

The Best 5k Program ***FOR YOU***



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About me

Admittedly I was always into sport but I was never amazing at it. Played a lot of football for fun and came 4th in my year at cross-country once (my greatest achievement).



Into my twenties and I began to eat more and train less then realised that this was a habit that needed reversing. And guess what? It worked.

Hit my thirties and felt that I wanted to try making a career out of my passion for fitness so I spent 5 years working in the fitness industry in London involved in personal training and group exercise. I was a regular spinning instructor in places like Camden Town and the financial district as well as an instructor in reformer Pilates with a high-end boutique chain called Heartcore.

As the fast-life of London began to get too much for me I began searching for something that could be more universally applied so I joined a popular running store and worked as a sales rep for high-quality running shoes. This allowed me to get back into running myself and I soon registered for my first half-marathon in North London where I clocked a time of 1hr 36min.



My previous experience in both Pilates and spinning allow me to focus on the two cornerstones of pain-free running; **strong lungs and strong joints.**

I then moved to the slightly quieter surroundings of Manchester where I continue this work involved with the popular running scene in the North-West of England.

Essentially it was marriage that took me up North and I found myself eating more and training less (again) however, I find that like a lot of other men and women at a similar stage in life, the aesthetics aren't so important as the need for a good balance where we are still engaged in a

little physical activity to keep the mind and body fresh into our later years.

Why am I different to other running coaches?

Most coaches are 'born runners' probably topped their classes at school. They're all about club-style and club-level training. My approach suits those that do not take to it naturally.

My focus is to build the foundations for those that feel they are a little more injury prone.



Do a 5k your way

The couch to 5k

The C25K was created by an Australian athlete named **Josh Clark** in 1996. It has since been reportedly used by 5 million people. It is now an official NHS programme designed to get people to follow a more active lifestyle.

So I also bought into the idea that this was the standard programme to help everyone bar none to achieve their goal in becoming a 'runner'.



Come 2016 and I get sent to the university of Roehampton for a one-day course in biomechanics and attend a lecture by a highly knowledgeable professor in the subject called Dr Ceri Diss. She embarks upon doing the unthinkable and criticising the couch to 5k programme!!!



Whattttt! How could she?!

She said that the programme was too advanced. And she's right. Let's put it into context; a couch potato, sedentary, crap diet, joints messed up and compressed. At school they may have come up with excuses to get out of athletics and you're expecting them to complete 12 and half laps of an athletics track track in 2 months!! This is simply a serious injury waiting to happen and totally irresponsible of the NHS to back this programme.

On the other hand...

For some it is too easy. Many who embark upon it already have a strong foundation thorough their gym work and aerobics. But having been a gym rat for so long their running friends tell them that no medals are won through going to a shiny gym doing Jane Fonda or Arnie stuff so how about you do a marathon. For a lot of these guys the programme is so long and drawn out they will soon get bored were they to feel compelled to follow this plan.

And the problem gets worse when this whole mix of people come together in a group. I have seen a lot of these groups go through the programme where I work and while we sing the praises of those that come through and progress, a larger percentage are never to be seen again. And why?

Because they had this preconceived notion that this was a beginner's programme and found that it was too hard for them so they gave up.



So how does one train for a 5k?

This is about empowering you to find your own path on your fitness journey rather than blindly following a programme that might not fulfil your needs. So we are trying to provide the least amount of structure that is necessary.

Begin by deciding what group you fall into. The total beginner or the well-conditioned. Skip to page 7 if you are from the second group.

