

Walk or Run Your Way to a 5K

Supports: Building Block 20 — Make Being Active a Way of Life: Overcoming Barriers

Why It Matters

Maybe you have always wondered what it would feel like to cross a 5K finish line. Whether you plan to walk every step, run the whole way, or mix the two, you can get there with a gradual, forgiving plan. Starting to move really does begin with a single step, and this handout lays out a build-up that meets you at your level and grows with you.

What to Know

Ease into it, week by week

The idea is simple: start with short, comfortable sessions about three times a week and slowly add time. If you are newer to activity, begin with gentle walks; if you have some walking behind you, you can start a little longer. There is no rush — you set the pace.

- Early weeks: walk a handful of minutes at an easy pace, three times a week
- Middle weeks: add a warm-up, then alternate short brisk or jogging intervals with easy walking
- Later weeks: gradually lengthen the faster intervals or add a few more of them
- Always bookend each session with a few minutes of easy walking to warm up and cool down

Walk, run, or both — all of it counts

There is nothing wrong with walking part or all of a 5K, and you will be in great company at any race. If jogging intervals feel good, you can slowly trade walking time for jogging time; if they do not, staying a walker is a completely valid and worthy goal.

Support your training

A few small things make the build-up smoother: supportive shoes, weather-appropriate clothing, and staying hydrated. Adding a couple of strength sessions a week can round out your routine, and rest days are part of the plan — they let your body recover and come back stronger.

Start where you are. Choose the starting point that matches your body today and advance your time and intensity only as it feels comfortable. Because this raises your activity level, check with your physician before you begin, especially if you have a chronic condition or symptoms.

Try This

Picture your own path to a 5K and what would make it enjoyable and sustainable for you.

- ? Would you rather aim to walk it, run it, or blend the two — and why does that appeal to you?
- ? Which three days each week could you protect for your training sessions?
- ? What would help keep you motivated along the way, such as a friend, a podcast, or a favorite route?