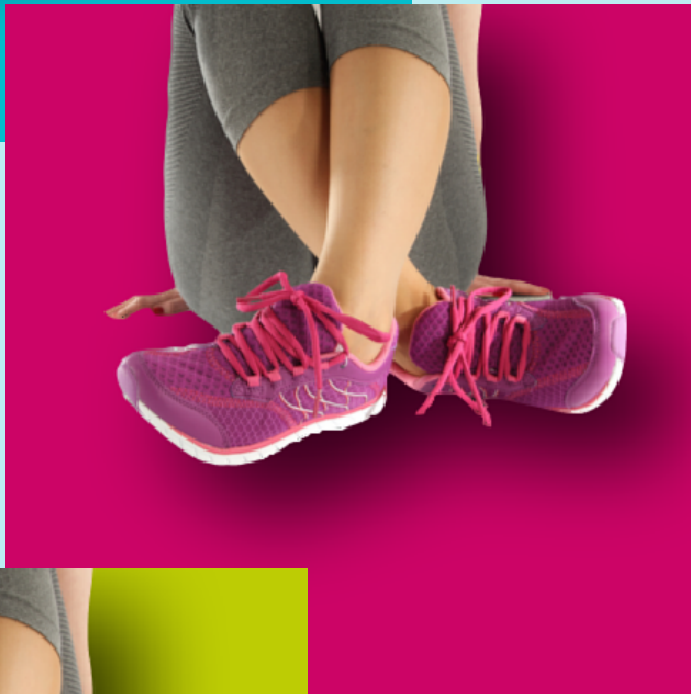




**HOOKED ON  
RUNNING**  
Smart training for busy women



# Half Marathon Training: 3 Mistakes You Won't Want to Make

## In Brief

### Mistake #1: Only allowing 12 weeks of training for your half marathon

- 12 weeks of training isn't long enough to do a half marathon justice.
- In reality, you have only 7 or 8 weeks to build your mileage once you take into account recovery weeks, and doing your longest long run at the end of week 10
- It takes 2-3 weeks to get the training effect from a long run, so a long run done in week 11 will make you fitter for the weeks AFTER the race!
- Trying to build your mileage too quickly can result in injury and/or illness
- Life can get in the way despite best intentions, so a bit of wriggle room is always good

### Mistake #2: Following the "10% Rule"

No-one seems to know how this "rule" came about, but it's not based on any scientific research. The 10% rule simply states you should increase your mileage by 10% each week.

- This might be too conservative for you, and leave you at less than peak fitness for the race
- This might be too aggressive for you and put you at risk of injury and illness
- It doesn't take into account your need for recovery weeks.
- You need to base each cycle of training on how you responded to the previous cycle. A hard and fast rule doesn't allow you to do this.

### Mistake #3: Training at the Wrong Pace

- Many women do all their running at a medium level of intensity, making their longer runs very difficult and leaving not much in the tank for speed work
- Your long run pace should be at least 25% slower than your *current* 5k race pace
- Short efforts followed by standing rest intervals are unlikely to get you faster for a half marathon. Your top end speed is not the limiting factor when it comes to running a faster half marathon.

Well thank you thank you thank you.

You have kept me on track and I achieved a time I only dreamt about!

Your confidence in the time I could achieve was surprising but I guess you've seen it all before!! I love my splits below and the ranking.

The best bit is that I'm feeling great not stuffed. Might be a different story tomorrow morning.

-Rachel Hadfield

# The Detail

## Mistake #1: Leaving only 12 weeks lead time to train for the half marathon

I know. If 12 weeks isn't long enough to train for a half marathon, then why are there so many 12 week half marathon training programs floating round the internet? I'm not entirely sure, but I do know that unless you keep yourself in pretty good shape year round, 12 weeks simply isn't enough time to develop the aerobic capacity and muscular strength required to do the half marathon justice.

### Most women will be on the course for around 2 hours

A quick look at the results for 4 of the big half marathons here in Australia this year shows that more than 85% of women are out on the course for longer than 1 hour 50, so statistically speaking, that's likely to be you. No matter what level of intensity you are running at, around 2 hours is a long time to be running. It puts tremendous stress on the muscles in your legs, and you need to prepare your body for that challenge in training. Those last 5k will feel a whole lot easier if you've got enough training in your legs.

