



8-Week 21km Training Plan

(For those stepping up from 10k)



Week	Tues	Thu	Weekend
1	10-15 minute easy warmup 6- 8 x (90sec tempo pace, 90sec jog recovery). 5- 10 mins easy cool down	30-40min easy run	10-13km easy run Incorporate hills where possible. See notes.
2	10-15 minute easy warmup 8 - 10 x (90sec tempo pace, 90sec jog recovery). 5- 10 mins easy cool down	30-40min easy run	11-14km easy run Incorporate hills where possible. See notes.
3	10-15 minute easy warmup 3x (4- 5mins tempo pace, 2min easy recovery jog) 5-10 mins easy cool down	35-45min easy run	12-15km easy run Incorporate hills where possible. See notes.
4	10-15 minute easy warmup 3x (4- 5mins tempo pace, 2min easy recovery jog) 5-10 mins easy cool down	35-45min easy run	13-16km easy run Incorporate hills where possible. See notes.
5	10-15 minute easy warmup 2x (8-10mins tempo pace, 2min easy recovery jog) 5-10 mins easy cool down jog OR 10 minute easy warmup jog. Long (60-90sec), gentle-grade hill repeats x6 Run these at '7/10 effort' or 'comfortably hard' Walk or slow jog back down as recovery 5-10 mins easy cool down jog	40-50min easy run	14-17km easy run Incorporate hills where possible. See notes.
6	10-15 minute easy warmup 2x (8-10mins tempo pace, 1- 2min easy recovery jog) 5-10 mins easy cool down jog OR 10 minute easy warmup jog. Long (60-90sec), gentle-grade hill repeats x6-8 Run these at '7/10 effort' or 'comfortably hard' Walk or slow jog back down as recovery 5-10 mins easy cool down jog	40-50min easy run	15-18km easy run Incorporate hills where possible. See notes.
7	10 minute easy warmup jog. 15-20mins tempo pace 5-10 mins easy cool down jog OR 10 minute easy warmup jog. Long (60-90sec), gentle-grade hill repeats x8 Walk or slow jog back down as recovery 5-10 mins easy cool down jog	40-50min easy run	12-14km easy run Choose smaller hills or flat this week. Recovery becomes critical from today.
8	10-15 minute easy warmup jog. 10 x (1min stride-out, 1min jog recovery). 5 mins easy cool down jog	20-30 min easy run	21km(ish) BEER RUN!!

Notes on the 21km program:

Base Fitness

There is a decent degree of assumed fitness required to utilise this training plan safely and effectively. It is assumed that you can already run 10km. If you are not already able to run 10 km then you are likely to find this program too aggressive and will significantly increase your risk of injury in attempting to complete it. Good general health is assumed too. If you have not been exercising regularly, and have not had a medical checkup in the past 12 months, speak to your GP before commencing a program like this.

Be conservative, it's better to run a slower race on the day than to not make the start line at all because of injury!!! See the notes below regarding 'Ranges' for tailoring this program between both lower and intermediate levels of fitness.

Basic Training Principles in This Plan

There are deliberately only 3 sessions per week in this plan. This is to allow adequate recovery time between sessions. One of the most commonly overlooked factors influencing injury risk is adequate recovery. Do not underestimate the step up from 10 km to 21 km, particularly over a course with challenging hills. While every effort has been made to design a program aimed at maximising performance and minimising injury risk, this step up still poses a significant challenge for most. This is particularly the case for a time frame as short as 8 weeks. If you are already performing multiple sessions of different types of training during the week (other than running) you may want to consider reducing those training sessions while increasing your running.

