

Running Challenges

How to choose which event is right for you

Whether you're taking your first steps off the couch or you're a seasoned runner looking for your next goal, choosing the right event can make the difference between an amazing experience and a struggle to the finish line.



WHERE TO START?

From 5K walks to full marathons, our running expert Tracy will help you discover how to match your challenge to your fitness level, timeline, and training capacity – and set yourself up for an achievement you'll be proud of for years to come.

TRACY SWINDELL

Tracy transitioned from a fun runner to becoming a Great Britain international athlete in both half and full marathons, achieving an impressive personal best time of 2:40. In 1997, she proudly finished as the 3rd British female and 19th female overall in the prestigious London Marathon. More recently, Tracy dedicated a decade to working as a personal trainer and is also a co-survivor.

CHOOSE SOMETHING THAT EXCITES YOU

Choose an event that truly excites you. This excitement will be your driving force during those challenging training sessions when motivation wanes. Whether it's the thrill of your first 5K, the adventure of a mountain hike, or the triumph of crossing a marathon finish line, your passion for the goal will propel you forward.

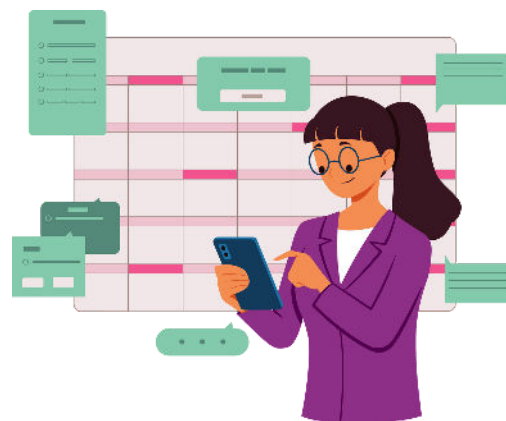
Consider what type of challenge resonates most deeply with you. Some runners find inspiration in distance goals, pushing their endurance to new limits with half marathons or ultra events. Others are drawn to unique experiences like obstacle races, trail runs through scenic countryside, or iconic city marathons that combine personal achievement with incredible atmosphere. The key is selecting something that makes you genuinely excited to lace up your trainers each day.



MATCH YOUR EVENT TO YOUR TIMELINE

Give yourself enough time to succeed

There's nothing worse than struggling through an event because you weren't adequately prepared. The key is realistic planning.

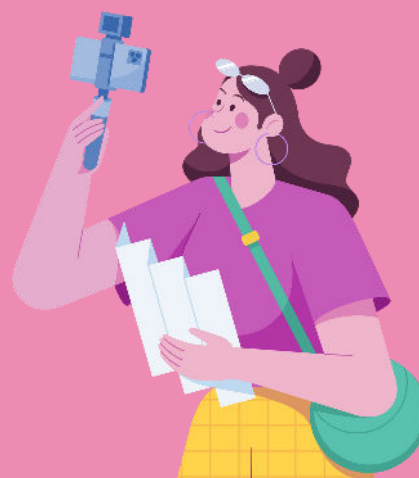


If you're starting from a sedentary lifestyle

Begin with achievable goals, such as a local 5K or charity walk. The Couch to 5K plan is excellent – it typically takes 9 weeks to get you running 5 kilometres comfortably, and you can repeat weeks if you need more time.

For your first marathon

Ideally, have at least a year of running experience behind you. Build up through shorter events – 5K, 10K, then half marathon. You'll learn valuable lessons along the way that will make you much better prepared for the full distance.



If you're already an experienced runner

A 14-16 week marathon-specific training program should be sufficient.

BE HONEST ABOUT YOUR AVAILABLE TIME

Consider both how many days per week you can train and for how long. Two 30-minute sessions per week won't prepare you for an enjoyable marathon experience, but they might be perfect for a 5K goal. Be honest about your available training time to set realistic goals and expectations.



Ask yourself:

- How many days per week can I realistically train?
- How much time can I dedicate per session?
- What other life commitments do I need to work around?