If you allow yourself more than 12 weeks to train for the half, you're under a lot less pressure to complete a training session if you're not feeling up to it. Running when you're unwell or maybe have a little niggle, can make things much worse. If you've given yourself plenty of time to prepare for the half, you'll be able to take extra recovery days if needed. And let's face it, life gets in the way of training sometimes too -kids, partners, parents, work, all place demands on our time, and occasionally, missing a training session has to happen.

### Faster and more experienced runners

If you're a more experienced runner and training to improve your half marathon time, you'll be putting in a lot of miles at half marathon pace, so you need a good strength and aerobic foundation to be able to do this. The first 6-8 weeks of your training program can be used to build this foundation. You can then use another 6-8 weeks for half marathon specific training (more on that later), and a week or possibly two to taper. That's 13-18 weeks of training. Of course, if you're a more experienced runner and in reasonable shape, you can step up your training over 12 weeks and run well, but to be at your best, you'll likely need more than a 12 week build up.

### Give your body time to adapt to your training

A good training program will give you a recovery week, usually every third or fourth week (though everyone is different, and a recovery week every 5th week might suit you better). This recovery week becomes even more important as you get older, as does good recovery in general.

In a nutshell, training works like this: You train repeatedly. Your body says to itself “Crikey. If she’s going to keep doing this to me, I’d better get stronger so I can cope with it”.

For your body to adapt to the training stress you are placing on it, it needs a bit of down time. It needs to repair the minor damage training places on it, so it can come back a little bit stronger ready for the next step up in training. That’s the theory anyway, but just like other forms of stress, if you are continually stressed with no respite, over time you’ll either break down with injury or exhaustion, or at the least your performance will plateau.

### Progressing your long run takes more than 12 weeks

Understanding the importance of a recovery week, and the importance of building aerobic, muscular and mental strength through long runs, we can take a look at how many weeks it might take you to build up to at least one long run of two hours before race day.

Let’s assume you’re already running 3 times a week, and at least one of those runs is for 55-60 minutes. The progression of your long run might look something like the plan below. Keep in mind the long run is just one component of your training, and other workouts might be increasing in either volume or intensity at the same time.

Week 1: 60 mins	Week 6: 90 mins	Week 11: 120 mins
Week 2: 70 mins	Week 7: 100 mins	Week 12: 90 mins (recovery week)
Week 3: 80 mins	Week 8: 80 mins (recovery week)	Week 13: 120 mins
Week 4: 60 mins (recovery week)	Week 9: 100 mins	Week 14: 80-90 mins
Week 5: 80 mins	Week 10: 110 mins	Week 15: Race Day!

Even though following this protocol you’d do a two hour run in week 11, your body will not feel the benefits of that training session for 2-3 weeks. So the extra fitness you gain from your long run in week 11 will help you to better complete your long run in week 13, which in turn will enable a better performance and more enjoyable experience in week 15!

### Mistake #2: Following the 10% rule to increase your weekly mileage

The 10% rule is pretty simple, which probably accounts for its wide usage in popular running publications. It states that you should increase your mileage by 10% each week. So if you're running 15km a week right now, next week you should run 16.5km, the following week 18.15km, the following 20km etc.

We can see a problem with this already, in that it doesn't give you any down time, but the main problem with the 10% rule is that it is so general and doesn't cater to many different training situations. And...then there's the fact that there's no scientific research to support it. That's right. The widely applied "10% rule" is a figure that seems to have been plucked out of the air for no particular reason other than it has a nice ring to it.

Following the 10% rule might mean you are way too conservative with increasing your training load, or it might mean you're increasing your training load too aggressively. A good training program caters to individual circumstances, and a blanket rule just doesn't work on that level.

#### How to increase your weekly mileage - less experienced runners

##### Consistency

One of the questions I ask women when they first start training with me is how much running they do. Typically, the answer is 3-4 runs a week including a long run on the weekend. Then we talk about the specific training they've done over the past couple of weeks. Often, it turns out that they are doing two to three sessions /week rather than the four they think they are doing.

Unless you're already the most dedicated of runners, you'll find that a commitment to consistently completing all your planned sessions will increase your mileage. Most likely, you'll be doing one extra session a week on top of what you had actually been doing in the past, as compared to what you had planned to do. Once you're regularly getting in all your planned training sessions you can look at other ways to increase your mileage.

