

# RIYADH MARATHON TRAINING GUIDE



## 21 KM



RIYADH  
MARATHON  
ماراثون الرياض  
2026  
PRESENTED BY  
الأول  
SAB



وزارة الرياضة  
Ministry of Sport

رؤية  
2030  
المملكة العربية السعودية  
KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA

CONGRATULATIONS ON TAKING YOUR

# FIRST STEP

An event that celebrates determination, endurance, and community spirit in the heart of the Kingdom.

Whether you're running your first 21K or chasing a new personal best, this training guide has been carefully designed to help you cross the finish line strong, confident, and proud. Remember to enjoy the process every step is an achievement worth celebrating.

At the Riyadh Marathon, every runner represents more than a personal goal — together, we represent a growing movement for health, vitality, and unity across Saudi Arabia.

Your journey starts here, and with every kilometer you run, you inspire others to do the same.

This guide brings together and adapted to Saudi conditions and built around safe progression, balanced training, nutrition guidance, and recovery.

No matter your background or experience, this plan will help you enjoy your training, stay healthy, and perform your best on race day.



# HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

THIS TRAINING GUIDE IS DESIGNED TO HELP YOU PREPARE SAFELY AND CONFIDENTLY FOR THE RIYADH MARATHON 21.1 KM

Follow the plan week by week – focus on consistency, not perfection



Choose your level: Beginner or Intermediate



If you miss a session, don't worry – simply continue with the next one



Every 3–4 weeks, take a lighter week or repeat one if you need extra recovery



Train at your own pace and listen to your body



Stay hydrated and avoid running during peak heat hours



You can print or save this guide – check off each week as you progress



## REMEMBER

The journey is more important than the finish time.  
Each kilometer brings you closer to your goal



# TOP TIPS FOR FIRST-TIME HALF-MARATHON RUNNERS



## **START SLOW, BUILD SMART**

Your first few weeks are about building endurance, not speed. Consistency — not intensity — will carry you to race day. Missing a session? No problem. Keep moving forward.

## **HYDRATE AND FUEL PROPERLY**

Hydration starts the day before every run. During long runs, sip small amounts of water every 20 minutes. Experiment with energy gels, dates, or chews during training — never try anything new on race day.

## **RESPECT REST DAYS**

Rest is not laziness — it's how your body adapts and grows stronger. Use recovery days for light stretching, mobility work, or walking. Sleep at least 8–7 hours per night.

## **PLAN YOUR NUTRITION**

The night before long runs, eat slow-release carbs like rice, oats, or pasta. Avoid fried or spicy foods that may cause discomfort. After long runs, refuel within 30 min (protein + carbs).

## **JOIN A RUNNING COMMUNITY**

Training with friends or a local group keeps you accountable and motivated. Look for Riyadh Marathon Training Runs or SFA community sessions — they make every run more enjoyable.

## **TAPER WITH CONFIDENCE**

The last two weeks are about rest, not more training. Reduce mileage, eat well, and focus on recovery. You've already done the hard work.

## **ENJOY RACE DAY**

Smile, wave at the crowd, and soak in the energy of Riyadh. Start easy, find your rhythm, and enjoy every step. Cross the finish line proud — because you've earned it.

## **TEST EVERYTHING BEFORE RACE DAY**

Use training runs to test your shoes, outfit, and gear. Avoid brand-new shoes or clothes on race day — comfort is key.

## **PREPARE MENTALLY**

You'll have good runs and tough runs. That's part of the process. Visualize yourself crossing the finish line in Riyadh — strong, smiling, and proud.

## **TRAIN SMART FOR THE WEATHER**

Run in the early morning or evening. If you feel dizzy or overheated, slow down, hydrate, or stop — safety always comes first.

# 21.1 KM TRAINING PLAN OVERVIEW

## DURATION

12 weeks

## SESSIONS PER WEEK

4 (3 runs + 1  
strength/cross-training)

## LEVELS

Beginner &  
Intermediate

| Day       | Focus                           |
|-----------|---------------------------------|
| Sunday    | Rest / Mobility                 |
| Monday    | Easy Run                        |
| Tuesday   | Quality Run (Tempo / Intervals) |
| Wednesday | Strenght / Cross-Training       |
| Thursday  | Rest                            |
| Friday    | Long Run                        |
| Saturday  | Rest                            |

Adaptations for the hot climate (early morning / late evening runs)

