

Welcome to your marathon Training Plan Guide

This guide is your companion to marathon training with Runna - created to help you understand what to expect from your plan, the principles behind it, and the people supporting you along the way. Inside, you'll meet your coaching team, explore how your training develops over time, and gain the insight to approach every phase with clarity and purpose.

As you move through, you'll also find a practical app guide that shows how to bring your plan to life and make the most of the Runna features.



This is not a training plan

It's a resource to help you understand yours with extra clarity and confidence.

A quick note before you begin

Every runner's journey is unique, and your individual plan will be tailored to your ability, goals, training history, available time, and preferred intensity. What you'll find in this guide are guiding principles - not fixed rules.

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Coach

Ben Parker

Ben is a certified running and triathlon coach with over 7 years of experience, helping runners of all levels. As a Runna co-founder and competitive athlete, he brings expert knowledge and real-world performance to his coaching.



Coach

Anya Culling

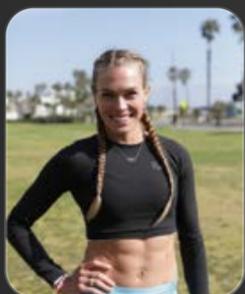
Anya is a lululemon-sponsored marathoner and England representative whose remarkable rise in running proves it's never too late to chase bold goals. She brings energy, relatability, and passion to everything she does.



Coach

Steph Davis

Steph is an Olympic marathoner and Adidas-sponsored athlete who led Team GB in Tokyo 2020. With a rapid rise in the sport, she now shares her expertise by coaching runners of all levels.



Coach

Colleen Quigley

Colleen is an Olympian, national champion, and world record holder, known for her elite career in track. She brings a lifelong passion for sport and high-level competition to everything she does.



Coach

Kayla Jeter

Kayla Jeter is a coach, athlete, and community leader who empowers runners of all paces to live healthier lives. A former pro volleyball player turned ultramarathoner, she shares insights that help runners smash their goals.



Coach

Genevieve Gregson

Gen is a 4x Olympian, Australian record holder, and World Championship finalist with range from steeplechase to marathon. A new mom and seasoned elite, she pairs world-class experience with resilience.



Coach

Andre Coggins

Andre is an England Athletics coach and founder of Mafia Moves, with over a decade of experience shaping inclusive run culture. His work blends community, movement, and purpose to inspire lasting change.



Physio

Adrian D'Costa

Adrian is a seasoned physical therapist and founder of The Running Room, a London clinic helping runners recover, stay strong, and perform their best. His global experience spans elite athletes to everyday runners.



Pilates

Christie Wang

Christie is a third-generation classical Pilates instructor with 10+ years of experience. With pre/postnatal expertise and a love for movement, she supports everyday athletes with precision and energy.



Physio

Ailish Toomey

Ailish is a senior MSK physiotherapist with 15+ years of experience who supports runners, especially mothers returning to the sport. A mom herself, she offers expert, empathetic guidance at every stage.



Movement

Fraser Briggs

Fraser is a Movement Coach with 6 years of experience helping runners move better and stay injury-free. His calm, focused style blends mobility, strength, and body awareness for lasting performance.

Which marathon plan should I choose?

Choosing the right plan length is key to setting yourself up for success - balancing your current fitness, timeline, and goals. The duration you choose will shape how your training progresses week to week, influencing the length and structure of each phase.

Whatever you choose, we've got you covered.

12 week Marathon Training Plan

Best for: Advanced Runners

Training focus: Fast, intensive build-up

A 12-week marathon plan is best suited to runners who already have a solid aerobic base and are ready to train with focus and intensity.

This plan would work well for you if you're currently running at least 3-5 times per week, covering roughly 15-25 miles (25-40 km) weekly, and are comfortable completing a long run of around 8-10 miles (13-16 km). That foundation ensures you can handle the quicker jump in mileage and sustain quality sessions without overtraining.

Across these twelve weeks, the focus is on sharpening endurance, pacing, and strength under race-like conditions - building on existing fitness rather than starting from scratch. It's an efficient option for advanced runners who want a sharper, high-focus block.

Just note: there's little room for setbacks, so if you have a busy schedule or want a buffer for illness or injury, we'd recommend opting for a plan 2-4 weeks longer.

16 week Marathon Training Plan

Best for: Most Runners

Training focus: Balanced & sustainable progression

A 16-week marathon plan is the most popular and versatile option - long enough to build endurance gradually, yet short enough to stay focused and motivated. It offers the perfect balance between effective progression and manageable commitment, giving your body time to adapt safely to higher mileage and intensity.

This plan suits most marathoners - whether you're moving up from shorter races, returning after a break, or chasing a new PB. It's ideal if you currently run 2-5 times a week, cover 10-22 miles (15-35 km) weekly, and can manage a long run of 5-8 miles (8-13 km). It's flexible for those building consistency or increasing mileage for the first time, yet structured enough for experienced athletes to train purposefully without overdoing it.

Across sixteen weeks, your training follows a steady rhythm - alternating between build and recovery weeks. This balance reduces injury risk, supports steady adaptation, and keeps motivation high throughout the training block.

20 week Marathon Training Plan

Best for: Beginners or returning runners

Training focus: Slower, gradual build

A 20-week marathon plan offers the longest, most progressive path to the start line - ideal for beginners or anyone wanting a slower, more confidence-building journey. The extended timeline allows your body to adapt gradually to higher mileage, helping you develop endurance, consistency, and resilience without added pressure.

This plan would work well if you're currently running 1-4 times per week, covering around 6-15 miles (10-25 km) weekly, and can comfortably complete a long run of 3-6 miles (5-10 km). It's particularly suited to first-time marathoners, runners returning from injury, or those balancing training around a busy schedule.

Across twenty weeks, your training builds in layers - starting with aerobic conditioning before introducing longer runs and race-specific efforts. The extra time gives newer runners space to learn how their body responds to training - building confidence with each week as distances grow.

Note: For those who are just getting started with running, we suggest doing our New to Running plan before starting a 20 week plan.

Custom Length Marathon Training Plan

Best for: Most Runners

Training focus: Intensive to Gradual

Our marathon plans can range from 6 to 26 weeks, giving you ultimate flexibility to choose the length that best fits your timeline, experience, and goals. For safe and effective training, we recommend at least 12 weeks - shorter plans don't allow enough time for your body to adapt, increasing the risk of injury or burnout.

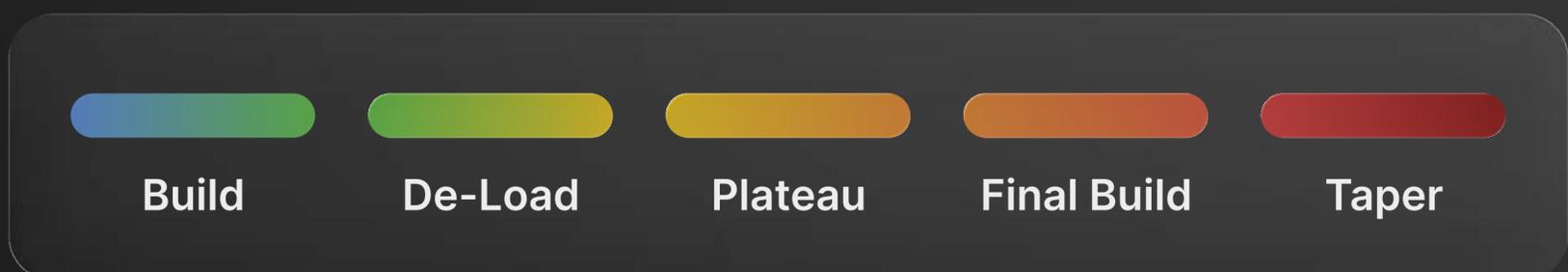
A custom-length plan works just like our 12, 16, and 20 week options, but automatically adjusts your training volume, intensity, and progression based on your chosen duration. Whether you're syncing with a race date, managing a busy schedule, or building from your current fitness level, Runna ensures your training stays structured, progressive, and tailored precisely to your goals.