For many runners making the jump from 10 km to the half Marathon, a training program progressing too quickly and lacking variety across the week is a significant factor in the development of injury. A repetitive distance-focused-only program without interval training, tempo sessions, or harder work such as hills, significantly compromises your performance and fitness gains. This program deliberately focuses on a session with intermittent higher intensity efforts at the start of the week, and mid-week easy run to log miles but be gentle on the legs, followed by a progressively longer weekend run. Trying to simultaneously increase your distance and intensity increases the risk of injury. Sticking to a varied plan like the one listed above will help you improve your performance while keeping injury risk as low as possible over an 8 week build-up.

Ranges

Note that many of the entries have a range of distances, number of repeats, or time. Use these ranges to tailor the program to your fitness. Run at the bottom end of the range if you feel your fitness is low. You should also consider running towards lower ends of the range from time to time if your stress levels are high (yes- stress affects recovery and injury risk!), your sleep has been poor, or you are feeling a little stiff or sore. Listen to your body!

Extra Sessions?

If the program above is even a moderate step up in mileage or intensity for you then I would suggest NOT adding extra runs at all, no matter how tempting. Running well, and running injury-free, does not work on the 'more is better' principle. 'Recover better, train better' is key. Stepping up this much over 8 weeks is enough of a challenge in itself for many runners.

If you are already regularly running somewhere near the level of the middle weeks of this program then you could consider a little extra work. If I was to add an extra session to this program it would be a strength day or cross-training day. If you're not already at the gym then body-weight exercises are more than enough. Detailing these sorts of exercises is beyond the scope of this article, but I would recommend getting advice from someone like a physio or running coach if it is an option for you.

Easy pace

2 out of the 3 weekly sessions in this program are very deliberately described as easy pace. This could be described as “conversational pace”, i.e. a pace at which you would be able to hold a conversation. Another way of measuring this effort would be on a 0 to 10 scale of “perceived exertion”. Your rate of perceived exertion on an easy run would be around 6 or lower. Your long, easy runs are supposed to be just that. Save the racing for race day.

Tempo pace

Tempo pace is a term commonly used in running coaching, this term is often used interchangeably with the terms threshold pace or lactate pace. It could also be described as “comfortably hard”, or about 7 to 8/10 perceived exertion. Note that you should consider the pace to feel comfortably hard across the duration of each effort, not feel like you are running flat out in the first 100 m of a 3 to 5minute effort! Focus on good running form throughout each effort, i.e. running tall with good arm swing, controlled breathing and a steady leg turnover.

Terrain

Given that you are training for a trail run, try to vary the surfaces on which you run. Utilising running routes with undulating or rolling terrain is a great way to naturally vary your heart rate, helping to improve your fitness further.

Hills

There are numerous hills on Sharpy’s Beer Run 21km(ish) course. Some rolling, some medium grade, some short and sharp, and a couple of killers! Specificity of training is important. You should be making every effort to include hills in your training runs. If you have the option to run on the course itself before race day this would be ideal. Make no mistake, this course will be incredibly difficult if you have only trained over flat terrain.

You need to make allowances for the fact that a hilly run will require more effort and time than a flat run over the same distance. Make use of the ranges listed in this program. If you run over a hilly course, you can choose to run a shorter distance than you would have otherwise done on the flat. One great method to use is to calculate the duration of the run you would otherwise be doing on flat terrain and simply run for this duration over the hilly course without a specific focus on distance.

Particularly those new to trail running might find it quite a surprise that walking is entirely acceptable, at times critical, in a trail race. Once the steepness of the hill reaches a certain grade the effort required to continue running up it is so substantial that the small amount of time gained over those who are walking the same hill is nowhere near the cost in terms of energy depletion for later in the race. A great way to see this in practice is tackling a steep hill with a training partner. While one of you continues to run, the other should hike up quickly behind them, you will notice that once you reach a certain level of steepness there is very little speed difference between running and fast hiking. It is also a good idea to practice some of this fast, steep, uphill hiking in the training program during your long runs. The main hill on the Beer Run course, coming up the back of Arthur’s seat from McLaren’s dam, can take 10 minutes or more with at least 70 to 80% hiking for most runners.