START WHERE YOU ARE, NOT WHERE YOU THINK YOU SHOULD BE

Your starting fitness level determines your event choice and timeline. If you're not very fit, that's absolutely fine – you just need to be realistic about what's achievable given your timeframe and available training hours.

Don't forget: you don't have to be an Olympic athlete to kick things off! Just keep your goals realistic and give yourself plenty of time to get ready.





THE BOTTOM LINE

With the right amount of time and effort, you'd be amazed at what you can achieve. Choose an event that challenges you appropriately, gives you enough time to train correctly, and most importantly, excites you enough to keep you motivated throughout your journey.

IMPORTANT NOTE

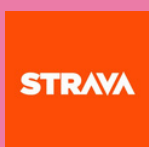
If you are a survivor or haven't undertaken any sporting activities in some time, we strongly advise you consult your GP or cardiologist before embarking on or committing to any event.



Podcasts are a great way to keep you entertained, motivated and for being inspired on your next run, walk or challenge. Paula Radcliffe, Runner's World, Couch to 5K and The Running Challenge are some of the popular ones.



[parkrun](#) is a nations favourite. Every Saturday morning at 9am, 100's of 5K parkruns take place across the country where you can run, jog, shuffle, walk and talk with many others. It's totally free! If you want to track and get route ideas checkout [Strava](#) and Komoot, both are excellent apps. And for some reading flip, through the pages of Country Walking to inspire your next walk in the Great Outdoors! Make sure you join our groups on [parkrun](#) and [Strava](#).



komoot

Country
walking



Tracy's Top 10 Tips

Start with the 10% rule - Never increase your weekly mileage by more than 10% each week to avoid injury.

Find a training buddy - Having someone to meet makes it harder to skip sessions, especially on dark winter mornings.

Train on similar terrain - If your event is hilly, include hills in training. Road race? Focus on pavement running.

Test energy gels, drinks, and breakfast during training for race day nutrition; avoid new items on event day.

Invest in proper running shoes - Visit a specialist running shop for gait analysis. Your feet will thank you, especially on long runs.

Incorporate rest days into your schedule—recovery is crucial for strength and adaptation. Rest days are essential, not lazy days.

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Keep hydrated, especially during hot temperatures and long runs. Use dedicated sports drinks to replenish electrolytes

Join a local hiking or running club. Running Clubs are more suitable for slower runners, and athletics clubs if you're a bit faster.



SUDDEN CARDIAC ARREST UK

YOUR CHALLENGE, THEIR RECOVERY

Tracy's biggest challenge wasn't crossing any finish line - it was performing CPR on her husband Paul when he suffered a sudden cardiac arrest. That moment changed everything, turning Tracy into a co-survivor and showing her that some of life's most important challenges happen when we least expect them.

For almost a decade, Sudden Cardiac Arrest UK has been supporting survivors, co-survivors, and families through these unexpected journeys. We're passionate about empowering people through recovery, raising awareness, and pushing for better care across the UK. We've helped set quality standards, achieved a Guinness World Record with 127 survivors, and influenced national policy - but our biggest achievement is the community we've built.

When you take on a challenge for Sudden Cardiac Arrest UK, you're doing more than raising vital funds. You're showing survivors that recovery comes in many forms - that setting goals, pushing boundaries, and celebrating achievements are all part of moving forward. Your training journey and finish line moment become powerful examples of what's possible.

Many survivors and co-survivors wonder if they'll ever feel strong again. Seeing someone take on a 5K, conquer a half marathon, or complete a charity walk provides hope that recovery isn't just about returning to normal - it's about discovering what you're truly capable of. Every step you take helps us continue our vital work while proving that challenges are meant to be overcome.

WHAT'S YOUR NEXT CHALLENGE?

5K Run - Your first finish line awaiting? 10K Challenge - Ready to push further? Half Marathon - Could this be your perfect distance? Full Marathon - Time for your ultimate test? Charity Walk - Move with purpose for our cause? Trail Adventure - Craving fresh air and wild terrain? Mountain Hike - Ready to conquer new heights? Which one makes your heart race with excitement? What achievement will make you proudest?



We truly appreciate your incredible support for
Sudden Cardiac Arrest UK!

Thank you for being part of our mission to make a difference.



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