This option gives you complete control over your marathon journey - offering the same expertly designed structure, adapted to your timeline.

Training Plan Phases

Your marathon training plan moves through distinct phases - each designed to build, adapt, and refine your fitness in a strategic way. Understanding these stages helps you trust the process and recognise how every week contributes to your overall performance.

Note: These phases act as guiding principles rather than strict stages. Their structure adapts to your experience, plan length, training volume and training intensity. Some runners may feel clear shifts between phases, while others may experience these phases in a more subtle or flexible way, based on individual needs.



Build

The Build Phase marks the early stage of your training, where you begin to increase your workload to develop the strength, endurance, and consistency needed for marathon preparation. Mileage and intensity rise in a controlled, progressive way, helping your body adapt without excessive fatigue.

This phase focuses on extending endurance, improving running efficiency, and establishing the foundation for race-specific training. The focus and duration of this stage vary for every runner, but the goal remains the same - to build a strong, sustainable base for the work ahead.

De-load

Every 3-6 weeks, your plan includes a deload week - a planned period of reduced mileage and intensity to help your body recover from the previous training block. This phase allows you to overcome fatigue, absorb training adaptations, and reduce injury risk. The timing and volume of each deload is personalized to your individual circumstances.

Plateau

The plateau phase may feel less eventful, but it's a crucial part of sustainable progress. Here, training volume steadies to consolidate the fitness you've built, allowing your body to strengthen beneath the surface - reinforcing connective tissues, improving efficiency, and deepening endurance.

It's also a mental checkpoint, teaching patience and consistency when results seem subtle. This stage can vary in length or presence depending on individual needs, but its purpose is universal: to turn accumulated effort into lasting resilience.

Final Build

The final build is when your training reaches its peak - a focused phase that prepares you to face race day with strength and confidence. Workouts become more purposeful and race-specific, combining distance, pace, and mental resilience to bring every aspect of your fitness together.

It's a demanding but rewarding stage, designed to bring your fitness to its height before taper begins. The structure and intensity of this phase may vary from runner to runner, but the aim remains the same - to leave you confident, composed, and ready to run your best.

Taper

The last phase in your plan - a taper is where your hard work locks in. Training volume drops to reduce fatigue, while intensity stays just high enough to keep you sharp. During this time, your fitness peaks as recovery catches up - muscles repair, glycogen stores refill, and energy levels rise. Feeling restless is normal; it's your body gearing up to perform.

Although its format may differ amongst different runners, it's purpose is always to ensure you arrive at the start line fresh, focused, and ready to run your best race. Trust the process!

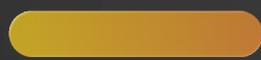
How Each Run Should Feel

There are a few different effort levels you'll come to recognise throughout your training. A useful way to understand them is by paying attention to your perceived exertion - how hard each run feels based on your breathing, rhythm, and ability to speak.

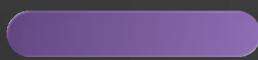
Below is an outline of the key effort ranges and how they typically feel during your runs.



Intervals



Tempo



Long Run



Easy Run



Hill Run

Intervals

Intervals are your highest-effort sessions - short bursts of hard work with recovery breaks in between. These should sit around 8.5 out of 10, or higher, effort. This should sit anywhere between your 3k and 10k race pace, depending on the volume of the session and the lengths of the reps. You'll be working at the edge of your comfort zone - breathing heavily, unable to speak more than a word or two. Each rep should feel tough but controlled; the goal is to push your limits while staying strong and composed through every repeat.

Tempo

A tempo run should feel comfortably hard - demanding enough to make you focus, but sustainable for the full effort. Aim for 6-8 out of 10 effort. This should sit anywhere between your 10k and half marathon race pace, depending on the volume of the session and the length of the reps. You should feel a steady burn in your legs and lungs, yet remain in control of your breathing and form. You're running faster than your easy pace, but not racing - if you can say more than a couple of words, you're going too easy; if you can't maintain the effort, it's too hard.

Long runs

The cornerstone of marathon training, long runs come in two main forms: some are run entirely at your easy pace, while others include sections run at or near marathon pace. The easy long runs should feel steady, controlled, and comfortable - around 5-6 out of 10 effort. Their purpose is to build endurance and efficiency without overloading your body. The long runs with marathon-pace sections include stretches at a higher intensity - around 7-8 out of 10 effort - designed to prepare your body and mind for the demands of race day. You should always finish feeling tired but strong - confident that you could have gone a little further if needed. The challenge here comes from time on your feet, not just intensity.

Easy runs

Intervals are your highest-effort sessions - short bursts of hard work with recovery breaks in between. These should sit around 8.5 out of 10, or higher, effort. This should sit anywhere between your 3k and 10k race pace, depending on the volume of the session and the lengths of the reps. You'll be working at the edge of your comfort zone - breathing heavily, unable to speak more than a word or two. Each rep should feel tough but controlled; the goal is to push your limits while staying strong and composed through every repeat.

Hill runs

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When training doesn't go to plan

Even the best training plans hit bumps along the way. Life gets busy, energy dips, motivation wavers - and that's part of the process. What matters most is how you respond. Here's how to navigate some of the most common roadblocks you might face.

And remember - the Runna app gives you more in-depth support through in-app guidance, articles, and a 24/7 support team.

- When life & the plan don't align
- When fatigue starts to build
- When motivation feels low
- When something feels off or painful
- When a run just feels awful
- When you're bouncing back after a setback
- When the weather throws you off
- When race nerves kick in

When life & the plan don't align

Schedules change, life happens, and that's okay. If you miss a run, shuffle sessions around or drop one altogether. Your progress comes from consistency over months, not from nailing every single day. Listen to your body, adjust when you need to, and trust that small changes won't derail your momentum - they're simply part of training smart.

When fatigue starts to build

Feeling tired is part of training, but constant fatigue isn't. When everything starts to feel like a grind, it's your body asking for a reset. Check the basics first - sleep, nutrition, stress, hydration - they matter more than you think. If you need to, swap a hard run for an easy one, or take an extra rest day. Recovery isn't a setback; it's what allows your body to adapt, rebuild, and come back stronger for the next session.

When motivation feels low

It happens to everyone. When that feeling hits, start small: tell yourself you'll just head out for ten minutes or jog to the end of the street. Once you're moving, momentum usually takes over. Remind yourself why you started, take a moment to visualise your end goal, and focus on progress, not perfection. Showing up, even on the hard days, is what truly builds strength.

