**So You Want to Run a Marathon!**

You’ll be glad you did! Just keep in mind that this is a significant challenge for your body. Don’t make the mistake of taking it lightly. You are going to need to spend some time training, planning and taking care of yourself in order to have a positive experience. This paper will talk about some things you’ll want to wrap your mind around: **1) Running form; 2) Training; 3) Race strategy; 4) What to know about the race**

**1) Running form**

Your goal is efficiency.Running economy is the runner’s equivalent of automobile gas mileage. The less oxygen your body consumes at any given pace, the more economically you run. A high running economy is beneficial in two ways. With it you can run faster before reaching your maximum rate of oxygen consumption and you can also run farther before running out of muscle fuel.

There is a key difference between running economy and gas mileage, however. Cars get the same gas mileage regardless of whether the tank is full, half-full, or three-quarters empty. But runners actually lose economy as they become progressively fatigued. The reason seems to be that running form changes with fatigue, becoming sloppier and more wasteful. One way to improve your performance in races is to train specifically to delay and attenuate this “falling apart” of the stride.

How is this done? A new study from England’s Northumbria University begins to answer the question. The purpose of the study was to investigate the relationship between muscular endurance and fatigue-related loss of running economy. Muscular endurance is the capacity of individual muscles to maintain their force output through sustained hard work. When you contract a muscle as hard as you can and hold that contraction for an extended period of time, the force of the contraction will steadily decrease as the muscle fatigues. But this loss of force will occur more slowly in a muscle that has high endurance than in one that has low endurance. The authors of this new study hypothesized that runners who exhibited high endurance in their quads and hamstrings in muscular endurance tests would also exhibit a smaller fatigue-related loss of economy when running.

Here are a few problems you might need to fix in order to improve your running efficiency:

**Slow Cadence:** Running speed is a result of stride length multiplied by stride frequency. That said, many runners will first attempt to increase stride length, which in turn reduces their stride frequency, which, under optimal conditions should be around 180 foot strikes per minute. The easiest way to count stride frequency is to count your steps for 15 seconds and multiply by 4. If you count 40 steps in 15 seconds of running–meaning your are currently taking 160 foot strikes per minute–gradually make the jump to 180 foot strikes per minute by focusing on increasing your turnover.

Take a few minutes to listen to your feet hit the pavement when you run. The more time your feet spend on the ground, the more energy is required to propel it forward. Focus on increasing your cadence, and in turn, your efficiency.

**Lack of Mobility:** As mentioned earlier, stride frequency and stride length are the two components that determine running speed. [Check out this video analyzing the stride of Chris Solinsky](http://www.somaxsports.com/video.php?analysis=chris-solinsky-stride-analysis), the former American record-holder in the 10,000 meters, which shows how hip separation can help propel you forward, and consequently cover more ground.

Mobility trumps all else when it comes to running fast and staying healthy. If you lack complete range of motion anywhere in your lower body, you are going to be more susceptible to injury. A good way to increase running-specific mobility is through Active Isolated Stretching, a method made popular by stretching guru Phil Wharton. His techniques are focused on how to lengthen the muscles properly in order to prevent injury and improve performance.

[**VIDEO: The Right Kind Of Flexibility For Runners**](http://running.competitor.com/2011/11/videos/video-the-right-kind-of-flexibility-for-runners_42944)

Lastly, lets take a look at momentum, ideally of the forward variety. One of the best ways to establish forward momentum is to lean from the ankles. This forward lean will also help you avoid running vertical miles. Keep your head as level as possible, and avoid bouncing up and down as you propel yourself forward.

**Unrelaxed Upper Body:** One of the most difficult things to teach a runner, beginner or experienced, is how to run fast AND relaxed. A good way to do this is by using the example of a world-class sprinter. If you slow the footage down, you will see how relaxed his or her jaw is, how effortlessly their knees drive up toward and through the hips, and how the shoulders are relaxed and hanging away from the ears.