Total beginner

First of all eliminate this idea from your head that 5k is some sort of holy grail. Your job is to get fit and you do it your way. There is no definition of a 'runner'. Forget about those stuck-up people that boast about which race they're doing next. We are human beings, mammals, evolved to run, so you are simply realising your natural potential. My advice is to follow these three steps:

1. Brisk walk first

Couch to any kind of running is the equivalent of walking before crawling. Begin by trying to walk fast enough and far enough to feel it in the muscles and lungs. Sustain effort for fifteen minutes. You know you're pushing it too hard when:

- breathing becomes too hard to control
- you start to feel it in the joints rather than the muscles



Brisk walking is the natural transition from sedentary to any sort of running

2. Use a heart rate monitor

Here's a question; what do you think your heart rate is when you're walking down to the newsagent, off to the post office? About 90 bpm give or take? How about when you're running? It shoots up to 160+. So here's an idea; try doing something that will keep you somewhere half-way. Oh yes we just mentioned it, brisk walk. And how good would it be if you could monitor your heart rate so you know that you are in the right zone. You can get these devices for as little as £50 and even ones with in-built



Heart rate monitors come in the form of a wireless strap connected to a wrist-watch. However, newer models like the Garmin Forerunner 35 (right) have a wrist-based monitor with which a chest strap isn't needed.



GPS can be as little as £80. They help you remain assured that you are training at just the right amount of intensity. Not too easy or too hard and this is the key to consistency

3. DO NOT run until you get a good pair of running shoes

Running hurts. Believe me it can be painful. The last thing you want to do is hamper yourself by wearing the wrong kit. It is tempting to wear your Vans, Converse or Nike Air Max. Go to a reputable running store like Sweatshop, Runners Need or Up and Running where there will be friendly staff that can help you find the best pair of running shoes. It will be the best and most unique customer experience you will ever enjoy because you get great advice and a bit of a workout at the same time. Make sure



The array of shoes on a start line. The average price of each pair will be above £50 guaranteed. be prepared to invest a good £75 to £150 in a bit of kit that will help you make a difference to your life

you take your gym kit with you. Most importantly, be prepared to invest a good £75 to £150 in a bit of kit that will help you make a difference to your life. The money will not go to waste as you will definitely get the best, most profitable use out of these beauties. Being a beginner is not reason to buy a low quality, cheap pair of running shoes. In fact it is the opposite. It is the well-trained that can get away with those bargain-basement shoes just like an accomplished driver being able to drive around in a 30-year old banger.

Recap

- brisk walk first then start to introduce short bouts of running.
- use a heart rate monitor
- get a good quality pair of shoes

So when does the running begin?

Good question; as long as you're doing the same sort of routine on a daily basis you should automatically begin to feel stronger and more energised by the week. Now introduce short bouts of running during your brisk walk. I would recommend 30 seconds jog, 90 seconds walk. Gadgets like the Garmin Forerunner 35 allow you to set yourself a run-walk programme.

Again, you take control. Decide for yourself if you are ready to increase the duration of running. In turn you will know when you are finally ready to commence the couch to 5k.



The Right shoes can Prevent Injury:

- Improve Finishing time
- Protect feet
- Reinforce good running form
- Build Foot and lower leg strength

The well-conditioned

I'm doing you a favour by including this section because I know for a fact that some of you will get bored if you try and adhere to the #C25K blindly. A better programme would be to build it up by distance. Start by running 1000m. How did it feel? If comfortable go up to 2000. Any incremental advancement that feels quite tough repeat that distance until it gets comfortable again. If a particular distance requires a little more effort set yourself a run-walk programme. Get out of the habit of blindly following programmes. Use a little intuition and really engage with your practice and figure stuff out yourself.

Recap

Begin by running 1000m and assess the level of exertion required.

Gradually build up at a rate of progression suitable to you until you have reached your 5k. Try this really complex training programme.

WEEK 1	1000M
WEEK 2	1500M
WEEK 3	2000M
WEEK 4	2500M
WEEK 5	3000M
WEEK 6	3500M
WEEK 7	4000M
WEEK 8	4500M
WEEK 9	5000M

Of course I was being facetious. Just goes to show that the task is actually simpler than you think.

When put like this you can see why professionals have reservations about the difficulty level of this programme. If you are having trouble getting through these progressions you need longer rests in between runs. Contact me for guidance on what to do during these rests.