When when something feels off or painful

There's a difference between normal training discomfort and pain that signals a problem. If you feel a sharp or unusual ache, ease off and rest - it's your body telling you to take a step back. Missing a few runs now is far better than losing weeks later. Use Runna's in-app resources for guidance on recovery and injury prevention, or reach out to the support team if you're unsure.

When a run just feels awful

Bad runs happen - even to elite athletes. Some days everything just feels off: maybe it's the weather, poor sleep, stress, or simply a dip in energy. It's part of the training journey, not a reflection of your ability. Don't dwell on it or overanalyze every detail - log it, move on, and trust the process. One bad run won't define your progress, but how you respond to it will. The next one will almost always feel better.

When you're bouncing back after a setback

Whether it's illness, injury, or life getting in the way, ease back in gradually. Focus on effort over pace and celebrate small wins. Consistency will rebuild your rhythm faster than you think - patience is the secret ingredient to progress.

When the weather throws you off

Weather can have a big impact on how your runs feel. Heat raises your heart rate, cold can tighten muscles, and wind or rain makes finding rhythm harder. None of this means you're less fit - it's just your body working harder to adapt. On tough-weather days, slow down and run by effort instead of pace. Use these sessions to practise fuelling, hydration, and patience in different conditions. Training through unpredictable weather builds resilience and confidence, so when race day comes, nothing will catch you off guard.

When race nerves kick in

Pre-race nerves are completely normal - they show your body and mind are gearing up to perform. As mileage drops in the taper, it's common to feel restless or doubt whether you've done enough. Channel that energy into focus: visualise the course, run through your race-morning routine, and revisit your pacing and fuelling plan. Nerves are a good thing - they sharpen your concentration and ready your body to race. Trust your preparation, take a breath, and know that once you cross the start line, instinct and training will take care of the rest.

This example reflects the rhythm of a typical training week, but every plan is tailored to your ability, goals, training volume, intensity, and overall timeline.

- Taken from week 9 of an intermediate marathon plan

Monday 10th
5mi Easy Run

This should be an easy run, which means we want to keep it conversational. For your run today, listen to your body and remember your Easy Run pace can vary significantly day to day, there is no such thing as too slow!

Tuesday 11th
Intervals

For the first 400m, aim for around 85% of your best effort. Note how long it takes and then try to match it on every subsequent interval. If you felt the first rep was too fast or slow, adjust the effort accordingly - the goal is to be as consistent as possible. Wait until the last 1 or 2 reps to see if you can push it a little faster to finish strong!

Wednesday 12th
Rest

Rest up! Recovery fuels success, so enjoy the gift of a rest day.

Thursday 13th Legs & Core

Today we're hitting glutes, legs, and core to build the strength that keeps you efficient late in the run. Focus on control, stability, and form - every rep should feel purposeful.

Friday 14th Tempo Run - Mile Over and Unders

We have a rolling effort today! The over 1mi should feel slightly slower than your tempo pace and the under 1mi should be slightly quicker. The goal is to keep going, no walking or static rests between reps. This kind of intensity requires a conscious effort to push but should still feel sustainable. You got this!

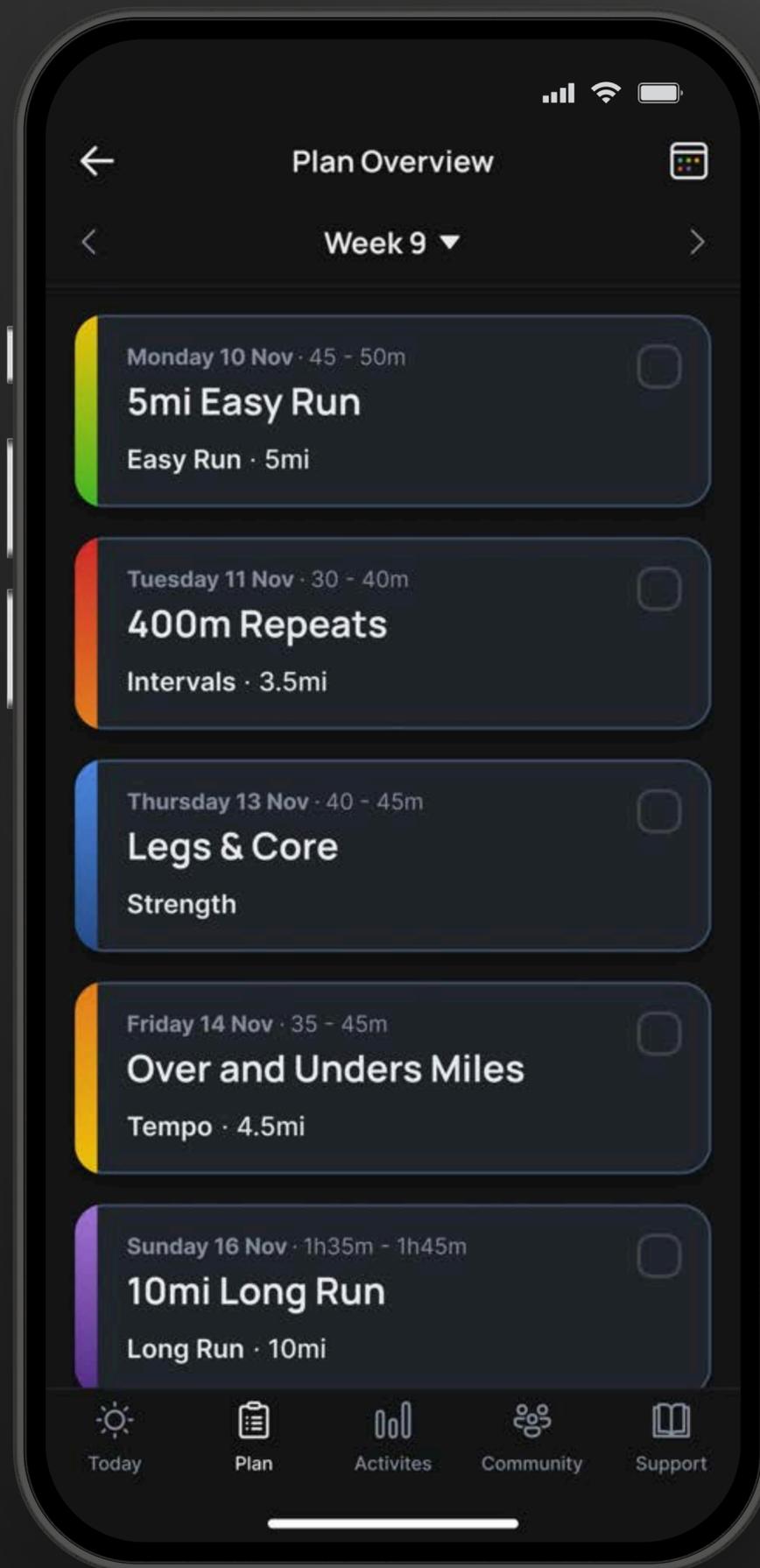
Saturday 15th Rest

Rest up! Recovery fuels success, so enjoy the gift of a rest day.

Sunday 16th 10mi Long Run

Today the task is simple: relax & enjoy yourself. Get the distance done and don't worry about meeting a pace target. Use this run to focus on maintaining a relaxed and comfortable pace, mainly focusing on effort. Try to replicate the conditions for the race with respect to fueling - the same pre-race meal and mid-run fuel you will consume. You want to identify any part that may cause an issue and fix it ahead of the big day. Good luck and enjoy!

