

# How Can I Get Started on a Walking or Running Program for Myself?



One of the many benefits of walking or running is that you can do it on your own (no gym membership required!) with personal discipline and just a little guidance. To take care of the latter, here is the 12-week “self-paced” training schedule that “First Strides” uses with great success. Just follow this gradual, progressive program, and you, too, will be able to complete a 5-K (5 kilometers or 3.1 miles) in three short months.

If you experience any persistent muscle or tendon soreness that doesn’t go away with stretching, ice massage, and/or rest, stop the program and try to determine the cause. Your local specialty running store is usually an excellent resource for advice on typical injuries experienced by walkers and runners (such injuries are often related to improper or improperly fitted footwear—something they can certainly help with). They also can recommend sports-related physicians in your area.

## Sample Workout

- Warm-up with 5 minutes of easy walking or jogging
- Stretch
- Do the Easy;Hard workout described in the schedule below
- Cool down with 5 minutes of easy walking or jogging
- Stretch

## Definitions (see chart headings below)

■ **Easy; Hard** refers to your effort. This is the actual workout. For some people, “easy” will be a very slow stroll, and “hard” will be a faster walk. For others, “easy” may mean a comfortable walk and “hard,” power walking. For still others, “easy” may mean a brisk walk and “hard,” a jog. Some will jog and pick it up to a run. The beauty of this program is that it accommodates all abilities because it’s based on minutes of activity, not distance or speed.

■ **Reps** means repetitions, or, the number of times you repeat the Easy;Hard minutes.

■ **Total Easy** and **Total Hard** are listed only to show you the gradual progression of the activity. The “easy” gets shorter, the “hard” gets longer. The result is your improvement!

■ **Total Time\*** is the time of the Easy;Hard portion of the workout. It does not include the mandatory 5-minute warm-up before starting the Easy;Hard portion of the workout or the 5-minute cool down after the Easy;Hard workout (see Sample Workout above).

■ **Warm-up** means a comfortable (relative to your ability) walk or easy jog to get your muscles warmed up.

**Cool down** is a similar pace that gradually eases you back to ending the workout or complete rest.

■ **Stretching** is an important part of your workout. It prepares your muscles for activity and helps avoid injuries from over-use. Incorporate some stretches that stretch your calves, your hamstrings, and your back between the warm-up and Easy;Hard workout and again after your cool down ... before you jump in the car to drive home or flop on the couch! (See Sample Workout above)

■ **Frequency** refers to the number of times per week you do that week’s workout. In the first five weeks, a frequency of 3 means you should get out there every other day for three days of activity in a seven-day week. It’s always best to alternate workout days with rest days. Rest days are days in which you do nothing physical or participate in an activity other than running or brisk walking, such as swimming, bicycling, strength-training, golf—you get the picture.

## “First Strides” Training Schedule

Week	Easy;Hard	Reps	Total Easy + Total Hard = Total Time*		Frequency	
	in minutes	repetitions	minutes	minutes	total # min	workouts/week
1	4:1	3	12	3	15	3
2	4:2	3	12	6	18	3
3	3:2	4	12	8	20	3
4	3:3	4	12	12	24	3
5	2:3	5	10	15	25	3
6	3:4	4	12	16	28	4
7	2:4	5	10	20	30	4
8	1:4	6	6	24	30	4
9	1:5	6	6	30	36	4
10	1:7	5	5	35	40	4
11	1:9	4	4	36	40	5
12	1:10	4	4	40	44	5

\* This time does not include the mandatory 5-minute warm-up and stretch, and 5-minute cool down and stretch