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## TRAINING GUIDE FOR RUNNING A



وزارة الرياضة  
Ministry of Sport

رؤية  
2030  
المملكة العربية السعودية  
KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA

# 21 KM Challenge Accepted! RACE

## Take on your first big leap

Are you ready to challenge yourself and take a leap towards an unforgettable achievement? The 21.0975 KM track is a test of endurance and determination. This is your chance to push beyond your limits and discover the strength within. This 'My 1st Half-Marathon' training guide will be your digital companion. From physical and mental preparation to expert training techniques and insider tip If you've already completed the 10K track before, then this challenge is for you!

## Believe in yourself

Taking on your first half-marathon is a journey that might feel daunting at first, but remember—every run starts with a single step. Trust in your ability, focus on progress not perfection.

## You a hero of the people

When you take on the challenge of a half-marathon, you inspire more than just yourself—you inspire everyone around you. Involve your loved ones in your journey They sure will feel encouraged to take on the challenge too!

## Miles of smiles

Remember, the goal is to enjoy the experience! Marathons are a great way to have fun, get fresh air, and relieve stress



# All the benefits of running

It's always good to keep them in mind!



## Physical benefit

Running is a full-body practice that strengthens your heart, muscles, boosts your circulation and enhances endurance.

## Mental benefit

When you run, something magical happens: your mind clears, stress fades, and you become more calm and focused.

## Reconnect with the world

Running gives you a chance to reconnect with yourself, others and nature. Unplug from the noise and recharge your spirit.

## The power of achievement

Every run, whether it's a quick jog or a long-distance challenge, is an accomplishment worth celebrating. Running teaches us resilience, commitment, and the joy of pushing past limits.

# Running is a form of selfcare

# VOGAB LIST

## Anti-chafing cream

A protection solution. It protects the skin from irritation or damage caused by friction.

## Fartlek

A Swedish word which means "speed play": a system of training for distance runners in which the track and pace are changing.

## Maximal Aerobic Speed (MAS)

A training method which consists in alternating periods of high-intensity exercise (running at a higher speed) with breaks in between. Interval training allows for greater physiological progression and is often practiced on professional tracks.

## Jogging

Is a low intensity running exercise, it helps with building stamina. You should experience less breathlessness and muscle fatigue when jogging.

## Pace

The average time it takes you to run 1km. Can you run 10km in 1 hour? Therefore, your average pace is 6 minutes per kilometer.

## Start area

Marathon runners do not leave at the same time, but from space. This helps in avoiding congestion at both the start and finish lines.

## Energy gels

During intense exercise consuming energy gels provide a fast energy boost.

## Glycogen

This is how your muscles and liver store glucose (sugar), which is one of the sources for fuel and energy

## Interval training

A training method which consists in alternating periods of high-intensity exercise (running at a higher speed) with breaks in between. Interval training allows for greater physiological progression and is often practiced on professional tracks.

## Hitting the wall

The concept of "Hitting the wall" can occur around the 30km mark. After a certain level of physical exertion, glycogen levels deplete. It's when you run out of muscle fuel.

## Personal Best

Personal Best (PB) is used to refer to your best time recorded over a given distance.

## Stress test

A physical examination where a doctor monitors your heart's activity, either on an exercise bike or treadmill. Marathoners should get a checkup before the race, especially if they are over 40!

# Train to your ability



Get to know yourself, your strength points and endurance levels, that way you'll know exactly what is the goal you can set.

- Get to know yourself and appreciate your potential. As you train, your pace, stamina and stride will improve.
- Stay humble. Running a long race safely requires basic experience to help prevent injuries. Start at a comfortable pace; focus on enjoying the experience. Stick to your training plan and resist the urge to push beyond it.

## Some tips for time-based performance

- Never underestimate small improvements. Progressing with just a few seconds is a powerful sign. Every second counts!
- Don't compare your performances to anyone else's. Use your best Half-Marathon time as a starting point to estimate your progress.
- Pace leaders are here to help participants achieve their target times by maintaining a consistent pace throughout the race. Look for them on race day—they'll often carry signs or wear visible markers with their goal time.

# First time

Here are tips to enjoy your journey

## 1 Find a partner or group to join

The best way to stay motivated is the support and encouragement from others!

## 2 Consistency is key

Aim to run 2-3 times a week. This frequency helps build the endurance and strength needed to tackle the half-marathon distance.

## 3 Patience equals progress

Small, consistent improvements will build your stamina and ensure you're prepared for the big day.

## 4 Pre-run fuel

Don't forget your diet. The night before a long run, fuel up with slow-release carbs like sweet potatoes or quinoa. Post-run, replenish with a balanced snack that includes protein to aid recovery and keep your energy high.