Here are a few tips to ensure that your upper body is relaxed and you are carrying your arms properly.

• Keep the angle of your elbows at 90 degrees, and be sure not to release that angle in the back swing, as it will only waste precious energy.

• Raise your shoulders to your ears at each mile marker during a race, and then drop them back down into their ideal, relaxed position.

• Perform the “Hands on Head” drill. Start by interlocking your hands on your head. Focus on keeping your core solid and straight while keeping the hips and shoulders level and relaxed. Start jogging. This drill will help you to eliminate any left to right movement through the hips and help eliminate a criss-crossing, side-to-side arm carriage.

**2) training**

We recommend the CrossFit Endurance programming for your training. Change the template as needed to fit your schedule, but to keep the integrity of the program and maximize results, stick to the programmed template as closely as possible. If you need to move a wod to a different day, move everything from that day to the new day. Keep wods from the same day together. If you cannot keep up with the demand, scale it back, as this is about progression, not destruction. When your event approaches, taper 1.5 : 1 week.

If you are not warming up properly, doing skill-based work for each and every sport including strength, sport, or gymnastics (these are examples) you are not following the programming as intended. Everything you do here should involve technique training, warm up, and cool downs. There is more work involved here than just lacing up your shoes and running 2 to 3 hours at a time. Use at your own risk, and remember … have FUN!

**General template for CFE training:**

**Week 1**:

**Sun:** Endurance WOD or Tempo / Time Trial

**Mon:** Strength: max effort lower; CFE S&C (<10 min)

**Tue:** *morning:* CFE S&C (>10 min); — *evening:* Endurance WOD Short Interval

**Wed:** Strength: max effort upper; CFE S&C (<10 min)

**Thur:** Endurance WOD Long Interval

**Fri:** Strength: dynamic effort lower; CFE S&C (>10 min)

**Week 2**:

**Sun:** Endurance WOD or Tempo / Time Trial

**Mon:** Strength: dynamic effort upper; CFE S&C (>10 min)

**Tue:** *morning:* CF; — *evening:* Endurance WOD Long Interval

**Wed:** Strength: max effort lower; CFE S&C (<10 min)

**Thur:** Endurance WOD Short Interval

**Fri:** Strength: max effort upper; CFE S&C (<10 min)

**Terminology:**

*S&C =* CrossFit strength and conditioning workout. Follow as close to prescription as possible. Scaling is a *must* for the intention of sticking to standards of movement. Most of these workouts are intended to be less than 10-15 min with lots of intensity.

*Time Trial* = a measurement of maximum work capacity/power output over a set amount of time or distance. The time trial is often called the *race of truth.* It is done alone and should be re-tested under similar conditions and the same distance/time. There should be nothing entertaining or fun about it. Until it is over of course, and if you are PRing it!

*RPE* = Rate Perceived Exertion. It is on a scale of 1 : 20.

*Rx* = as prescribed

*Intervals =* You should be trying to hold the fastest pace possible.

% = Use the indicated % of your best time for the prescribed distance or time. If you do not have a time or distance for what is prescribed, go set one that will be used in future wods. Keep track of times/distances/paces with dates in a log book so you can refer back to them.

*ME* = Max Effort. Usually consisting of working to a 2 rep max. If you feel you can get a 1RM PR then do so, if not, it is not necessary.

*DE* = Dynamic Effort. Usually 2 reps at 50-70% (not limited to these) done as fast as possible. Think of a ball bouncing off the floor. You may choose to utilize bands, chains, boxes, boards, or whatever your little heart desires to mix it up and add to either of these. DE is Dynamic and for speed!

**Warm-up—Strength and Conditioning**  
Warm Up: Mobility — DROM: Dynamic Range of Motion  
Exercise specific skill work, warm up/ramp up of weight and intensities. The shorter the workout, the longer the warm up.

