

33RD MARINE CORPS MARATHON



Training Tips from LtCol Alex Hetherington

1. Tie a long term goal to your marathon training. By having a personal or professional goal parallel to your training plan, you will find that the self-discipline and time management required to achieve your marathon goal will reinforce your efforts toward your additional goal.
2. Use your Marine Corps Marathon training runs to provide balance for everyday life. On days that have not gone to plan, either at work or at home, at least accomplishing the goal of getting in a run will help provide the focus and energy needed to address productivity barriers in other more essential areas.
3. Alternate pairs of running shoes, preferably different models/types. Having the right shoes for the workout or surface you are running on will allow you to achieve the best possible fitness and footing. Additionally, since each model/type of running shoe fits your foot and engages your muscles in different ways, if you are experiencing a persistent localized ache or pain, the first step should be to run in a different pair of shoes. The results may be surprising.
4. For easy and long runs, occasionally run for time instead of distance. Take the pressure off yourself to always run the precise number of miles identified on your training plan and sometimes run for a pre-determined amount of time at whatever pace feels the most comfortable. On days when you are tired, sore, or just feeling stale, this is a good strategy for getting in a workout while allowing yourself to recover mentally and physically.
5. "Smell the barn..." As you approach the end of your longer runs, bring it home by allowing the pace to build over the last few miles. Doing so will give you the instinct and ability to maintain a strong pace through the later stages of the marathon as others start to crumble.

6. Get off the road. The Marine Corps Marathon is a road race, so that is where training should be focused, but a weekly run on a soft surface trail provides relief from pounding the pavement, as well as surroundings that are mentally refreshing. Although footing can sometimes be a concern due to mud, roots, and rocks, the twists and turns of a trail run will help you avoid overuse injuries that can develop from too many miles on the pavement alone.
7. Keep a run log. This is the secret to maintaining the discipline to get out and run day after day. After keeping a run log for a few weeks, you will find that almost nothing provides greater satisfaction than recording your daily workout, or more anguish than to have to put a zero in the mileage column on a planned training day. Additionally, reviewing the entries in your run log before the marathon will give you the confidence of knowing that you have done the work to run well.
8. Tune up for your Marine Corps Marathon. Tune-up races at distances from 10km to half-marathon provide excitement and motivation as you build toward your marathon goal. The right number of competitive events to rehearse your race routine is a matter of individual preference, but tune-up races provide fitness benchmarks and instill confidence as your times improve.
9. Take it easy early; patience is critical to running your best in a marathon. If you feel like you are "racing" before the half-way mark, it's going to be a long day. Ideally, the pace should feel smooth and fluid well past 13.1 miles, and certainly not like a maximum effort until the later stages of the race. Although this is the most conventional of marathon wisdom, it's also commonly ignored, even by experienced runners who are undone by their adrenalin-fueled competitive instincts.
10. It's not just a race, it's an adventure, so have a branch plan. Not every marathon unfolds as expected, which is one of the appealing things about this distance. Prepare in advance for the possibility that you will not have a perfect race. The shift to an incrementally smaller goal at the appropriate time could mean the difference between still achieving a satisfying finish and a collision with the proverbial "wall." A personal record performance is not possible every time out of the gate, and you will find that some of the most satisfying marathons involve overcoming some sort of adversity to still finish strong.

LtCol Alex Hetherington has been a competitive runner for over 20 years and a member of numerous All Marine Running teams dating back to 1994. He has competed in 14 Marine Corps Marathons, including two top 10 finishes, and was the 1998 Armed Forces Marathon Champion. LtCol Hetherington has a 2:29

marathon PR and is an AH-1W Cobra pilot assigned to Marine Aircraft Group 39 at Camp Pendleton CA.