Weekly progression builds endurance gradually, with a taper in the final 2 weeks

# 21.1 KM TRAINING PLAN



| WEEK | Easy Run                  | Quality Run                                       | Strength                                                  | Long Run            | Focus                      |
|------|---------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|
| 1    | 30 min (B) / 35 min (I)   | 20 min steady (B) / 4 sets of 2 min intervals (I) | Core + legs (Squats, Lunges, Plank)                       | 6 km (B) / 8 km (I) | Build rhythm & consistency |
| 2    | 35 / 40 min easy run      | 25 min steady (B) / 5 sets of 2 min hard (I)      | Glutes + hamstrings<br>(Step-ups, Deadlifts, Calf raises) | 8 / 10 km           | Build lower-body strength  |
| 3    | 40 min easy run           | 30 min steady (B) / 20 min tempo (I)              | Core circuit (Plank, Leg raise, Superman)                 | 9 / 12 km           | Focus on form & posture    |
| 4    | 40 min easy run           | 6 sets of 1 min hard (B) / 6 sets of 400 m (I)    | Plyometrics (Jump squats, Push-ups)                       | 10 / 14 km          | Improve power & speed      |
| 5    | 45 min Easy run           | 25 min steady (B) / 3 sets of 5 min tempo (I)     | Full-body strength (Push-ups, Step-ups, Core)             | 12 / 15 km          | Test fueling & hydration   |
| 6    | 45 min Easy run           | 4 sets of 3 min hard (B) / 4 sets of 800 m (I)    | Glutes & core + band work                                 | 13 / 16 km          | Mid-plan progress check    |
| 7    | 45 min Easy run           | 30 min steady (B) / 25 min tempo (I)              | Strength endurance (Bodyweight + light load)              | 14 / 17 km          | Balance effort + recovery  |
| 8    | 50 min Easy run           | 6 sets of 2 min hard (B) / 5x1 km (I)             | Functional CrossFit (Box jumps, Row, Sit-ups)             | 15 / 18 km          | Longest long run           |
| 9    | 40 min Easy run           | 25 min steady (B) / 3 sets of 6 min tempo (I)     | Light resistance + mobility                               | 12 / 15 km          | Begin taper (reduce 10%)   |
| 10   | 35 min Easy run           | 4 sets of 2 min hard (B) / 3 sets of 800 m (I)    | Mobility + stability work                                 | 10 / 12 km          | Focus on recovery          |
| 11   | 30 min Easy run           | 15 min tempo (B) / 20 min tempo (I)               | Core + stretch session                                    | 8 / 10 km           | Prepare body & mind        |
| 12   | 20 min easy run + strides | 15 min EZ (B) / 3 sets of 2 min (I)               | — (Rest week)                                             | Race Day: 21.1 Km   | Race week – taper & enjoy  |

**Easy Run:** Relaxed pace, can talk comfortably.

**Tempo Run:** Slightly challenging, controlled breathing.

**Intervals:** Fast bursts with recovery periods.

**Long Run:** Slower pace, builds endurance

**B = BEGINNER TRACK**

**I = INTERMEDIATE TRACK**

# STRENGTH & RECOVERY

STRENGTH AND RECOVERY SESSIONS ARE ESSENTIAL TO ENHANCE YOUR PERFORMANCE AND PROTECT YOUR BODY FROM INJURIES.

Frequency: Once per week (Thursday or any non-running day).  
Duration: 25–40 minutes.

## SUGGESTED ROUTINE:

- 2 sets of 12 Squats
- 2 sets of 12 Lunges (each leg)
- 3 sets of 15 Glute Bridges
- 2 sets of 20 sec Planks
- 15 Calf Raises

## RECOVERY TIPS

- Stretch for 10–15 minutes after each run.
- Hydrate and eat a balanced snack post-workout.
- Sleep 7–8 hours for optimal recovery





# NUTRITIONS TIPS

## BALANCED DAILY NUTRITION

Aim for a mix that keeps you energized throughout the day:

55–65% carbohydrates → your main fuel source for training. Examples: rice, oats, bread, pasta, potatoes, fruits.

15–20% protein → supports recovery and muscle repair. Examples: chicken, fish, eggs, yogurt, lentils.

20–25% healthy fats → sustain long-term energy and hormone balance. Examples: olive oil, nuts, avocado, seeds.

Hydration: Drink 2.5–3 liters of water per day, adding electrolytes once daily during hot or long training days. + Stay consistent rather than over-drinking before race day

## BEFORE TRAINING

Eat 2–3 hours before running: a light meal with carbs + small protein. Example: oats with banana, or toast with honey.

Avoid high-fat or high-fiber meals that may cause stomach discomfort.

For early runs, a light snack (banana or 2 dates) 30–45 minutes before is enough.

## AFTER TRAINING

Refuel within 30 minutes with a mix of carbs + protein.