**Warm-up—Endurance**  
Run: 1/2 mile easy jog or equivalent for Swim/Bike/ C2.  
Run: 3 sets of 3 different CrossFit Running drills of choice with brief (100-200m) jog increasing to sprint between each. Follow up with 3 sprints <100m. 80%, 90%, and 100%. Recover completely; begin workout.

**Strength and Conditioning Recovery:** This can and should be done the day of races, after long runs, or on Sundays after interval work.

Glute Ham Developer Sit-ups (make sure you are extending knees aggressively to come up. your quads should also burn on this) 3 x 15, Glute Ham Developer hip extensions (hamstrings and butt should burn), Kettlebell/Dumbbell swings 3 x 15, Bench Press, Pull-ups All exercises with light : medium weight. 3 sets! Reps are until you feel burn in target area or prescribed amount. This is not a timed WOD.

**Rest periods: Should I be doing anything?** You choose how you want to do it, but if you are going all out, you won’t do much more than rest. If you want to walk, go for it. If you want to jog, go for it. If you want the most distance gained out of each interval you will rest. More does NOT = better.

No breaks on the set between rounds unless indicated. It is he/she who is proficient in all metabolic systems who will be most successful.

**Work on speed:** University of Colorado cross country and track coach Mark Wetmore, who said: “Distance doesn’t kill speed, not doing speed kills speed.”

So what’s the easiest and most effective way to work on your speed? Start by performing a few strides after your easy runs, or add a session of weekly hill sprints into your schedule. It’s hard to run fast, especially uphill, with inefficient form. From there, start sprinkling some small doses of speedwork into your training schedule, which will help fine-tune your form, while improving speed and efficiency.

Running faster will force you to break out of your comfort zone and start recruiting your previously unused fast-twitch muscle fibers. Doing too much, too soon, however, will result in injury, so it’s important to sprinkle in speed work in small doses.

After one or two of your regular old runs during the week, find a flat stretch of road and accelerate for 15-20 seconds. Once you approach top speed, gradually decelerate back down to a jog. Repeat four to six times and take a minute or so between repeats to catch your breath and get ready to go again. Remember, these aren’t all-out sprints but short accelerations. Focus on running relaxed with fluid form: get up on your toes and lift your knees a little more than you ordinarily would while covering ground quickly and comfortably.

In the beginning, a set of four to six strides two to three times a week after your regular runs is plenty.

**Fartlek:** Once you’ve made strides a regular part of your training regimen, you’ll be ready to start stepping up the speed work ladder. Fartlek – Swedish for “speed play” – is a great way to get your wheels spinning. This type of speed workout can be done on the roads, trails or treadmill and all you’ll need is a little imagination or a reliable watch. Essentially, fartlek is a series of faster pickups with a recovery interval in between. The length and speed of the pickups, as well as the recovery intervals, is totally up to you.

When out on the roads or trails, after an easy warm-up jog of a mile or two, find an object off in the near distance, be it a tree, rock or telephone pole, and run to it at a pace faster than you ordinarily would. Once you reach your destination or start feeling fatigued, jog gently or even walk until you’re feeling recovered and then repeat the process all the way home.

If you prefer a little more structure in your speed play or are tied to the treadmill, set your watch so your pickups are of a predetermined duration, whether it’s 30 seconds, 10 minutes or anything in between. Use the shorter pickups to practice sprinting and utilize the longer intervals to run strong at a steady pace you hope to maintain in a race. A mix of short, fast running and longer, steady stretches will tap into your anaerobic system and increase your aerobic capacity, thus improving your ability to maintain a faster pace. Try to perform a fartlek workout once a week and allow yourself a few days of easy running or rest afterward to ensure you recover completely.

**Track Workouts:** Track work in the form of interval training is one of the most precise ways to keep your speedometer in check on race day. Similar to fartlek training in that bouts of faster running are separated by recovery intervals, track training will better allow you to keep a close eye on your pace and give you an accurate idea of what you’ll be capable of in a race.