Supplementary training

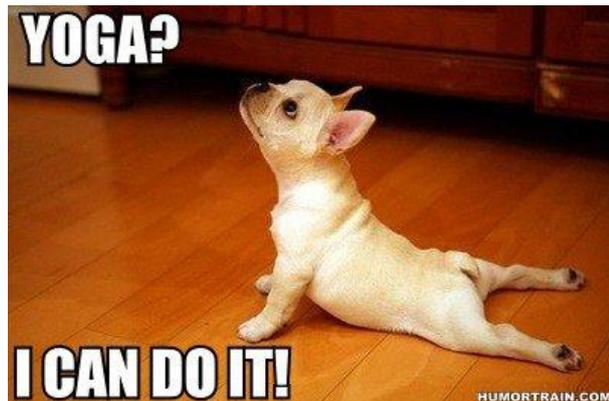
Now this is really important. Your strength and flex work should not play, second fiddle. It should be a foundation of exercise activity as you seek to do the following

1. Increase the mechanical resistance of the joints
2. Enhance the fatigue-resistance of the muscles

BS programmes

You have probably come across titles like 'yoga for runners' or 'top 3 exercises for running'. You probably are aware yourself that many of these workouts are just a load of hot air, full of exercises that have no relevance or carry-over to running.

As a rule, ignore any of these workouts if they contain sit-ups or press-ups. Choose workouts that include a nice variety of single-leg exercises.



For me the best conditioning routines for running are reformers Pilates and spinning; stabilising the joints through the former and increasing the fatigue resistance of the muscles and cardiovascular system through spinning.



The classical method of Reformer Pilates have been modified to create a general fitness class catered for all levels. Studio Lagree and Heartcore Fitness are 2 fitness methods with studios in London. You could still go down the pure classical route whereby you will get more one-to-one training and instructors are more widespread, although you will end up paying a lot more.

[Here is a montage of what goes on in a Reformer Pilates class.](#)

These exercises are great because of the emphasis on strengthening and lengthening at the same time. Introducing a variety of stability challenges to the body with practically every exercise. The intensity is perfect as well as the ability to scale the routine to differing levels of difficulty. You can tell that I'm getting nostalgic about my days in London

as an instructor at Heartcore fitness. Trust me these workouts helped me achieve 1 hour 36 in my first half-marathon.

The great thing about spinning and the way it prepares one so well for running is the way it strengthens the lungs in an impact-free way. I would definitely recommend the use of a heart rate monitor to control what training zone you're in. Unfortunately, most instructors insist on delivering a gut-busting session every time but if you are only concerned with staying at a moderate 70% to help improve your running then simply inform the instructor before class about your intentions. Avoid classes that make you do crazy shit like weights and press-ups on the bike like Soul-Cycle or Psyche.

These moves are contraindications and carry a risk of injury, full-stop.



Breathing

This is perhaps my favourite often-ignored benefit to indoor-cycling. The ability to work on your breathing.

How should you breathe when running?

The most popular saying amongst coaches is 'Breathe in your nose and out through your mouth'. I don't know the science or logic behind this, maybe the point is to at least have some sort of rhythm to your respiration.

Diaphragmatic Breathing

Now this stuff is a true game-changer. Think about it. Breathe into your chest. Take a deep inhale into the chest until the chest expands and notice the pressure it puts on the spine. Now breathe into your abdomen. A deep inhale until your belly looks BIG and unsightly. Feel how it just calms the mind. This method of breathing when you're running is obviously better for you but if it isn't your preferred method of breathing it is really difficult. Now the stationary bike, much-maligned, by snotty-nosed runners (and cyclists) is a perfect tool for training yourself on diaphragmatic breathing.

I'm hoping I have already shown you little gems and opened up your eyes to a wider world of fitness and health all geared towards enabling you to hit the road. Trust me there's a lot more where that came from so keep

reading. Apparently an ebook has to be at least 3000 words long so allow me to fill it with useful info.

Alternative methods of improving strength and flexibility

Not everyone has access to a Pilates studio like Lagree or Heartcore so there are some great exercises and routines that you can do instead.

Yoga

Oh yes, not a fad, so not a fad. Untold benefits doing yoga and while attending a class a week is desirable (mainly for the additional relaxation benefits) it can be time consuming when there is probably just one specific and popular, yoga sequence that is necessary and beneficial to runners and that is the warrior sequence.

Warrior what?