## 5 Run fuel

Incorporate energy products like gels into your routine so your body gets used to fueling during long runs. Practice with these products to see what works for you, ensuring you're ready for race day.

## 6 Mix up your routes

Varying your running routes will help you stay flexible and ready for race day.

## 7 Test your gear

Dress for the weather conditions and use your training runs to try out the gears you plan to wear on race day. This way, you'll know exactly what works best for you and avoid any surprises.

## 8 Track your progress

Tracking your results every week will help you see how far you've come and keep you motivated.





# The runner's wardrobe

## Footwear

Comfortable shoes are essential! Make sure your shoes fit properly and feel comfortable. Try them during your training, and avoid wearing brand-new shoes on race day to prevent discomfort.

## Outfit

Choose clothing that makes you feel comfortable, every piece you wear matters, from socks to caps! When it comes to t-shirts, don't worry we've got you covered with a Riyadh Marathon t-shirt included in your race kit!

## Hydration belt

A hydration belt is a runner's best friend, helping you stay hydrated throughout the race. Be sure to try it out during your training.

## Food and water

We've set up refreshment stations along the tracks to keep you hydrated. Free to bring your own snacks, such as fruit, or protein bars, to fuel your journey.

## Race bib

Your race bib is your entry pass to the event. Be sure to collect it in advance and wear it on race day!

## Music

A good playlist can boost your energy and feel invincible. That's exactly why music and cheers will follow along the road!

# BEFORE TRAINING

## Consistency is key

Consistency will be your greatest ally. There will be moments when you feel unstoppable, and sometimes fatigue sets in. Stay committed, push through the tough days, and focus on making steady progress

## Gradually increase intensity

Your body will gradually adapt to the training, becoming stronger and more capable of handling increased exertion. Don't rush the process, stick to the prescribed distances and pace to ensure steady improvement and avoid burnout.

## 3 sessions a week

Training for a 21.0975 km race requires focus. Aim for at least three runs per week, each serving a different purpose:

### **1** Long runs

Build endurance and prepare your body for longer distances

### **2** Interval training

Alternate between sprinting and recovery to boost speed and stamina.

### **3** Cross training

Mix it up with activities like swimming, cycling, or strength training to enhance overall fitness and prevent injury

## A 1-hour test run to begin

Before diving into your training plan, it's important to know your running capacity. Schedule an initial 60-minute test run where you can jog at a comfortable pace. This session will give you a solid baseline for where you're starting from and help you gauge how to adjust your training plan.





# The ideal diet

## Water

### Every day

Drink 35 ml of water per kilogram of body weight daily

### During training

Aim to drink 800-500 ml of water per hour of training. Sip regularly, about 3-4 times every 20-25 minutes to stay hydrated.

### Post workout

Rehydrate with around three liters of water in the hours after your workout. Don't wait until you're thirsty, as this can affect your performance

### During the race

Don't skip water stations, small sips regularly will help you stay strong throughout the race.

## Food

### Before the Half-Marathon

Test your nutrition and hydration strategy during long runs (2+ hours). Focus on fueling with slow-release carbs and familiar foods like dried fruits and bananas. three days prior to race day, increase carbs, fats, and proteins to maximize glycogen storage.

### Race day

Time your last meal based on the race start time. Consume carbs (gels, chews, fruit purées) with water, but avoid overeating and prevent digestive issues. Hydrate well before the race, and drink room-temperature water.

### After the Half-Marathon

Within 30 minutes of finishing, replenish with mineral-rich water and easily digestible foods to support recovery. Keep muscle mass by maintaining glycogen levels.

# FOLLOW your diet

Here is a chart for you to use as a guide during your preparation. It's simple Try to tick all the boxes during your training! Start by trying to tick 4 boxes at a time.

<b>Guideline</b>	
Drink at least two liters of water every day + 500 ml per hour of sport.	
Never skip the three main meals.	
If you need a snack, eat the portion of fruit initially planned for the following meal.	
Meals should last at least 20 minutes: the time needed to feel full. Include a starter (e.g. soup).	
Reduce the amount of sugary drinks you consume (fizzy drinks, sweetened hot drinks, fruit juice, squash).	
Cut down on sparkling water as it contains salt except after a session lasting more than 1.5 hours.	
<b>Daily Hydration</b>	
Eat mostly whole grains: pasta, rice, bulgur, wheat, wholemeal/sourdough/granary bread.	
In the evening, consume half the quantity of grains, unless it is the night before a session lasting more than 1.5 hours.	