Introduce track workouts into your training schedule only after strides have become part of your regular routine and you’ve had some fun with a few fartlek workouts. When setting out to do a track workout, warm up with a mile or two of easy jogging and then perform a set of four to six strides in order to get your fast-twitch muscle fibers ready to do some work. As for the workout itself, aim for two to three miles’ worth of intervals ranging from 200 meters (1/2 a lap of the track) to one mile (four laps) and run them at your goal 5K race pace or even a few seconds per mile faster. For recovery, jog or walk for half the duration of the faster interval before starting the next one.

So, for example, if your goal race pace for 5K is 8:00 per mile, a sample track workout would be to run one mile at your goal pace of 8:00 and follow that that with 4:00 of slow jogging or walking for recovery. Then run 2 x 800 meters at 3:55, or 10 seconds per mile faster than your goal race pace, and follow each of those intervals with about 2:00 of walking or jogging. Finish fast with 2 x 400 meters in 1:55 with about a minute recovery in between and cool down with a mile or two of jogging afterward. You should finish the workout feeling pleasantly tired and not absolutely annihilated.

Track workouts are very demanding on the body, so be sure to treat them with the respect they deserve – performing them once a week or even every other week is plenty, especially if you’re racing regularly. And as with any other type of hard session, recovery is key, so be sure to run easy or rest in the days following a track workout.

**Final thoughts on training:** Running coach Mark Bravo [runbravo@yahoo.com](mailto:runbravo@yahoo.com) offers a few tips for Oklahoma City Memorial Marathon participants. Three weeks from Marathon weekend, make sure you’ve embraced a major ingredient for raceway success: POSITIVE ATTITUDE. It’s truly the most overlooked “intangible” you’ll bring to the race April 29.

You’ve been diligent with your training, experiencing an 18-20 mile effort or two for the full Marathon. Now, how about adding a middle to longer effort of ‘pacing’ to this, or next week’s training. Doesn’t have to be your longest run; maybe an 8-miler at race-goal-pace (sometimes called MGP for Marathon goal pace; HMGP for half.) If you desire a 5 hour marathon, and you feel intact and ready, aim for a 16-18 miler at 11:30 pace. This will heighten your confidence, shake any lethargy from the legs if training has been much the same for awhile, and freshen your outlook. An ‘altered’ effort always does that. If speed is not an issue, do shorter ‘pick-ups’, which raise your fitness, and also lend to the same self-empowerment.

Remember not to be too ambitious; set yourself up for SUCCESS! No need to perform the whole distance you’re aiming for April 29th. You’ll be ready to answer the bell raceway due to many intangibles: least of which is gratitude for simply being a part of such a memorable day in Oklahoma City! The Memorial Marathon is unlike any other race on earth! Take it all in; you’ll have it forever!

**3) race Strategy**

**Run at a set pace**: The easiest way to figure out what pace you should run at is to just decide on a finishing time that you would like to achieve. Once you have the finishing time, you can calculate what your average pace per mile needs to be. You can make yourself a wrist band with each split to help remind yourself while you are running, or else use a sports watch with a lap timer that will let you know how long you have been running for each mile. If you run a mile too fast or too slow, you will be able to make adjustments if you know what pace you are supposed to be running at. That way you will not run at the wrong pace for as long of a stretch, which can really hurt your race performance.