Examples: chocolate milk, yogurt with fruit, or a tuna sandwich.\*

This recovery window helps replenish glycogen and repair muscle fibers.



# FINAL WEEK PREP CHECKLIST

THE LAST WEEK IS ABOUT RECOVERY, NOT HARD TRAINING. YOUR GOAL IS TO ARRIVE AT THE START LINE RESTED, FUELED, AND FOCUSED

## TRAINING:

Reduce total mileage by 40–50%.  
Avoid long or intense workouts.  
Include 1–2 short, easy runs (20–30 min).

## NUTRITION & HYDRATION:

Eat familiar foods rich in carbs.  
Drink water and electrolytes regularly.  
Avoid trying new supplements or meals.

## RACE KIT:

Running shoes (tested and comfortable)  
Official bib and timing chip  
Light clothing and cap  
Watch or phone (if tracking pace)

## MENTAL PREP:

Visualize your run and finish line.  
Sleep well and wake up early.  
Plan transportation and arrival time.

## ON RACE MORNING:

Eat 2–3 hours before start.  
Warm up 10 minutes before the race.  
Start slow and enjoy every moment!



# PRE-RACE & RACE-DAY NUTRITION

## NIGHT BEFORE

Eat a carb-rich dinner with light protein — rice or pasta with grilled chicken or fish. Avoid heavy, spicy, or new foods. Drink water through the day (2.5–3 L) and one serving of electrolytes in the evening. Sleep 7–8 hours.

## RACE MORNING (2-3 HRS BEFORE)

Have a familiar, light meal: oats + banana, toast + honey, or dates + yogurt. Drink 400–500 ml water or electrolyte drink 1–2 hrs before. Optional snack 30 min before: half banana or 1–2 dates.

## DURING THE RACE

Start fueling after 45–60 min if needed.  
→ 30–60 g carbs / hour (gel, chew, or dates)  
Sip water every 20 min;  
alternate with electrolytes if it's hot.  
Test everything during training  
— no new products on race day.

## AFTER THE RACE

Rehydrate with water + electrolytes.  
Eat within 30 min: carbs + protein (e.g., chocolate milk or yogurt + fruit).  
Walk a few minutes, stretch,  
and enjoy your finish.





# LOCAL CLIMATE & RACE-DAY CONSIDERATIONS (KSA)

**RUNNING IN SAUDI ARABIA'S CLIMATE  
REQUIRES EXTRA CARE FOR HYDRATION:**

Train early morning or after sunset to avoid the heat.

Increase electrolyte intake during hot weeks

Always test your hydration and fuel strategy during training — never try something new on race day.

Avoid high-fibre and fatty meals the night before or on race morning to prevent stomach discomfort.

# RACE DAY TIPS



## TIP 1

Arrive at start with sufficient time to warm up (10 min easy jog + dynamic stretches).

## TIP 2

Start conservatively: first 5–10 min should feel comfortable. Let the race develop.

## TIP 3

Mid-race: stick to your fueling and hydration plan practiced in training. Use gels/carb drinks at consistent intervals.

## TIP 4

Final 5 km: rely on your trained endurance; increase effort if you have reserve.

## TIP 5

After finish: keep walking, hydrate, and refuel (carbs + protein) within 30–60 min. Stretch or use foam roller.

## TIP 6

Lay out your gear the night before, check weather, shoes, bib, timing chip, early morning plan.

## ADDITIONAL TIPS

## TIP 1

Consistency trumps perfection: showing up week after week matters most.

## TIP 2

Listen to your body: if you're overly fatigued or feel pain, rest or adjust.

## TIP 3

Practice race day gear (shoes, clothing, gels) — your gear should not be new on race day.

## TIP 4

Engage with community: training groups or running clubs add accountability and support.

## TIP 5

Have a meal full of protein to help with the recovery.

## TIP 6

Enjoy the journey: the race is the celebration of months of dedication.

# SEE YOU AT THE FINISH LINE

YOU'VE COMMITTED TO 12 WEEKS OF TRAINING, DISCIPLINE, AND SELF-BELIEF — AND THAT'S ALREADY A VICTORY.

Whether you cross the finish line running, jogging, or walking, remember that every kilometer you've covered has built your strength, your resilience, and your story.

The Riyadh Marathon is more than a race — it's a celebration of movement, health, and community. You're now part of something bigger: a growing culture of active living in Saudi Arabia.

So take a deep breath, trust your training and enjoy every step on race day.

Run with pride.  
Run with purpose.  
Run for Riyadh.





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ماراثون الرياض

مقدم من  
PRESENTED BY



الأول  
SAB