What a training week could look like



In addition to your Training Calendar, here is what your week will look like in your **Plan Overview**.

Here, you can browse your weekly workouts, tap into any session for the full details, and easily keep track of your total mileage for the week.

This section is your guide to getting the most out of your marathon plan in the Runna app - a look at navigating the tools, features and flexibility that bring your training to life and help you perform your best.

Getting Started

- Set your goal
- Set your training preferences
- Sync your wearable devices

Managing Your Plan

- Adapt your schedule
- Set up personalized workouts
- Manage missed sessions
- Add a B-race
- Enter Holiday Mode
- Tell us you're not feeling 100%

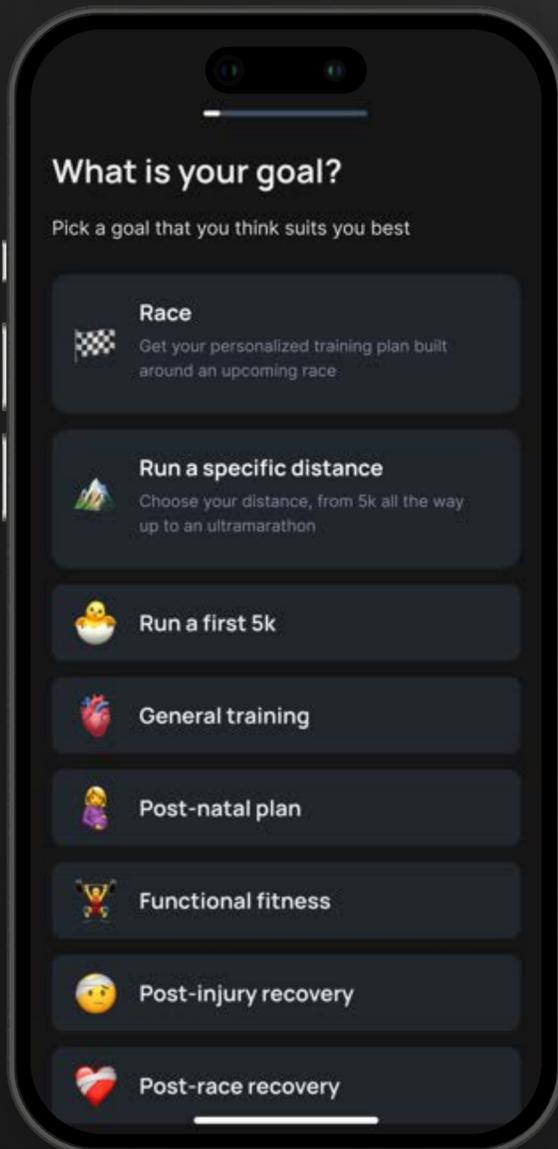
Community and support

- Track your progression
- Read 'Workout Insights'
- Discover your pace insights

Extra training features

- Add 'Instant Workouts'
- Receive Live Audio Coaching
- Train on a Treadmill

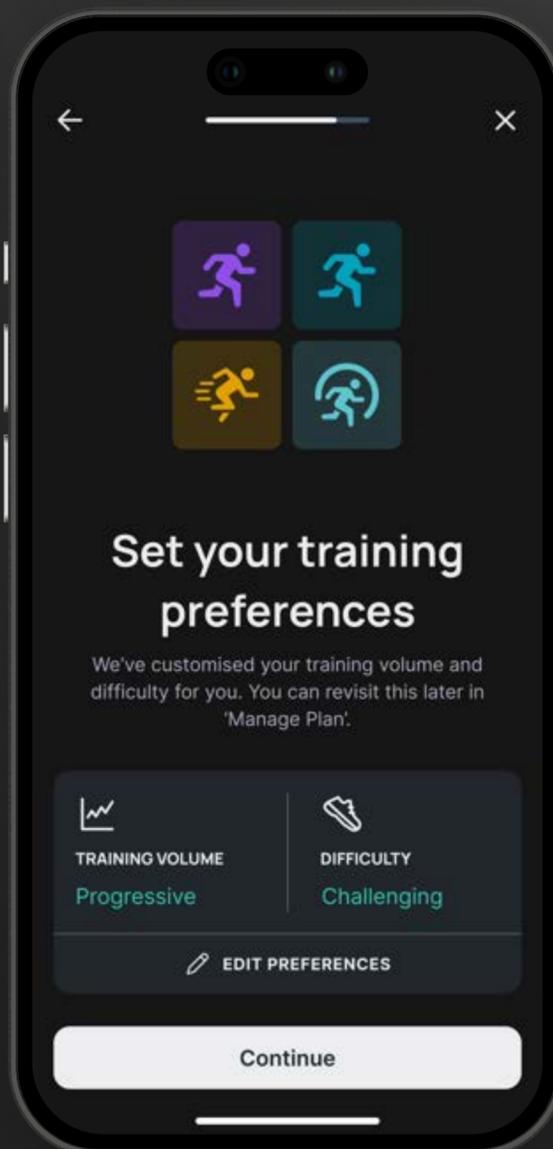
This is where your journey begins - setting the foundation for training that fits around you. From the very first step, it's about building a plan that matches your goals, lifestyle, and the way you want to train.



Set a goal

Choose your event from the race list, and Runna will tailor your training to the race date and course elevation.

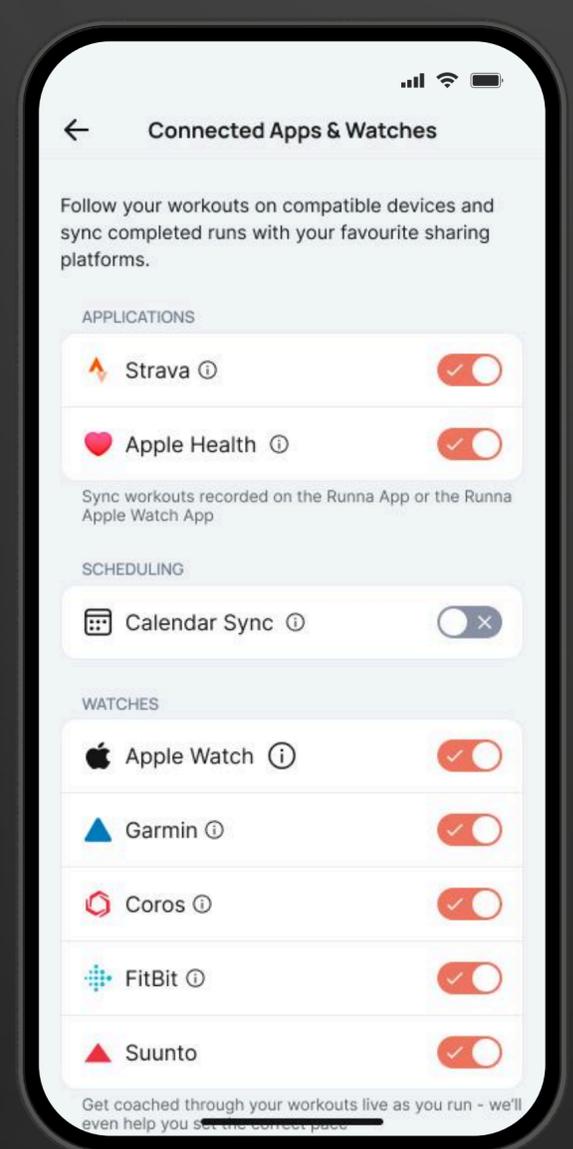
Alternatively, select "Run a Specific Distance" → "Marathon" to generate your plan.