**Sample: 8:00 miles = 3:30 marathon**

**1** :8

**2** :16

**3** :24

**4** :32

**5** :40

**6** :48

**7** :56

**8** 1:04

**9 1:12**

**10** 1:20

**11** 1:28

**12** 1:36

**13** 1:44

**14** 1:52

**15** 2:00

**16** 2:08

**17** 2:16

**18** **2:24**

**19** 2:32

**20** 2:40

**21** 2:48

**22** 2:56

**23** 3:04

**24** 3:12

**25** 3:20

**26** 3:28

**9:00 miles = 3:56 marathon // 10:00 miles = 4:22 marathon // 11:00 miles = 4:48 marathon**

**Planned splits by distance**: Very closely related to running even, positive, or negative splits is planning your splits throughout the race. In fact, those are actually just simplified versions of this strategy. This could be broken up by any distance; for a marathon, you might want to plan what pace you want to run at for each mile split, or for each 5k split, or for each half split. By planning your splits a little more closely, you can account for different factors you expect to encounter on the race and you can tailor your training to mimic what your race plan is so that you will have an idea of what to expect. Having a race strategy like this for every race will leave you very confident on the starting line, because you will have spent a lot of time planning everything out and mentally preparing for the race. Having confidence that you can accomplish what you set out to do is a very large part of racing well, especially in a long race such as the marathon.

**Planned splits by course**: This is probably the most effective strategy that you can adopt without merging different strategies together. If you know the course well enough to plan how fast you want to run each of your splits, you will be just as confident if not more than if you just planned it based on the distance. As long as your knowledge of the course is accurate, you will also have a more realistic pace that can not be skewed by things like large starting crowds or steep hills. You should consider the course elevation of each split, how many people you expect to have running with you and around you at any given time, where water stops and other aid stations are, where traffic is likely to pose a problem, and even how much crowd support you might have at any given point. These factors can all have an affect on how fast or how slow you run, and it helps to anticipate everything that can influence your race. Just be careful not to get distracted by anything that you did not anticipate.

**4) What to know about the race**

**At starting line:**

Bear in mind that you will probably need more clothing at [the starting line](http://news.runtowin.com/2006/10/23/marathon-preparation-what-to-bring-to-the-starting-line.html) than you will during the race.

 **Race bib and/or chip**

 **Race Uniform**: Shoes, socks, shirt, shorts

 **Gel Packs**: Crank or Gu or any other type of gel

**Band Aids, Vaseline**: Vaseline or body glide is useful if you are prone to chafing or if it is really cold out. Feel free to apply it liberally. Band aids over your nipples.

• **Water bottle, snack**: Disposable water bottle; bagel or power bar to eat before race.

• **Trash bag**: for warmth and to discard when race starts

**Post-race bag:**

**• The Post-Race Bag**: The first thing to remember is the bag itself. Know the rules at your race! When I ran in San Antonio, you were given a plastic bag with your number written on it that you could put anything into, including another bag. Other races may require only that you have a sticker on the outside of your backpack or duffel bag. Some races may give you a plastic bag, but will not allow you to put another bag such as a backpack inside of it. Know what is required and what is allowed before you get to the baggage bus, and have your bag packed the night before.

**• Clean (and warm) Clothing**: You are going to be tired after your marathon, and no matter what the temperature your body is going to have more trouble than usual regulating your temperature. A light wind breaker, clean shorts or pants, dry socks, and a clean shirt can make you much more comfortable after the race than the wet clothing you just finished running in. If you don’t think you’ll be able to change your shorts, then some wind pants can be thrown over them quite easily. You may want to have a hat and gloves of some sort as well, if it is cold out.

**• Flip-flops**

**• Towel, Baby Wipes, Deodorant, Cologne**: A towel and baby wipes are handy at the finish line for taking the sweat and salt off of your body. If you are not going to have an opportunity to shower right away, or you plan on going out right after the race for some lunch or drinks, then your friends and other random folk around you will appreciate it if you dry off and put something on that will mask your stench.

**• Water and Snacks**: Most races will have food at the finish line for runners. It never hurts to have your own. You can also pack gatorade or other supplemental drink to help for after the race. I usually keep at least a bottle of water, a heel of bread or a bagel, and a power bar in my bag.

**• Cash**, **ID**, **Cell Phone**, **Keys**

**On race day:**

**Wake up early**: Early enough to get everything done that needs doing. You need enough time to digest your breakfast before your race.