## Progressing Your Training Plan

Other ways to increase your training include:

1. Adding another run in each week
2. Increasing the duration of your shorter runs
3. Increasing the duration of your long run
4. A combination of any two of these, or all three

Keep in mind that your mileage does not need to go ever upwards. You might increase your shorter mid-week runs by 10 minutes, and stay at that increased mileage for a couple of weeks, then have a recovery week, and then add another short run into your schedule after that. There's no one size fits all approach to training, so I can't give you the definitive answer to what's right for you in this paper. Here's just one example of how you might increase your weekly mileage.

<b>Week 1</b> 25 minutes 25 minutes 60 minutes	<b>Week 3</b> 30 minutes 30 minutes 80 minutes  12% increase on previous week	<b>Week 5</b> 20 minutes 30 minutes 30 minutes 90 minutes  21% increase over week 3
<b>Week 2</b> 30 minutes 30 minutes 65 minutes  13% increase on previous week	<b>Week 4</b> 20 minutes 20 minutes 20 minutes 65 minutes (you've added an extra run in, but total running decreases by 10 % from previous week for recovery)	<b>Week 6</b> 20 minutes 30 minutes 30 minutes 95 minutes (only a 3% increase due to a steeper increase the previous week)

## Mileage increases for experienced runners

If you're an experienced runner, you're likely to have a particular volume of training which suits you well. You're comfortable with that volume of training, but moving past it is a challenge.

Let's say that volume is 50km per week. You can jump pretty quickly up to that 50km per week after a break in training, or a period of lower volume. You might be ticking along with 3 x 10 k runs/week during a period of low volume training and you could rev up to 50k within 3 weeks.

Week 0: 10km, 10km, 10km

Week 1: 10km, 10km, 10km, 10km (33% increase)

Week 2: 10km, 10km, 10km, 15km ((12.5% increase)

Week 3: 10km, 10km, 10km, 20km (11% increase)

Once you've hit that sweet spot, your volume and intensity will need to increase in much smaller increments to avoid injury. Maybe you'll add another weekly 5k run, with a view to that session becoming a speed session after a few weeks. The possibilities are endless. 10% simply doesn't come into it.

## Mistake #3: Training at the wrong pace

### Easy run pace

Are you running your easy runs too fast? Most likely, you are. At least 80% of your training should be run at a very easy pace. That means 2-3/10 on the [Rating of Perceived Exertion](#). And that can be a lot slower than you realise. Your long run should be at least 25% slower than your 5k race pace, and a recovery run should be even slower than that. That's a recent 5k race time, not your best ever by the way. If you don't have a recent 5k race time, you can do a 3k time trial (see appendix).

5k time	5k pace	Easy Run Pace
20 mins	4 mins/km	5 mins/km or slower
25 mins	5 mins/km	6:15/km or slower
28 mins	5:36/km	7 mins/km or slower

### Speed Training

For most runners, improving your top end speed is NOT going to get you faster in a half marathon. Nor is working on your 200m, 400m or even 3000m speed likely to get you much improvement over the half marathon distance. That's not to say that speed training is not important, but you do need to make sure you're doing the right sort of speed training.

If you're a beginner, a chronic under-trainer, or you've started your training with less than 12 weeks lead time, you might be better sticking to easier runs and building your mileage. It's your aerobic conditioning that you need to work on to get you to the finish faster. Without a good aerobic system, it doesn't matter how fast you can run over a short distance, it's not going to help with your half marathon time.

If you have a good training foundation and you're ready for some speed training, work on longer efforts with active recovery, tempo runs, or fast finishing runs. Here are a few half marathon specific workouts for you to try.

### Workout 1

10 minutes very easy running (2-3/10 on RPE)

6\* 1 minute @ 8/10, 2 minutes @ 2/10

10 minutes very easy running (2-3/10 on RPE)

### Workout 2

10 minutes very easy running (2-3/10 on RPE)

6\* 2 minute @ 6\*7/10, 2 minutes @ 2/10

10 minutes very easy running (2-3/10 on RPE)

### Workout 3

Fast finish run

30-60 minute easy run PLUS 10-20 minutes @ 6/10 to finish.

