like, "Oh, I want to do more," right? You can't wait to get out there and do it again. If that's you, half marathon training is for you and 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 sounds like a great challenge for my body and my mind. I like running." If that sounds like you, your brain is probably ready for half training, okay?

And maybe you're somebody who's like, "Well, one day, I want to do a full marathon." So 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 if a marathon is your end goal, then you're probably ready mentally to start half marathon training.

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If you are committed to stepping outside your comfort zone to see if you can change your story about yourself, all right, 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 I can see what I'm capable of," 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, "Well, I just want to see what all the fuss is about. I don't necessarily have a burning desire to become a long distance runner for the rest of my life, but I want to find out what all 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 so if that's you, yeah, I think, again, you might be ready to start the training.

And I will tell you, if you're a runner and you train for a half marathon and you finish it, that finish line, it is such a rush of confidence and pride. There is nothing like the moment when you finish that first half marathon. So if you love running, three miles doesn't feel like a burden, and you hadn't really thought about half marathon training but you're listening to this podcast going, "Huh, maybe this is a good idea," then you might be getting into the right spot, okay?

And this has happened a bunch of times in Run Your Best Life, which I've mentioned before, it's my trademark coaching program. And we get a lot, a lot of beginning runners in that group who think, "Oh, I just want to do a 5k." And then once a month in that program we have a live call that's dedicated just to half marathon and full marathon training topics. And there are women that come to that call, never done either distance, no real intention to do it, they just kind of like to listen and see what other runners in the group are working on.

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And then they listen and they're like, "This sounds like fun." And they get really excited and inspired hearing about everybody else's success. And then after a few months of coming to those calls, they're like, "Okay, maybe I'm ready to train for a half marathon."

And it just starts out with this thought of like, "Huh, maybe that's a thing I could do. Well, if she could do it, maybe I could do it." Or, "I don't know, it looks like they're having fun." Or, "I would love to feel as proud of myself as these other women do." So if you've had any of those thoughts, again, you might be ready to start planning out some half marathon training.

Okay, so I'm going to give you a few important things to consider when you are planning your training. Now, if you love running, but you hate running alone, hate running by yourself and none of your training partners or your running buddies are into this half marathon thing, you are kind of going to be facing doing some of those long runs alone, okay?

So if you sign up for a half marathon, you're going to need to find some sort of community. And I definitely recommend an online community as support. Whether or not you have an in-person community, definitely join an online one. Run Your Best Life is a great one, but there are tons of others out there. But seriously, Run Your Best Life is the best one.

But also, you're going to want to maybe recruit some different running buddies to run parts of your long training runs with you, okay? And so this means that if you have a spouse or some friends that are like, "Hey, I'll come out and run a mile with you," you can plan out your route and have them run the first mile, or the middle mile, or the last mile or something like that. So you don't necessarily need to have somebody with you the whole time, the same person for the whole time. You can kind of parse it out with different spouses, friends, kids, what have you.

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You can also have people, maybe if they're not going to run with you, you can say, "Hey, can you meet me halfway and bring me fresh water?" Just so you kind of have something to look forward to. So you'll do most of it alone, but you get contact with family and friends maybe in the middle, maybe at the end to just sort of keep you interested and keep you excited.

Now, this is an important one. If you're thinking, "I'm going to train for a half marathon so that I can lose weight," I want to stop you right now. All right? If that's the only reason you're doing a half marathon, you're going to be disappointed because most of the time when people train for long distance races they either stay the same way or they gain weight. And I'm not going to go into all of the biological reasons for that, but one of the main reasons is that our brains are like, "Oh, I just ran 10 miles, I can eat an entire pizza."

So if you're somebody who's working on weight loss and you're thinking, "Oh, a half marathon is going to help me with that," it probably won't. You might even plateau during that time. And here's the thing, right? There's nothing wrong with that because the benefits that you get from training for that half marathon, the mental and physical benefits are amazing. They are life changing, all right? They're way more powerful than any number on a scale.

So I just want to make sure that you understand the implications that training for a half marathon may have on your weight loss journey, okay? Enough said about that.

So 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 someone else benefits from it, that is awesome. But you have to have solid reasons inside yourself to do the training, right?

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If your partner or your spouse is saying they're not going to do this half marathon unless you do it with them, don't do it. That's a them problem. That is not a you problem, okay? If you want to do this race with them just so that they don't complain about it, well, then everybody's going to be miserable. There's probably going to be some fights because you're not responsible for anyone else's feelings.