**Eat breakfast**: You need those calories to make it through the finish line.

**Remember your bib, chip, and bags**: It is imperative that you remember to attach your chip to your shoe and to put your bib onto your uniform. Ideally, you will have done this a day in advance so that it is less likely that you will forget them. Write emergency contact info on your race bib. I will usually include an ICOE with my wife’s phone number or the phone number of a friend or family member that is in town. I wear a [Road ID dog tag](http://www.roadid.com/?referrer=2219) most days and any time that I am working out. It is one of the most recognizable forms of identification, is not likely to get lost, and if hurt my head or am unconscious it will tell emergency workers who I am, where I am from, who to contact, and my blood type and known allergies.

**Get to the race early**: Easier to drop things at the baggage bus, warm up, and use restrooms before crowd.

**Do a short warm up**: Walk or jig jog a mile or two before your marathon. Warm up your muscles a little before hand. If you know that it is going to take 10 minutes to get to the starting line, at least walk around for 10 minutes or so before heading to the start line.

**Stretch your muscles**: After warm up, do some gentle stretching. Goal is not to increase your flexibility, so do not stretch to the point of discomfort. You just want to loosen up. Reach easily for various points on your body. Once you can feel the stretch start, hold where you are at for 5 or 10 seconds or so. Do an opposing stretch, and then revisit the last stretch. You do not want to tear too many muscle fibers like you have been after your training runs, you just want to keep the muscles warm and limber so that you do not hurt yourself at the start of the race.

**Empty your bowels**: If you can manage it, try to go to the bathroom at least twice before your race. Go before you leave your hotel, and try to go again at least once before the race starts. For some of the larger races you may need to empty your bowels well in advance of the gun. You should also be drinking enough water that you will have to urinate at least once before the race, as well.

**Line up on time**: Get to the starting line and place yourself appropriately before the race starts. If there are corrals, then find the correct corral that you will be lining up in as soon as you get to the starting area so that you will not get lost when it comes time to start. Follow all last minute instructions and remember to have fun when the gun goes off.

**During race:**

**Stick to your plan**: You will find it is much easier to deal with anything unforeseen that comes up. Not only that, but fewer obstacles will appear during your race than if you ignore or forget about your plan. Know what splits you want at different points in the race, and try to achieve them.

**Do not go out too fast, do not go out too slow**: Run to your ability and training.

**Watch for other runners**: Try not to change directions suddenly and cut people off. Watch out for runners in front of you who might change direction without warning. Avoid collisions. Make sure that you keep your elbows to yourself. Minor bumps and bruises are not a very big deal, but locking legs or a tumble can easily lead to a DNF.

**Watch for vehicles**: Even on a closed course, you could get somebody exiting their driveway or an emergency vehicle that needs to get through. Stay aware of your surroundings and remember that even if you have the right of way, you weigh a lot less. If somebody is coming up on a bicycle, they will not be as noisy as a car, but can hurt you just as much.

***Drink* your water**: You may not need water at every water stop, but it probably will not hurt to take some. Always drink at least one cup; if you want, grab a second to douse your head with. Drinking the water will cool you off much more effectively, and will help you to keep from getting too dehydrated. If you have trained with gatorade or whatever else they have on the course, then feel free to drink that too.

**Eat strategically**: If you have gel packs with you, take one every half hour or so as you come up on a water stop. Always take it before drinking the water, and take water as soon as you can after taking it. If you have trained with bananas or oranges, then feel free to take that during the race as well. If you have not, then you may want to skip the solid food that may be offered along the course.

**Beware walking breaks**: In my first marathon, I was on pace through 17 miles exactly. I started to slow up a small amount over the next three miles. At 20.5, I walked through a water stop. My race might as well have been over. My per mile pace was a mixture of half again my race pace and twice my race pace until the last mile. If you are running fast and then you stop to walk, your legs might get really stiff before you have a chance to get going again. It is hard to fight against that. Even a shuffle that is slower than your walk will allow you to keep a little looser as you grab your water.