Set your training preferences

Want a gentler build or a tougher progression? We've got you!

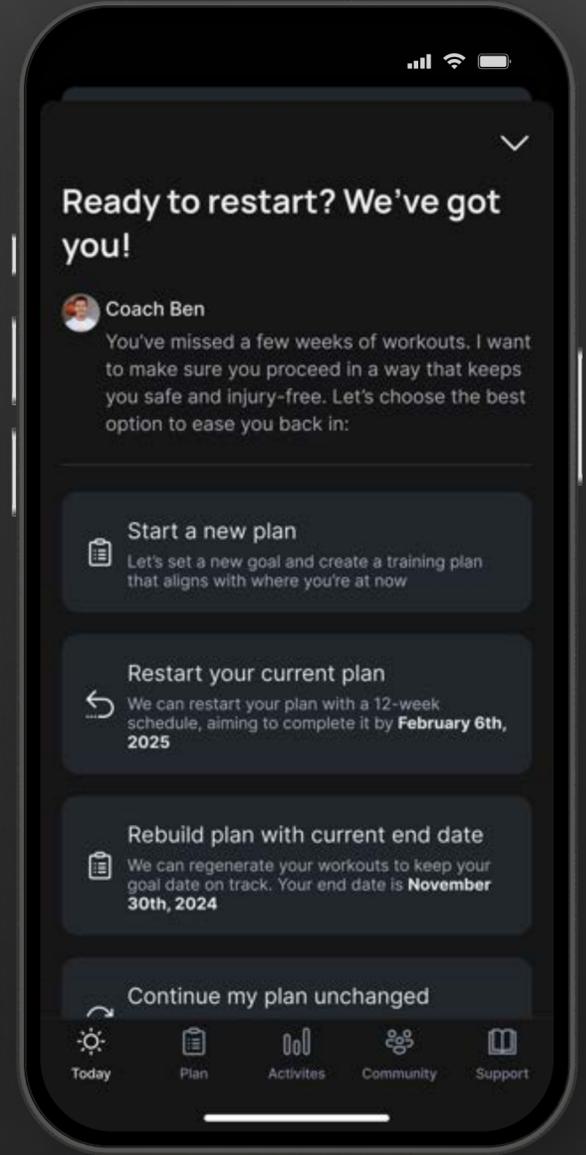
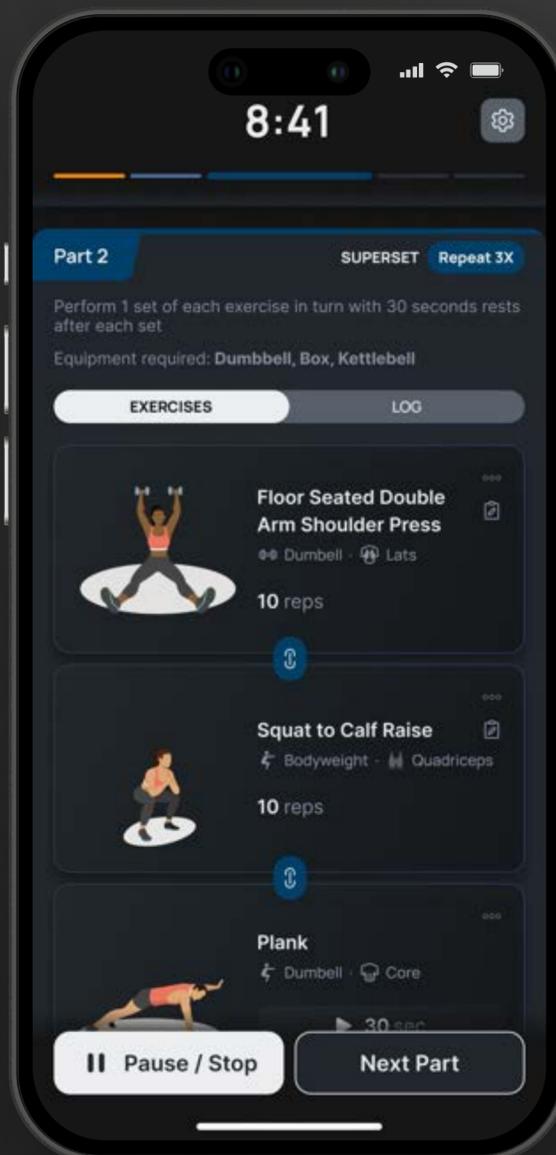
Whatever your preferred style and pace of progression, your plan flexes volume and intensity to match exactly how you want to train.



Sync your wearable devices

Sync your wearable - including Garmin, Apple Watch, Fitbit, COROS, Suunto, and more - to track real-time heart rate, effort, and performance. Every run automatically syncs to the app, turning your data into clear, actionable insights.

This is where your journey begins - setting the foundation for training that fits around you. From the very first step, it's about building a plan that matches your goals, lifestyle, and the way you want to train.



Adapt your schedule

Drag, drop or reschedule sessions directly in your training calendar so your plan fits your week - not the other way around. Adjust around work, life, and other priorities in seconds, ensuring your training stays on track.

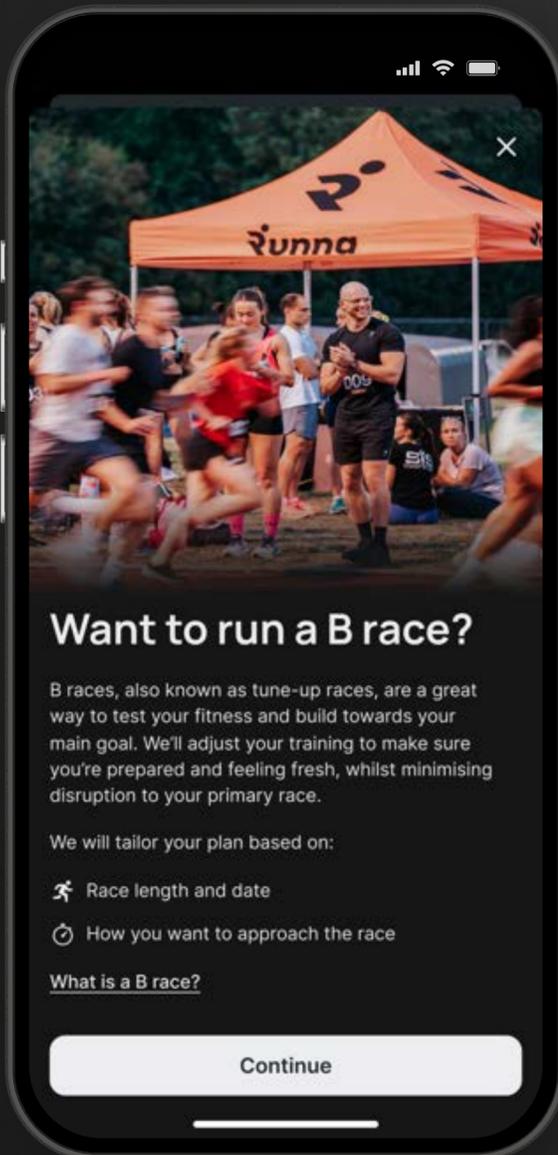
Set Up Personalized Workouts

Complement your running with cross-training designed by coaches for runners. Add strength, Pilates, and mobility sessions into your plan - each one tailored to your training phase to build durability, balance, and efficiency for what your body needs most.