## Grain



Your plate should always contain more vegetables than starchy foods.

Do not combine bread and starchy foods in the same meal. Always keep a grain product, as these are real sources of fuel.

During breakfast, avoid crackers and biscuits as they do not satisfy your hunger for long.

Choose sugar-free muesli (with nuts and dried fruits or chocolate chips) rather than sweetened, processed, shaped or extruded cereals.

## BALANCED MEALS



Add a starter of raw vegetables if your main course does not contain any vegetables.

Consume a product rich in calcium (almonds, tofu, spinach, beans, fruits) with every meal (three times a day). Ideally, move it to being a post-workout snack.

Eat a portion of fresh fruit with every meal (so three times a day).

Replace the cream, butter and frying oil in your main meals with a tablespoon of olive oil per meal.



# The ABC's of physical preparation

**You're a hero!**

## **Build a solid foundation**

Train for 8-6 weeks before your half-marathon. Begin with controlled sessions, alternating between jogging and slow running for 1 hour and 15 minutes.

## **General Physical Preparation (GPP)**

Focus on strength training for your core and lower body to lay the foundation for endurance and mental readiness.

## **The long run**

Long runs help your body prepare for running over two hours. Dedicate weekends for these runs and invite friends for motivation.

## **Mastering long runs**

Long runs are your key weekly session. Optimise them by:

- Running on a measured, flat course to track distance and avoid injury.
- Testing hydration and nutrition strategies (e.g., hydration belt and energy gels) to ensure they work for you.



# The right pace

## **Find your target pace**

On race day, aim to maintain a steady pace over the 21 km. Your goal is to run at a sustainable speed that balances performance and energy. This pace should be faster than recovery runs but still comfortable. You should be able to maintain long, smooth strides with only moderate shortness of breath.

## **Stick to your pace**

On race day, conditions may differ from your training. If you're struggling to find your pace, stay calm! Focus on your breathing and muscle discomfort (such as stitches) and adjust accordingly. You've found your target pace if you can talk in full sentences while running. If you're short of breath, slow down

# Advancing your running journey

## 8 weeks to go

Focus on interval sessions to improve speed and running efficiency. The goal is to build endurance to maintain a steady pace without fatiguing too quickly.

## Progress Gradually

Gradually increase your workout duration by 10-15 % each week. This helps your body adapt safely and prevents injury. However, don't push past your limits too hard if you don't feel comfortable.

## Interval Training Sessions

These involve alternating periods of effort and recovery, improving cardiovascular fitness, running form, and pacing skills. Interval training challenges your body, builds stamina, and prepares you for race-day performance.

## Examples of Interval Sessions

### The 30/30

This is the most basic interval training technique. It consists of a repetition of sets: 30 seconds fast, 30 seconds slow (slow jog rather than walking), with the advantage of being possible on all types of terrain. Beginners should try to achieve a first set of 10 repetitions of 30/30 before thinking about intervals over longer durations (and therefore distances).

### 10 x 400M

This classic interval training session requires good management of repetitions. Run 400 m fast then jog 200 m and start again. Make sure you keep the same pace, both in the 400 m of intense exercise and in the 200 m of recovery.

### 6 x 1,000M

A demanding set that requires a minimum of experience. It can be split into two separate blocks (2 x 3 x 1,000 m) with a recovery period of 2 minutes between each 1,000 m, and 4 minutes between the two blocks. To save the energy that will enable you to get to the end of the set, don't push yourself too hard during the first three sets. Do not be surprised if you find it hard: everyone finds it hard!

### 3 x 10 Minutes

This is a long interval training session. This type of workout, run at a pace that might be close to the speed at which you could run 10 km in a competition, teaches you to master a higher speed than that used during endurance sessions and thus be able to last at a high level of intensity. Recovery is at least three minutes of slow jogging. Take care, if you are too tired or short of breath, it is best to slow down or even cut the session short.



# The Final Countdown

## **14 days to go:**

Two weeks before race day, start tapering your training, especially long runs. Recovery is now your main focus. Use your last long runs to try out your race-day shoes.

## **Know your limits**

The half-marathon requires careful energy management. Long runs teach you to listen to your body and pace yourself to avoid running out of fuel during the race.

## **Don't overdo it**

If you're feeling excessive fatigue, cramps, soreness, or your resting heart rate is higher than usual, it may be time for a break. If symptoms persist, consider a doctor's check-up. Prioritize your well-being so you can continue enjoying your running journey!

# Race day checklist

## 1 A Balanced Breakfast

Stick to your good eating habits; don't go over the top!

### Avoid

- Too much coffee or juice.
- Ready meals.
- Fatty food.
- Large portions of sweetened cereal.
- Poorly tolerated dairy products.