[Just click the link and watch it fully you ignorant steroid-head.](#)

Now you get it and how it helps restore a little length to the lower extremity, not forgetting some balance around the hips as well as some stability as well. Get confident with the routine in this video and try to perform it at least twice per week. Then get a little more adventurous with some longer routines. And if you feel inspired to rock up at a class the instructor will be well impressed if you already have the warrior series nailed.

Stepping it up - Single-leg-training

These are your best friends when it comes to conditioning yourself for running in a low-impact way. There is a wide array of them and one really good compilation is this one [here](#). Only I would advise to do them without a big weight and focus on alignment and form. You can add intensity with speed and them light weights.

TRX-lunge

No not a make of car. A piece of training equipment popularised by an American navy seal and now found all over the internet with several different manufacturers.

Now I think most of the main core and leg exercises practised with the suspension trainer (using the generic term) have some sort of carry over

to running but the two most obvious ones, to me anyway, are the suspended lunge and the hamstring curl.

Suspended lunge

The key to this is to keep thinking you are standing tall and visualising the perfect alignment throughout the move. Also get that breathing synced up with the move. I so love this exercise.



Hamstring curl

You will look at this and immediately wonder how it has any relevance to running; well there's a 'googlable' concept called eccentric training where you strengthen and lengthen at the same time. In the exercise as the leg straightens you have to make sure it lengthens at a controllable speed using the strength in the hamstrings. The same thing happens when running as you approach the contact phase; leg lengthens and you have to attenuate the forces so that you land with a bit of control rather than slapping the ground. Clever isn't it. Found a video here with some great little progressions and regressions.



Bringing it back to topic - the problem with running programmes

So this ebook was about training for a 5k and it must be feeling that we have gone off topic. My problem is that a lot of running programmes found on the web are formulated by runners, born runners who live and breathe nothing but running. My philosophy is to bring together both

gym and running cultures which are often at odds with each other. I am thankful to have had extensive knowledge of both areas.

The solution

Quite simply minimise the amount of time spent pounding the ground and focus a little more on building a foundation through more strength and flex work. You will have noticed that the training advice for both total beginner and well-conditioned is much more streamlined in terms of the amount of running required. The detail is in the foundational work which may take place at home or at your local gym.

You do realise that with a good strength-training programme you can actually sacrifice one of your runs per week (if you are a 3 times per week kind of person). However, the condition is that you have the tools to increase the intensity. So it makes sense to have in your armoury a set of strength and dynamic exercises that you can put together almost in the form of a 20 minute circuit.

Well, you're in luck as we have already been through a few exercises to supplement such a workout.

Let's now add some exercises with a little transferability to your running but as long as they can help lift the heart rate.

Here's a list of some great exercises

[TRX sprint](#)

[TRX mountain climber](#)

[Floor runner](#)

[Knee repeater](#)

Star jumps

Box jumps

Now let's build the workout

Beginners

Equipment: Box/stool/step 10-30 cm high

Warm up by jogging on the spot for 15 seconds then 15 seconds star jumps. Repeat

Begin workout

1. 10 step-ups each leg

2. 30 seconds start jumps
3. 10 reverse lunges each leg
4. 30 seconds floor runner

Repeat 3 times

Cool down with warrior sequence

Progress by adding repetitions or weights

Advanced

Equipment: TRX/suspension trainer
Step/box/stool 20-30 cm high

Warm-up up by jogging on the spot for 30 seconds then 30 seconds star jumps. Repeat

Begin workout

1. TRX suspended lunge 10 each side
2. TRX sprint 30 seconds
3. Step up to reverse lunge
4. TRX mountain climber 30 seconds
5. Side lunge 10 each side
6. Box jumps 30 seconds

Repeat 3 rounds

Cool down with warrior sequence

Progress by adding repetitions or weights

So here's the hard part. If you would rather I coach you through these routines one-to-one just fire me an email. There will be a £10 charge but I will spend as long as you want (OK a 2 hour limit) to answer any questions you may have.

Soon the workouts will be uploaded to a popular platform so that personal interaction will only be available for a limited amount of time.

