ZERO TO 5K: BASE & BUILD PLAN

A 5K is a great goal for new runners or those returning to the sport!

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A gentle, safe, confidence-building structure for beginners or runners returning from injury or time-off.

Why This Plan Works

- **You don't need to be running right now -** this plan starts with walking and short run intervals.
- **You don't need speed or experience -** Consistency matters more than pace.
- **You DO need a solid base -** a simple4-week base phase prepares your body for running.

How to Know You're Ready to Start

- **You can walk 20-30 minutes comfortably** No pain or lingering soreness
- **You can exercise 3-4 days per week -** Walking, cross-training or light strength training
- **You are cleared for activity -** Especially important for post-injury or other medical conditions requiring a medical doctor's supervision.

BASE PHASE (Weeks 1 - 4)

Build strength, mobility, endurance and confidence before running

Week 1
- Walk 20–30 minutes, 3–4 days
- Light mobility 1–2 days
- Optional: gentle bike or elliptical

Week 2
- Walk 25–35 minutes, 3–4 days
- Add 2–3 × 30-second jogs if comfortable
- Light strength 1 day (bodyweight)

Week 3
- Walk 30–40 minutes, 3–4 days
- Add 3–4 × 45-second jogs
- Strength 1–2 days (glutes, core)

See KickStrength for ideas!

Week 4
- Walk 35–45 minutes, 3–4 days
- Add 4–6 × 1-minute jogs
- Strength 1–2 days
- Long walk: 45–50 minutes

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BUILD PHASE (Weeks 5–8)

Gradually shift from run-walk to steady running.

Week 5
- Run-walk: 1 min run / 2 min walk × 8–10 rounds
- 3 run-walk days
- Strength 1 day

Week 6
- Run-walk: 2 min run / 2 min walk × 6–8 rounds
- 3–4 run-walk days
- Long run-walk: 20–25 minutes

Week 7
- Run-walk: 3 min run / 2 min walk × 5–7 rounds
- 3–4 run days
- Long run-walk: 25–30 minutes

Weeks 8
- Run-walk: 4 min run / 1 min walk × 5–6 rounds
- Optional steady run: 10–12 minutes
- Long run-walk: 30–35 minutes

BOTTOM LINE If you can complete this Base + Build structure feeling steady — not depleted — you're ready to run your first 5K or return to running safely after injury.

FUN FIRST-RACE TIPS + TRICKS

- Warm up with a walk before the race
- Everyone takes off fast. Let them. Your best race happens when you ease in.
- Start slow — really slow
- Don't try anything new
- No new shoes, no new breakfast, no new gear. Familiar = calm.
- Find the "easy pace" or "run-walk" section. It makes the whole race smoother
- Smile at the start line It relaxes your shoulders and reminds your brain this is supposed to be fun.
- High-five a volunteer Instant mood boost. Also: they love it.
- Don't chase your watch Run by feel. Your first race is about finishing strong, not hitting numbers.
- Save energy for the last half mile Crowds + adrenaline = your best kick.

Celebrate the finish Take the medal. Take the photo. Take the moment. You earned it!!

