

Training for consistent race day pace

Mental and physical preparation for your event running pace can be practiced while you train. One of the common errors on marathon day is to go out too fast. Your legs are fresh and the adrenaline is pumping when you cross the start line. Experienced long-distance runners know that you risk early depletion if you start your marathon at too fast of a pace. Whatever time is gained by early fast miles will be paid back during the last 10K with a double or even triple slower time. There are some strategies you can use to both physically and mentally prepare to start your event conservatively and maintain pace over the miles.

- Discipline yourself to run the first two miles of your long run at your warm-up pace. You can mentally prepare for 'holding back' by imagining the excitement you will feel on marathon day.
- Build some endurance and variation by alternating pace during your long runs. Following are some ways you can do this.
 - o Two miles at an easy pace (one minute mile slower than marathon pace), followed by two miles at marathon pace. Attempt to maintain this variation throughout your long run.
 - o Do the first ten miles of your long run at an easy pace and then increase to marathon pace for the last 8-10 miles of your long run (for a half marathon, split the distance in half)
 - o Alternate pace of long runs; one week run your entire long run at an easy pace. The following week do your long run at marathon pace after the first two easy miles.
- In addition to alternating pace, try to finish the last two miles of your long run at an even faster pace than marathon pace. This will help you determine if you have enough stamina left to increase your output.
- Moderate your pace during any phase of your long run if you find you are fatiguing too quickly. This teaches you to stay in tune with pace as it relates to your energy level and your capability to finish the distance with 'enough fuel left in the tank'. Remember that you will have your good days and your 'not so good days'.

For most people, even pace (even splits) on marathon day equals best performance. In order to figure out what your target pace is, record your long run results. Log the total time and distance, figure out your average minute mile pace and record your stamina level during the long run and during the last two – three miles. Based on this data, you can target a consistent even pace for marathon day in order to finish well. The Garmin Forerunner is a good piece of equipment that can give you instant pacing and distance information during and after your runs. You can check the selection at [If the Shoe Fits](#). Finally, practice running at least one, maybe two of your long runs at this even pace. You will now be more in tune with your personal pace capability and better prepared to more accurately plan and adjust your pace on marathon day.