### Go For

- Energy bars.
- Wholemeal bread.
- Plain muesli.
- Green tea.
- Water.

## 2 Take Care of Your Sensitive Areas!

Protect sensitive areas of your body where friction can cause skin irritation. Stick plasters on your skin at friction points with your clothing and runners. Apply a thick layer of anti-chafing cream to skin folds and areas where the skin can be irritated by prolonged friction while running.

## 3 Double or Triple Knot

Tighten your laces, but not too tight because feet swell during exercise.

## 4 Right on Time

Join the start zone designated according to your target time, and warm up to music, 20 minutes before the start time.

## 5 Happy and Positive!

Don't forget, you are here to enjoy yourself!



# 8 Weeks Half-Marathon Training Plan

## Week 1

### SESSION 1

Jog for 50 minutes at a comfortable pace.

### SESSION 2 (INTERVALS)

Warm up for 30 minutes. Run 4 sets of 2-minute intervals at moderate intensity. Recover with 2-minute slow jogs. Cool down for 10 minutes.

### SESSION 3

Long run for 1 hour and 20 minutes at a comfortable pace.

### COACH'S TIP

Ensure you can hold a conversation during training. Interval training should be controlled and at a moderate pace.

## Week 2

### SESSION 1

Jog for 50 minutes at a comfortable pace.

### SESSION 2 (INTERVALS)

Warm up for 30 minutes. Run 4 sets of 3-minute intervals at moderate intensity. Recover with 2-minute slow jogs. Cool down for 10 minutes.

### SESSION 3

Long run for 1 hour and 30 minutes at a comfortable pace.

### COACH'S TIP

Practice running on an empty stomach to get used to using energy reserves. Carry a snack in case of low energy.

## Week 3

### SESSION 1

Jog for 50 minutes at a comfortable pace.

### SESSION 2 (INTERVALS)

Warm up for 30 minutes. Run 3 sets of 5-minute intervals at moderate intensity. Recover with 2-minute slow jogs. Cool down for 10 minutes.

### SESSION 3

Long run for 1 hour and 40 minutes at a comfortable pace.

### COACH'S TIP

Use long runs to test your nutrition and hydration strategy.

## Week 4

### SESSION 1

Jog for 50 minutes at a comfortable pace.

### SESSION 2 (INTERVALS)

Warm up for 30 minutes. Run 6 sets of 1-minute intervals at moderate intensity. Recover with 2-minute slow jogs. Cool down for 10 minutes.

### SESSION 3

Long run for 1 hour and 10 minutes at a comfortable pace.

### COACH'S TIP

Maintain control during interval training. Ensure consistent pacing.

# Week 5

## SESSION 1

Jog for 50 minutes at a comfortable pace.

## SESSION 2 (INTERVALS)

Warm up for 30 minutes. Run 5-minute, 4-minute, 3-minute, and 1-minute intervals at moderate intensity. Recover with slow jogging. Cool down for 10 minutes.

## SESSION 3

Long run for 1 hour and 45 minutes at a comfortable pace.

## COACH'S TIP

Stay hydrated and ensure quality sleep for recovery.

# Week 6

## SESSION 1

Jog for 50 minutes at a comfortable pace.

## SESSION 2 (INTERVALS)

Warm up for 30 minutes. Run 3 sets of 6-minute intervals at moderate intensity. Recover with 3-minute slow jogs. Cool down for 10 minutes.

## SESSION 3

Long run for 1 hour and 30 minutes at a comfortable pace.

## COACH'S TIP

Stay consistent with hydration and nutrition throughout the run.

# Week 7

## SESSION 1

Jog for 50 minutes at a comfortable pace.

## SESSION 2 (INTERVALS)

Warm up for 30 minutes. Run 4-minute, 6-minute, 4-minute, and 2-minute intervals at moderate intensity. Recover with slow jogging. Cool down for 10 minutes.

## SESSION 3

Long run for 1 hour and 15 minutes at a comfortable pace.

## COACH'S TIP

Focus on consistent effort and test your race-day strategies.

# Week 8

## SESSION 1

Jog and stride for 30 minutes, focusing on smooth transitions.

## SESSION 2 (INTERVALS)

Warm up for 20 minutes. Run 3 sets of 20-second acceleration strides. Walk back to the starting point for recovery.

## SESSION 3

Half-marathon race day.

## COACH'S TIP

Avoid starting too fast and enjoy the experience!

# Now it's up to you

See you at the finish line  
on the 8th of February!

Download SFA's official app for more  
information about the event and the  
training group sessions

