

Event day planning

Mind's brilliant personal trainer, Kev Betts, takes you through the weeks and days leading up to the marathon so you can make sure you're fully prepared.

Running a marathon can be scary, especially if you're new to it. What I've found is that planning, and preparation are vital to a good race and that the marathon begins almost a week before you start running. You know the old saying – fail to prepare, prepare to fail. And so... here are my top tips for getting race ready.

The week before the race

Check the rules and review your communications

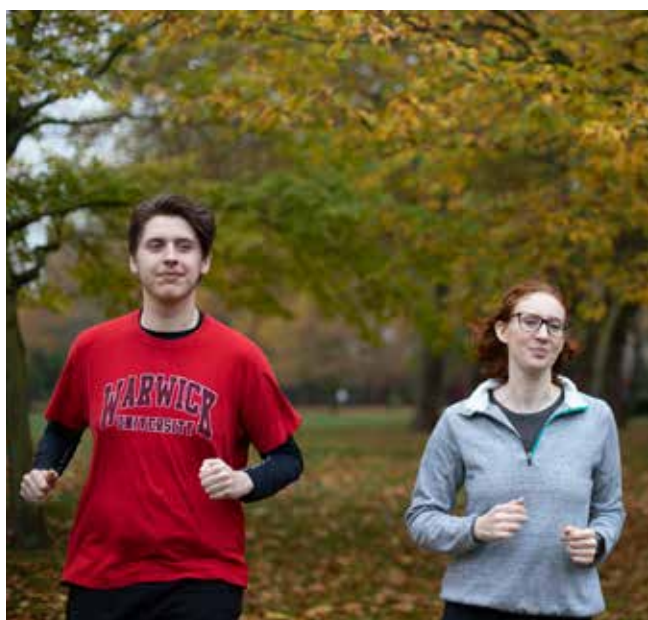
Every race is different and rules may vary. Some events don't allow earphones, for instance. And are there instructions they've sent you in advance that you need to follow? It might be social distancing, wave timings or simply an update of travel arrangements.

Organisers often don't post things now, so have a thorough search of your emails and the event website – it could contain really important information.

Learn and visualise your route

This sounds cheesy, but your race preparation isn't just physical. There's a lot you can do mentally to prepare yourself. Think about how you might feel at certain landmarks, and how you will deal with those feelings.

Run through the race in your head from mile 1 to mile 26. It will help defeat anxiety and will quash any in-race surprises.



Stretch/foam roll

Stretching is contentious in sport and exercise at the minute. Should we? Shouldn't we? Static? Dynamic? All I know is that so long as you don't push yourself too hard in those stretches, they shouldn't do any harm. If you're used to foam rolling, then give the muscles a bit of an iron out whilst you're watching the telly, too.



Don't just stop!

Taper does not mean stop! The taper (doing less in the run up to the marathon) is a difficult thing. Many people see it as a stopping point. It's not! Keep running and simply reduce the distances and intensity of the runs. It's important to keep your muscles active and your joints moving.

You should continue to run at the same frequency as you did in your training, but you should reduce how hard you work and how far you run. You won't gain any fitness this week, but it will help to keep you in race mode.

Work out your pacing strategy

For those who just want to finish, this might not be so important. But if you have a time in mind, work out what your average mile pace should be throughout the race to hit that time. Remember that it's a balancing act – do you have the skill and fortitude to stick to one pace throughout?

Are you likely to slow and therefore need a 'buffer' early on to accommodate slower late miles? Some words of warning – don't let this pacing rule your race. Reassess it throughout the race. It might happen, it might not. Either way, you're still running a marathon.



The days before

Make sure you have everything you need

You don't need to pack just yet, but check that you have everything on your essential kit list. Got new kit? Give it a wash and take it on a test run – especially tops.

You can spot a new half marathon runner by the state of his nipples. Blood on vest = hasn't washed or tried a brand new vest. Don't be that guy (or girl!).

Prepare your playlist, if you must listen to music

Get your track listing ready and rock and roll yourself around the course. Have you thought about using music intermittently?

During the tough times, instead of at all times? Quiet part of the course? Whack it on.

Tough later miles? Whack it on. Got a special song that makes you emotional and motivated? Save it up and whack it on!

Get out there and enjoy it!

Count up, then count down. Have mini victories and small targets - I needn't say any more than this. This race is your procession so enjoy it.

You've worked hard to get there after some big, big training efforts. Identify those mini targets as you get around – the people you love, the landmarks, the 5ks or the half way – whatever helps, do it!