Half marathon, if you want to do it, do it for yourself, okay? And again, if somebody else benefits, 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? That might be fun. I'm all in." So your bestie benefits with you as a training partner, but you are still doing it for you, okay? That's fine. But please don't do it to make someone else happy as your only reason because it's going to be miserable for everyone.

Now, another thing, please don't do a half marathon if you legit don't have time to train. And most people do have the time, 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 last two months of that training cycle, you're going to need to have like three, maybe four, maybe even five hours carved out every other weekend so you can do your long run and do your self-care afterwards.

So if you truly do not have that time or you do but you know you're not willing to give it up to running instead of something else, right, half marathon training is not for you. Okay? So be honest with yourself. Be honest about how much time you actually have and how much time you are willing to give.

And compare that with the amount of time that the training is going to take because if you say, "Well, I'm just going to be able to figure it out, I'm going to do it all." And then you end up skipping a bunch of training runs because

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you literally can't find the time in your schedule or you're not willing to prioritize something else, you run the risk of getting injured, you run the risk of having a really shitty race day, and maybe not even making it to the finish line, okay?

So be really 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? 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 runs during the week." Again, do I have childcare? Do I have everything set up support wise so that I can make that happen?

And then be brutally realistic about your current situation. This is the hardest one for most people to swallow. If that race that you want to do is a month from now and you've never run more than six miles, you are going to have to wait for the next one. I'm sorry.

You cannot fast track your training the way you can cram for a final exam. And cramming for a final exam is also a terrible idea, but you can cram information in on an overnight study session for a test. You cannot cram months and months and months of physical training in. You just, you cannot do it. You will get hurt.

So you're going to need at least two weeks before your race date to taper, preferably three weeks, okay? Which means you've got to bring your mileage down way before that race. So your longest run is going to be no closer to your race day 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 do not have time. You cannot fast track it. Please believe

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me on this, do not 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 that six to 12 month base, okay? Any faster than that, you risk getting injured, especially if you're fat. All right?

You need that time on your feet to get your body used to being on its feet and moving for a few hours at a time, right? You need that consistent running routine for months before you start building the mileage. So a solid training plan that eases you up in mileage – This is another thing I want you to look for. We're not going to jump up two miles on our long run every single week, right? You want to go up one mile every other week.

So if you see a training plan that's like every week you're going to do a long run that's two miles longer than the week before, that is not your training plan, especially if this is your first half marathon. You want to go up one mile every other week after you've built that six to 12 month base of running, okay? So get yourself a solid training plan, we have several of them in Run Your Best Life that will work for this. We also provide additional support over and above just the training plan.

But if you just wing it and you're kind of like randomly running here and there with no systematic approach, it's pretty much a guarantee that you're going to fall – Sorry, not fall. You're going to fail or get injured, right? So make sure you have an appropriate plan. Follow that motherfucker like it's your Bible, all right? When it says to run, you run. When it says to rest, you rest.

And then you get a coach or somebody experienced to help you out when you aren't sure what to do next, okay. And, of course, my recommendation is to join Run Your Best Life, do our comprehensive, fat friendly, time tested half marathon program because it takes time and planning and



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commitment. It's not a whim, right? You're going to need a support system around you.

So, I just realized that this episode kind of turned out to be a whole bunch of reasons not to do a half marathon, which is not my intention. But what I really want for, you know, what the take home message is from this episode is half marathon training is a time commitment, right? It's going to take mental and physical readiness. And it's going to take a time commitment and a mental commitment.

And so it is one of the most rewarding things you will ever do, but also I want you to take it seriously and not half-ass it because you're going to feel so, so, so good on race day if you follow my recommendations and you really, really show up for yourself and take the best care possible of your body and your mind while you're going through this process.

All right my runners, I hope this has been a helpful episode for you. If you liked it, please, please, please share it on Instagram, let people know. And meanwhile, I love you, stay safe, get your ass out there and run and I will talk to you next week.

Real quick, before you go, if you enjoyed this episode, you have to check out Run Your Best Life. It's my monthly coaching program where you will learn exactly how to start running, stick with it, and become the runner you have always wanted to be. Head on over to [runyourbestlife.com](https://runyourbestlife.com) to join. I would love to be a part of your journey.