

Why the Magic Mile?

By Jeff Galloway

The Magic Mile is a unique tool to help you determine realistic goals. The miles will help show progress as you usually improve each time. The runner is getting faster and stronger.

Training for a race such as the Marine Corps Marathon can be an extremely rewarding experience. Some runners, however, get a bit too motivated and run faster on training runs, and in the first part of their race, than they are able. This often results in burnout or injury. While we never know exactly how fast we will run on a given day, there's a simple time trial that can accurately predict your current potential finish time. This allows you to set a long run pace that can almost eliminate the chance of injury due to too fast a pace. This MM can also tell you an appropriate time goal, currently.

The “**Magic Mile**” is the result of 15 years of data collection. It has been an extremely accurate predictor of current performance. Analysis has shown that most runners slow down 30% when they go from a fast one mile, to a fast per mile pace in a marathon, and by 20% when they run a fast half marathon.

The Magic Mile will help determine:

- If the goal pace is realistic.
- How much improvement can be expected, and whether someone is on track to meet the goal.
- Running the Magic Mile takes the guesswork out of goal setting. This often involved putting the reins on the ego, which will talk the person into goals that are not within their current capabilities.
- These formulas will allow one to predict race time by running a timed mile.
- During the training season, you will run a Magic Mile on a set schedule, depending on your training goal.

Guidelines for running the Magic Mile (MM):

- Go to a track, or other accurately measured one-mile course. It is not necessary to use a track. If you don't have one available, use a GPS mapping tool on line, such as www.myfavoriterun.com or www.usatf.org and find a flat, uninterrupted one mile stretch.
- Warm up by walking for five minutes, then running one minute and walking one minute. Follow that by running an easy half mile.
- Run four acceleration gliders. (See *Galloway Training Programs Drills* chapter).
- Run the MM a little harder than your normal pace. Follow the walk break suggestion provided, or walk 30 to 45 seconds at each quarter mile.
- For the MM, don't run all-out from the start. Ease into pace after first half mile or 2 laps.
- Cool down with by reversing the warm up.
- Don't use a treadmill because they tend to be notoriously uncalibrated, and often show a farther and faster distance that was actually run.
- On each successive MM, try to better the pace by 20 to 30 seconds.
- Use the formula provided to see what time is predicted in the goal race.

How hard should the Magic Mile (MM) be run?

On the first MM, run just slightly faster than normal pace. On each successive MM, try to beat the previous best time by 20 to 30 seconds. Take walk breaks as needed or every quarter mile. After the first MM you should be huffing and puffing but not gasping for air.

A track is the best venue. If not running on a track, measure the course into quarter miles, and mark them. Check your pace at each quarter mile to improve pacing. Run the first lap (quarter mile) slightly slower than you think you can average. Take a short walk break. If you aren't huffing and puffing you can pick up the pace a bit on the second lap. Most benefit from taking a walk break after the second lap. It is ok to be breathing hard on the last lap. When you finish, you should feel like you couldn't run more than half a lap further at that pace (if that). You may find that you don't need many walk breaks during the test – experiment and adjust.

Improvement Possibilities

It is fine to choose a time goal for the goal race which is faster than predicted by the Magic Mile. If you are doing the mile repeats, the long runs and the MM, you should improve. For prediction purposes, as you take this "leap" to a goal, we suggest no more than a 3-5% improvement in a 3 month training program.

To Predict the MM pace to longer distances from one mile:

5K	Take the one mile time and add 33 seconds
10K	Take the one mile time and multiply by 1.1
Half Marathon:	Take the one mile time and multiply by 1.2
Marathon:	Take the one mile time and multiply by 1.3

EXAMPLE: One Mile Test Time: 8:00 minute mile = 10:24 mile time for a marathon

10:24 per mile = just under a 4:30 marathon time

Train Pace = 12:24 minutes per mile, or 10:30 pace group (adjusted for temperature)

Walk Break Ratio for 12:24 per mile = 2/1

3-5% Improvement – 4:30 marathon time – 4:21:54 - 4:16:30 is possible.

Here's a summary of the Magic Mile:

1. Every 2-3 weeks, as part of your training run, run an accurately measured one mile segment for time.
2. Warm up by jogging slowly for at least a mile. Then do 4-8 acceleration-gliders (not sprints). These are explained in my book *GALLOWAY TRAINING PROGRAMS*. Walk for 1-2 minutes and run a mile for time.
3. After the MM, run the rest of the mileage assigned for the day at any pace you wish—taking walk breaks as you wish to take them.

4. On the first MM, don't try to run as fast as you can. Run the first half as you usually run on an easy training run. During the second half, pick up the pace and record your time.
5. The goal on each successive MM is to beat the best time you have run so far. After about 3 or 4 of these, you should be running very close to your best pace, currently. You want to finish thinking that you couldn't have run more than a few seconds faster—to get an accurate estimate of potential.
6. During the 2nd. (and continuing) MMs, it's OK to be huffing and puffing—especially during the second half. But don't push yourself so that you are nauseous. We have a “no puking rule” in our Galloway training programs.
7. To find a safe training pace for your long runs, take the MM time, multiply by 1.3 and add 2 minutes. Then, make the temperature adjustment in # 12, below.
8. So a runner who records 10:00 in the magic mile, is predicting a 13 min/mi pace in a very hard marathon when doing all of the long runs (including a 29 miler), and all of the speedwork elements (including 14 x 1 mile), on a perfect weather day with no runners to impede progress.
9. The long run pace should be at least 2 min/mile slower than current predicted pace in the marathon. In the example above, the MM of 10:00 says that a long run should be no faster than 15 min/mi. It's OK to go slower than this.
10. During the last 4 weeks, after the last MM in the program, take your best time in the MM and multiply by 1.3 to find your current potential in the marathon, and multiply by 1.2 to see current potential in the Half Marathon.
11. The resulting time is the best you could expect, under ideal conditions (60F, no hills, no crowds, etc.) when you have done all of the speedwork, etc. to prepare for the time goal. You should then add to this predicted time based upon temperature, extra distance in crowded races (about a mile farther) how hard you want to push yourself, etc.
12. Temperature adjustment: Add 30 sec a mile for every 5 degrees above 60F—on long runs or during the race itself.
13. If you don't want to do the math yourself, there is a magic mile predictor function at our website: <http://jeffgalloway.com/resources/gallracepredict.html>