

Marathon Training Time Commitment

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Healthfully achieving the fitness conditioning for a marathon (26.2 miles of running and/or walking) is a worthy goal, like climbing an inspiring mountain.

The challenge of this goal will be somewhat different for different athletes with special finishing time goals. Some will want to train to finish happy and healthy. Others will want to finish under some specific time, like six or five hours as fitness walkers or racewalkers, or four or even three hours as runners. Some will want to run so as to qualify for the Boston Marathon, a widely recognized marathon runner's goal. A few may even want to continue their current training so as to qualify for the USA Olympic Trials. And a few may also be training to place in or win in their age group or other special race division.

Regardless of these special individual goals for a marathon performance, all of us will traverse 26.2 miles; a remarkable achievement. Only a few will ever complete a marathon despite the appearance that "everyone is running or walking". Only a small percentage of our population, less than 1%, will be marathoners.

Depending on one's initial health and fitness, marathon goal, and when one begins a 13-20 week marathon training program, the time commitment will vary from person to person.

The training for everyone is progressive, gradually increasing the occasional long easy run or walk every week to two weeks. The intermediate distance workouts will also gradually increase in duration during the week.

Everyone will start with about three to four days of weekly training times of varying duration, and some will be able to achieve the marathon on this frequency of training. Others will discover how much better they feel and will increase their frequency of training to five or six days a week of some training activity.

Those with the highest fitness level and the fastest time goals will be able to tolerate higher levels of training at faster paces. These athletes may train and cross-train as many as twenty hours a week.

Those starting out with lower fitness will begin training with perhaps a maximum of two hours per week of training and exercises the first week or so. This person will likely see their training rise to a maximum of perhaps 7-9 hours by the third week before the marathon date. Then the relative resting "tapering" period of training begins.

The average marathoner will perhaps train as much as perhaps 8-10 hours during their peak week of training.

Bottom line: Those training for and fit for a marathon tend to be more generally productive throughout their days and weeks because of their increased health, fitness and mental conditioning that comes with the satisfying self-discipline of achieving the marathon. It's like knowing you've climbed an inspiring mountain!

Riddle: How does one take time out of the week and yet have more time to work and play?

Answer: Commit daily time to health and fitness activities.