



The Starting Line

TIPS FOR BEGINNERS FROM AN EASYGOING COACH

BY JEFF GALLOWAY



START SMART
Relax before your race, and do only your usual stretches.

The Excuse (AND HOW TO BEAT IT)

I'm afraid to sign up for a race because I am too slow.

Sorry, but there is no such thing as "too slow." Watch any race and you'll see people of all ages and sizes running every pace from sprint to walk.



When most runners who say they are too slow finally enter a race, they find they finish in the middle. Neighborhood races are a fun way to get motivated to train and leave finishers with a glow that improves their running for weeks—even those at the back of the pack.

This Weekend's 5-K

What to do in the days and the hours before your race

YOU SIGNED UP FOR your first 5-K, and religiously followed a training plan for six weeks. Here's what to do on the last week to make the most of your experience. And once you reach the finish line, remember to give yourself a big pat on the back.

HOW MUCH SHOULD I RUN THIS WEEK?

→ Do two or three easy runs of 20 to 30 minutes. Take one or two days off before race day.

SHOULD I EAT A BIG BOWL OF PASTA THE NIGHT BEFORE?

→ No, loading up can lead to "unloading" during the race. Eat a normal portion of your regular healthy dinner.

SHOULD I WEAR THE RACE T-SHIRT TO THE RACE?

→ Unfortunately, most race shirts are made of cotton and become heavy as they absorb sweat, so save it for bragging rights after you cross the finish line.

I SEE PEOPLE SPRINTING BEFOREHAND.


SHOULD I DO THAT, TOO? → No. Warm up 30 to 40 minutes before the race begins by walking for five minutes, jogging for five minutes, then picking up the pace a bit for the next five minutes. Finally, walk to the starting line.

WHERE SHOULD I LINE UP? → At the very back of the crowd, where the atmosphere is relaxed. Start on a side so you can move over to take one-minute walk breaks for every one to four minutes of running.

SHOULD I RUN AS FAST AS POSSIBLE FROM THE START?

→ No. Even if the folks around you take off quickly, restrain yourself so you have energy to finish.

WHAT IF IT RAINS? → The race will still be held. Wear a cap and a garbage bag with holes cut for your head and arms that you can discard before the gun goes off.

WHAT IF I COME IN LAST? → You probably won't, but if you do, the crowd often cheers loudest for the last person. Congratulate yourself for beating the thousands in your community who are still in bed. 

FACT OR FICTION?

You must follow a rigorous training plan before you race.

FICTION You can complete a race—even a marathon—by running just three days per week, and two of these runs can be 30 minutes each. The longer run (usually on the weekend) should be very slow—about two to three minutes per mile slower than your usual pace. Take regular walk breaks from the beginning of long runs and the race itself. That's how thousands of beginners have finished 5-Ks to marathons without being unduly fatigued.



Ask Galloway any running question at JeffGalloway.com.