Manage Missed Sessions

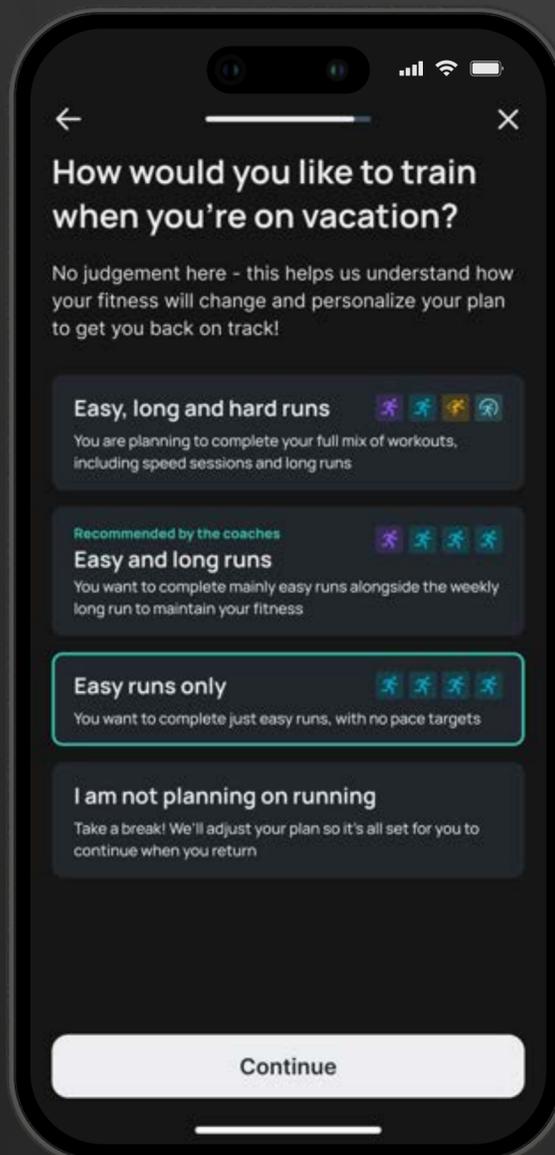
Life happens, and sometimes you miss a workout or two - the Plan Adjustment Tray helps you stay on track. As needed, you can:

1. Rearrange or skip missed workouts
2. Restart your current plan, start a new one, or continue unchanged.



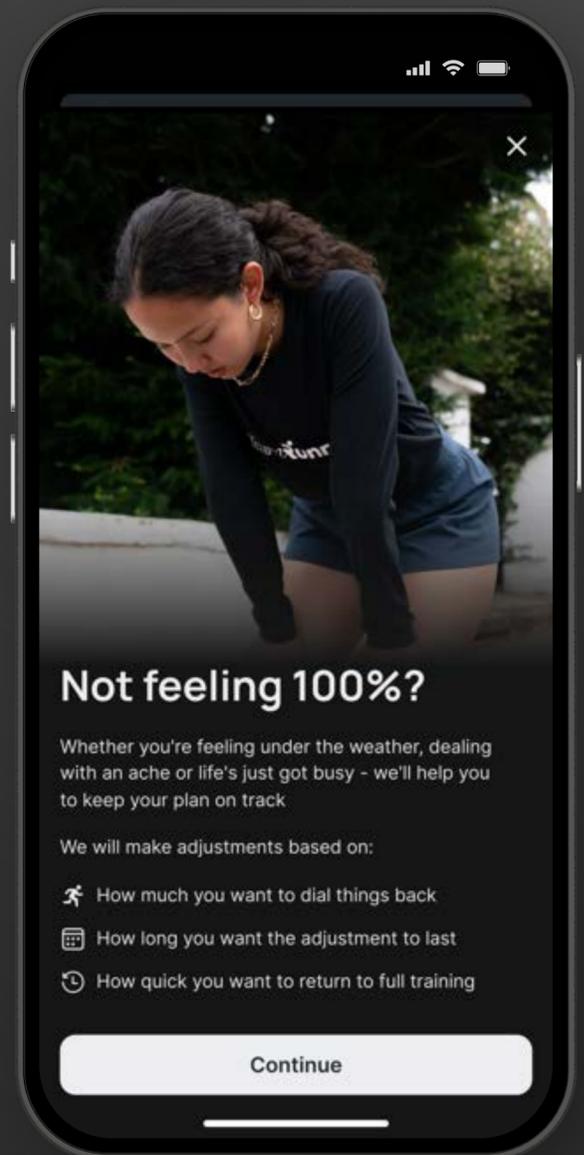
Add a B-race

A B-race is any secondary event you'd like to take on alongside your main goal (A-race) - whether it's a tune-up race, a fun run, or something new to challenge yourself. Add it to your calendar and Runna automatically adjusts your plan for balanced pacing, recovery, and progression to your main goal.



