



Regardless of your experience and capability, training for a half marathon is a serious undertaking. We thought it would be great to share 10 training tips from 651 Running head coach, Jim Dodsworth, to help you with your preparation.

1. **Get the foundations right.** This first tip isn't about running. It's about all those things *around* running that will help you be successful in your half marathon. Try to get 8 hours sleep a night, eat well, keep hydrated and incorporate 2-3 strength or conditioning sessions into your week to help prevent injury. The training will be hard on your body so how well you recover is crucial and these things all help with that.
2. **Consistency** – Being successful in a half requires week upon week of consistent running. Think of a beautiful painting by one of the Old Masters. Their work is composed of layer upon layer of paint that builds up to create the whole picture. It's the same with your training. You need to establish the foundations and then add more specific work as race day approaches. Start by building your aerobic base with low intensity training miles run at an easy, conversational pace.
3. **Have a plan but be prepared to be flexible.** We all have different constraints on our time, be that work, family or other commitments and you need to be able to accommodate these into your plan. Similarly, you may be unwell or get a slight niggle. Be ready to adapt and switch things around where necessary. There are a lot of decent plans on the internet, but you need to be ready and willing to change them to fit your individual circumstances. This is where a coach can be invaluable as they will work with you to create an individualised plan as well as providing motivation, feedback and accountability throughout the training cycle.
4. **Race pace.** You probably have a goal time that you wish to achieve. Even if your aim is to finish it's worth having an idea of the time you may achieve so you can pace yourself appropriately. It's worth including goal pace runs into your schedule as you get closer to race day, so your body gets used to the feel at that pace. Finishing a long run with some miles at half marathon pace accustoms your body to running that speed when fatigued.
5. **Hills are your friend.** The Southend Half is flat but, regardless of that, it is worth including hills as part of your training. They make you stronger both mentally and physically.
6. **Get the shoes right.** Your feet are going to be carrying you a long way, not just in the race but during your training. It's well worth visiting a specialist local running

shop, getting your gait tested by an expert and investing in a pair of shoes that work for you. Your feet will thank you!

7. **Peaking.** This is the final stage of your training and often referred to as the 'taper'. I prefer to think of it as peaking, the culmination of all your hard work. At this stage it's about getting yourself into optimal condition for the race ahead and involves reducing your training volume and intensity in the final couple of weeks before the half marathon.
8. **Test, test, test.** It's important that you are confident in everything on race day. Running a test race (maybe a 10k) in advance gives you the opportunity to practice your race pace as well as to test the kit you are going to wear, the gels you will take, and your routine on the morning itself. The result will also allow you to re-evaluate your training paces and consider if your goal time needs to be revised.
9. **Community.** Running with other people makes hard runs so much easier and the miles fly by. Make use of the Haven's training group which creates a wonderful sense of camaraderie. You could also consider joining a local running club who will almost certainly have other people doing half marathon training.
10. **Fun** – Regardless of your motivation for doing the half, the training will be hard work and take up a lot of your spare time. This is all the more reason to enjoy the journey. US Olympian Deena Kastor talks about making "choices not sacrifices" which I think is a really good way of reframing things when it gets tough. We are not obligated to do this. Running is a gift. Embrace it!