If it's your first time trying this type of run, you're best off starting with 30 mins of easy running followed by 10 minutes of harder running and building up to the longer fast finishing runs

### Workout 4

11-12 km cut back

Run your first km at an easy pace to warm up, let's say 6:30/km. Then get progressively faster.

1 - 6:30

2 - 6:25

3 - 6:20

4 - 6:15

5 - 6:10

6 - 6:05

7 - 6:00

8 - 5:55

9 - 5:50

10 - 5:45

11 - 5:40

If you can hold 5:40 for another km do so, otherwise, call it a day and have 5-10 mins slow running to cool down.



## Get Your Training on Track Fast

[Click here](#) for more information about Hooked on Running's online coaching

### What people are saying about online coaching with Hooked on Running

"Thank's Kirsten ... for my amazing coaching program, no way could I have made the 50km without your expertise! It's all in the training.

We came in 5th in our category and 7th overall! If anybody is training for a race they have to get you to write them a program."

-Lisa Penson

"I ran this morning keeping the pace slower to start with and avoiding thinking about "hurrying up". I do believe at one point I actually had the thought that it was somewhat enjoyable! The main thing is that it has taken the pressure off in thinking that I "should" be doing certain times...so thanks for that!"

-Shann

## Appendix

### 3km time trial to set your training paces

You can use a 3km time trial to help set a pace range for your training runs if you don't have a recent 5k race time. Your 3km race pace would be faster than your 5k race pace, but a time trial pace will be slower than a race pace (unless you have super-human willpower and can run as hard against the clock as you can against real people). The shorter distance tends to be cancelled out by the fact you're running on your own, so a 3k time trial pace equates roughly to a 5k race pace.

#### Preparing for the Time Trial

Take a rest day or two before your time trial to freshen up a bit. Try to get a couple of good nights' sleep.

It's good to map out your route before you run. Pick flat terrain, and avoid a route with lots of sharp corners for you to negotiate. You can do this on a track if you want to, or on the footpath, but no big hills.

NOTE: If you have been feeling unwell in the week leading up to the time trial, you need to postpone it, until you are better, and have been well for at least a week. Remember viruses can hang around in your body for a lot longer than you realise. A time trial done when you are unwell will not be a true reflection of what you are capable of, and it could be dangerous.

#### Warm Up

Warm up at an easy pace for 5-10 mins @ 3-4/10 intensity.

Pick the pace up over the next 5 mins, so that you finish the last minute at 7/10.

Have a good 2 mins or so walking recovery.

Do a few stride throughs - cover 50-75m @ 7/10 -8/10 intensity. Don't go crazy, you should still have something in reserve. Walk slowly back to the start, and repeat when you are feeling recovered. 3-5 in total is fine.

Stride throughs are just faster running over a short distance, preparing you for the faster session ahead. You just run normally. There is no need to "stride out", or lengthen your stride.

Let yourself recover with 5 mins of walking

You're now warmed up and ready for your 3km Time Trial.

### The Time Trial

Go to the start of your marked out route, and run like you mean business. This is a 3km time trial. Run as if you are racing. At the end, there shouldn't be anything left in the tank. At all.

That does not mean to run like the clappers for 400m then fall in a heap and try to hold!

If you have done a time trial or a 5k race in the last couple of months, you could aim to better that pace, but remember that even 5 seconds per km faster can take a lot more effort.

If you haven't done a time trial before, be conservative. Try to settle into a rhythm quickly, so that you're feeling "comfortably uncomfortable" for the first 1k. The next 1500m should see you gradually working a little harder. Dig in for the last 500m, and give it what you have left over the last 200m.

### Cool Down

Whilst there's not an awful lot of research going around on what the role of a cool down is in recovery and injury prevention, it is reasonable to assume that a light jog for 10-15 minutes after a lactate producing effort will help your body to adapt to dealing with that lactate efficiently and converting it back to fuel for your body. So, definitely have a jog after this session.

Make sure you record your time!

Have fun

## Disclaimer

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You accept full responsibility of any risk of injury or harm to yourself when performing any exercises that may be described in this ebook.

This information should not be relied upon or considered as a replacement for medical advice for specific conditions or as a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. You should always consult with your medical health care provider in the first instance if you have any questions about your health. If you have a pre-existing injury or medical condition, or suspect you may have a medical condition, you should consult with your physician or other medical health care provider in the first instance for medical advice and ensure you are cleared before undertaking any form of exercise.

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