Enter Holiday Mode

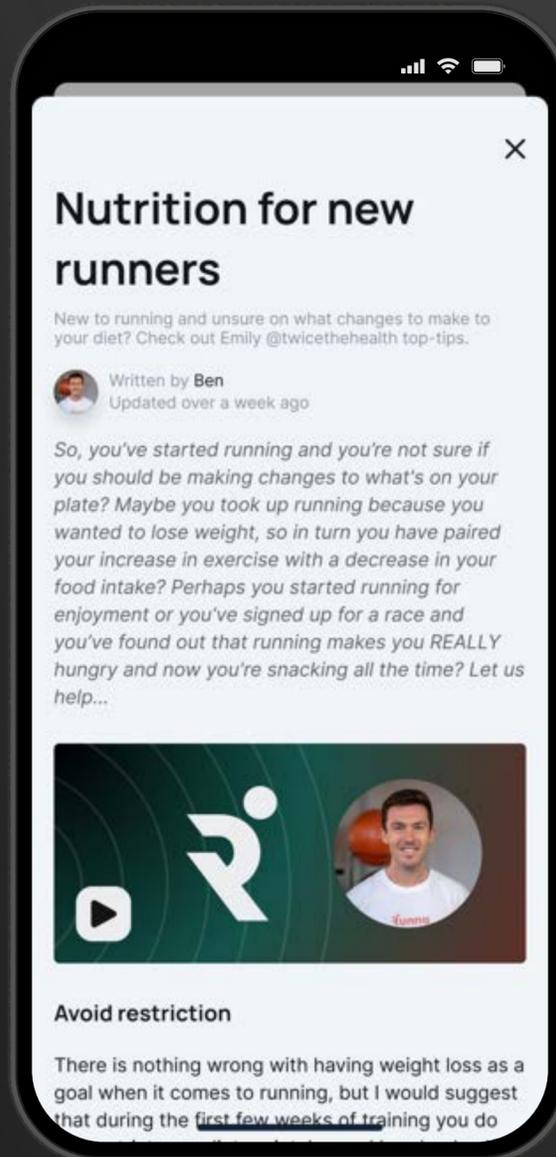
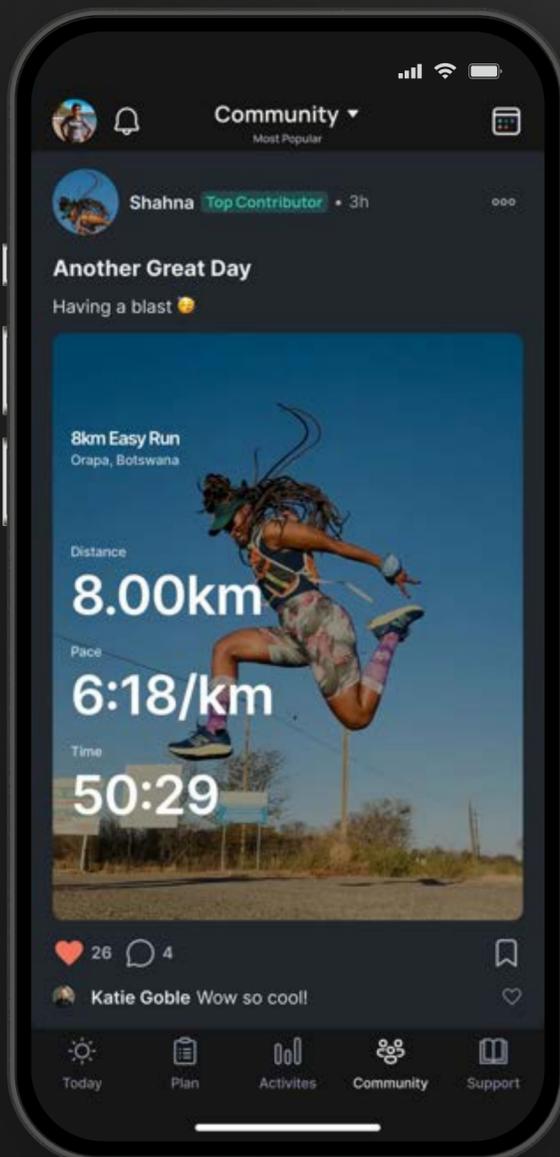
Whether you're travelling or resting, activate Holiday Mode (called "Vacation" for North American users) to customize your training while you're away. Select your start and end dates, choose whether to pause completely or keep certain workout types, and Runna will automatically adjust your mileage, deload weeks, and overall plan to match your preferences.



Not Feeling 100%?

When you're not feeling your best - whether that's feeling under the weather, a minor ache, or just a busy week, - select "Not Feeling 100%". You choose how much to dial back & how long for, and Runna will adapt your training so you can recover without falling behind.

You're part of a global running community. Here, you'll find connection, expert guidance, and support whenever you need it - from in-app groups and resources to the Runna team itself.



Join Your Community

Drag, drop or reschedule sessions directly in your training calendar so your plan fits your week - not the other way around. Adjust around work, life, and other priorities in seconds, ensuring your training stays on track.

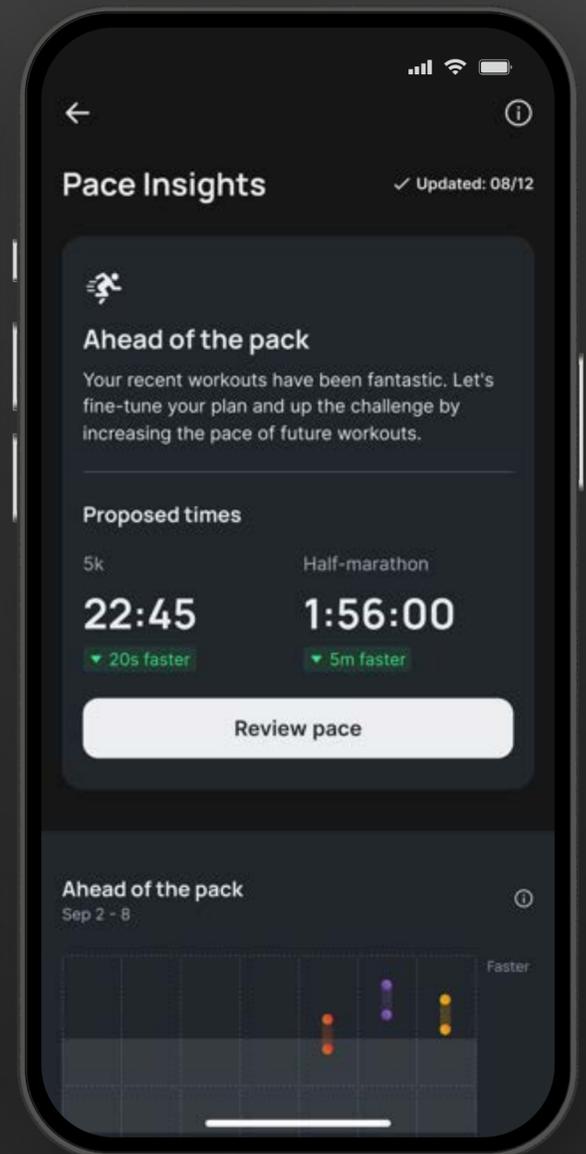
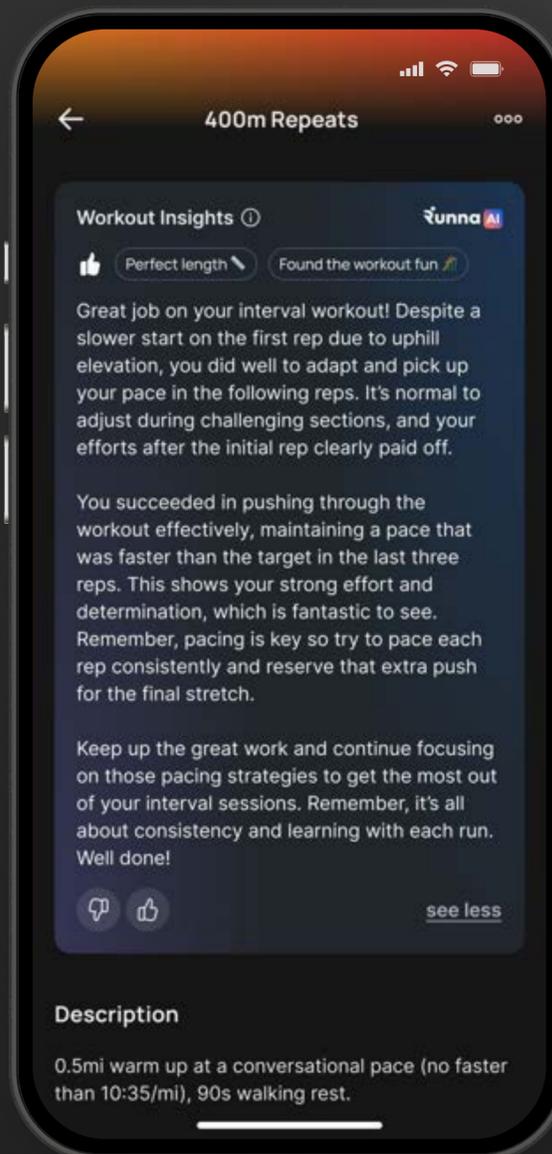
Read Our In-App Articles

Explore Runna's in-app library for expert-written guidance that supports every aspect of your training. From pacing and recovery to strength, nutrition, and mindset, you'll find detailed articles crafted by coaches to help you train smarter.