**Use turn signals**: Be courteous to your fellow racers. If you are going to turn or you want to get to the other side of the course (such as for a water stop) then signal with your hand and arm first. It will warn somebody behind you that you are not going to be continuing in a straight line, and will keep them from accidentally tripping over you. If you happen to spot a pothole, the people behind you who do not see it will appreciate it if you yell “Pot Hole!” as you come up on it.

**Do not forget to enjoy yourself**: You should be having fun. There is a very small percentage of the population that will ever run as far as you are in this one race. It will hurt, and the weather will sometimes be miserable. But is there really anywhere else that you would rather be? Make friends with your fellow runners. Wave to the crowd. Enjoy the sights and the sounds and the smells. Have yourself an experience, and avoid just going through the motions.

**Finish strong**: Ignore how much it hurts. You want to race into the finish. Be that guy that edges out the other person. Give the crowds something to cheer for. Give the photographers a good finish line photo. The quicker you finish, the quicker you can get to the food tent. Note that this only applies to people who should actually be finishing the race; if you have ruptured a muscle, or broken a bone, or are about to collapse of dehydration then you should probably pull yourself off of the course and visit a medical tent. For the rest of us, finish strong!

**After the race:**

**Stay on your feet**: Resist the urge to sit or lay down. Walk around and stretch your legs out. I usually walk about for at least half of an hour, though, before I sit down for more than a few moments.

**Give back your chip**:

**Put on something warm**: The space blanket they hand you at the end of the race will go a long way towards keeping you warm, but putting on some dry clothes and getting into something warm will feel great. If you have baby wipes or a towel, you can do a quick job of cleaning yourself up before you change.

**Eat and drink a lot**: Do not neglect this after you finish. Drink as much water as you possibly can, and stuff your face with whatever comes to hand. You need the calories. Visit the food tent as soon as you can, or raid your [post race bag](http://news.runtowin.com/2006/10/23/marathon-preparation-what-to-pack-in-your-post-race-bag.html) for any snacks that you packed in it. Better to give yourself the food and be a little uncomfortable than deny yourself the food and spend the rest of the day sick and in pain.

**Change your shoes**: Put some flip flops or sandals on, or put on some loose fitting sneakers.

**Hover around the toilets**: When you finish your race, you need to get changed and to get some food and water. While you are walking around, though, try to stay in the vicinity of whatever toilets are available. Trust me, you are going to need one. If you do walk off and wind up being even a two minute walk away, then you are asking for trouble. Bear in mind that there may be lines at some races to use them. The need to go can and will come up very suddenly, and it may take a trip or two before you are done.

**Take a nap**: If you can, try to nap for a half hour or more. An early to mid afternoon nap can really help to energize you and allow you to further enjoy any evening celebrations following the race. After the San Antonio marathon one year, I did not go to bed until after midnight and neglected the nap. I wound up spending the next 3 months sick as a dog. Your immune system is going to take a beating. Do everything that you can to get it back up to speed as fast as you can. Taking in plenty of calories, drinking plenty of water, and a short nap is all you will need to keep yourself going.

**Make the most of the post race festivities**: Enjoy the end of the race. Stick around for the awards ceremony. Make friends with your fellow runners. Get some quality time with your friends and family. You may as well enjoy what is available. You deserve to relax a little; you just ran over 26 miles. Have some fun. Reflect on your race. Write down your thoughts and memories so that you do not forget them.

**Go for a walk the day after your race**: I try to walk for at least a few miles the day after every marathon. You will be stiff, but after walking for a few miles you will have stretched out and you will really help your recovery. When I ran in Cleveland, I walked for 3 or 4 miles to a nearby park to read a book, and then walked back. After the Mysic Places Marathon in Connecticut, I walked around New York City the day after. I basically walked until I was too sore to walk any further and would stop in a pub. Then when I was too sore to sit any longer I would get up and walk again. After the Vermont City Marathon, I took in the sights of Burlington the next day. I was certainly not recovered enough to run a PR 5k the second day after those races, but I was recovered enough to have no trouble walking about my days and being perfectly comfortable.