Message Our 24/7 Support Team

Still got questions? Our 24/7 support team is always here to help - whether you need guidance on training, plan adjustments, using the app, or anything else! Just message us anytime directly through the app, and keep moving forward with confidence.

See your hard work take shape. From mileage and pace insights to detailed workout feedback, this is where your progress comes to life - helping you train smarter every week.



Track Your Progression

Track your weekly mileage, time, and total runs to see your training volume build over time. View detailed performance charts and personal records - giving you a clear picture of your progress and how every session brings you closer to your goal.

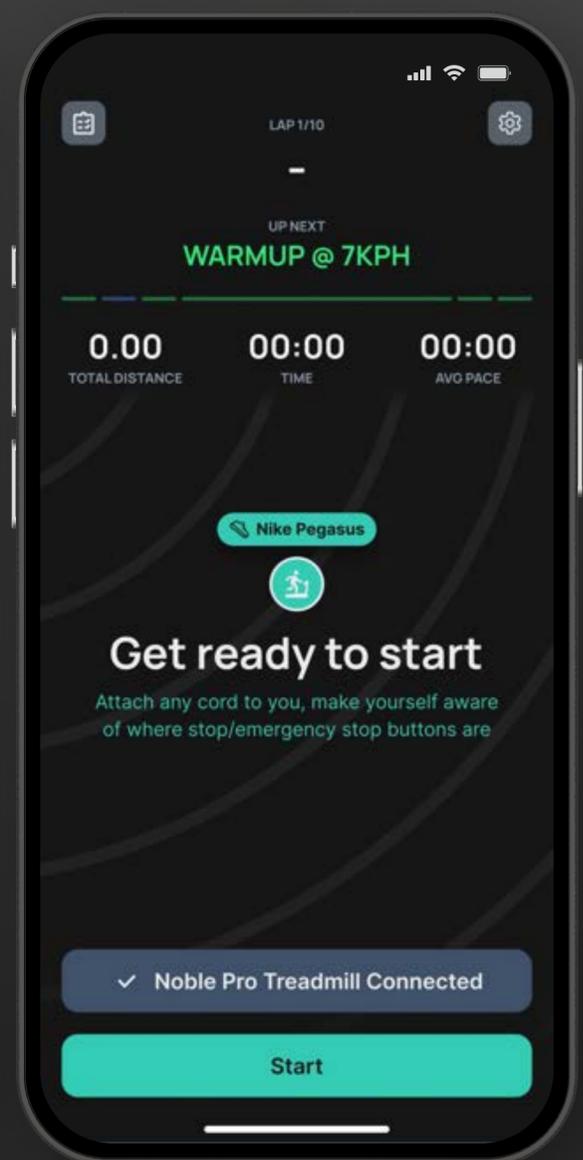
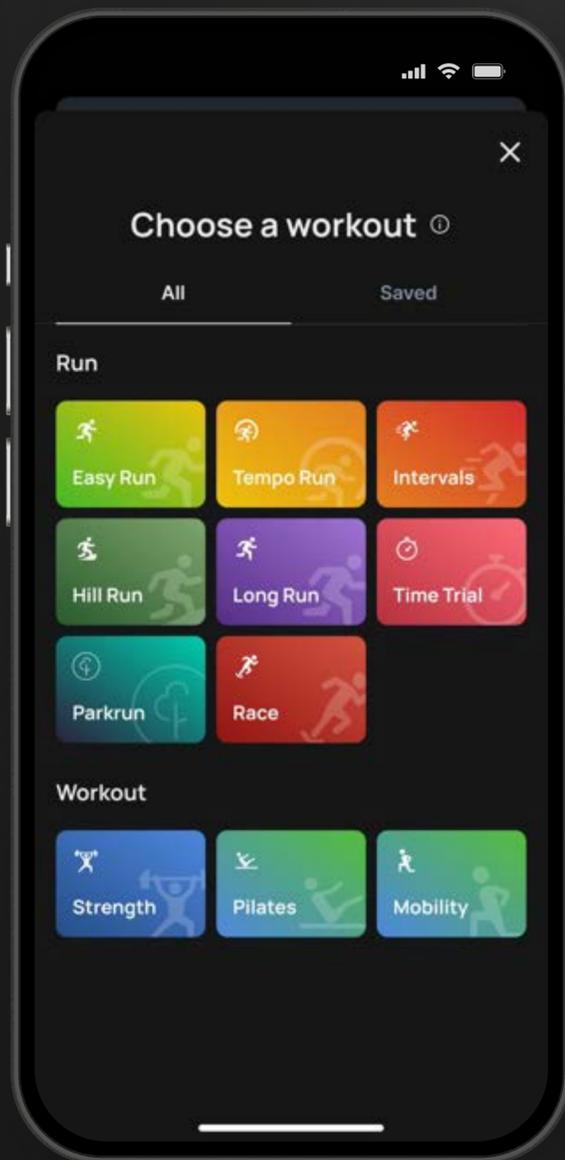
Read 'Workout Insights'

After each workout, Workout Insights reviews your performance against the plan, highlighting what went well and where you could improve. Once you rate your session, it unlocks detailed feedback, tracks personal bests, and helps you understand your progress toward your goal.

View Your Pace Insights

Your Pace Insights track how your interval, tempo, and time-trial workouts compare to your targets. When trends show you're consistently ahead or behind, you'll receive a pace change recommendation - you decide whether to accept it or stick with the current target.

Here are some extra features that take your training further - helping you stay flexible, explore new ways to train, and make every run more engaging, personalised, and effective.



Add Instant Workouts

Instant Workouts are one-off sessions you can add anytime - whether it's an easy run, tempo, intervals, or even a parkrun. Set your preferred distance, duration, or pace, and Runna instantly builds a structured session with in-app guidance, giving you the ultimate flexibility and variety.

Receive Live Audio Coaching

Receive live audio cues during your run to know exactly when to speed up, slow down, or rest - no guesswork required. Your pace, distance and rest periods sync automatically, so you can focus on the run while the app guides your effort in real-time.

Train on a Treadmill

Runna works seamlessly on the treadmill, giving you two ways to train indoors. You can either connect your phone to a compatible Bluetooth treadmill for real-time pace and distance tracking, or start your session manually - Runna will still guide your intervals and effort, keeping your indoor training as effective as your outdoor runs.

Every runner's journey looks different - some days feel effortless, others take everything you've got. But that's what makes it meaningful. Training for a marathon isn't just about building fitness; it's about discovering what you're truly capable of.

You've already done the hardest part - showing up. From here, it's about trusting your training, listening to your body, and remembering that progress doesn't happen in straight lines.



This race is just the icing on the top of the cake
Coach Anya



One foot in-front of the other for 42.2km
Coach Ben



Trying times make us stronger mentally and physically
Coach Colleen



1% better each day
Coach Kayla



Improvement requires moments that don't feel easy
Coach Andre

[Build my marathon plan now](#)