

It's Got To Be Perfect

For most, summer means race season. Want to know how to have the perfect race day - start to finish? Read our top tips and make your big day, the best it can be...



PREPARATION IS KEY

- The night before a race you should eat a healthy, carb-loaded meal such as pasta with pesto, nothing too adventurous and something you have tried and tested beforehand.
- Lay everything out, ready for the next day. Take a look at our check-list and make sure you are well organised.
- Ensure you have your travel plans worked out and can get to the start line in plenty of time. Have an early night, you need to be bright eyed and bushy tailed as you toe the start line.

THE DAY OF RECKONING

- Wake up nice and early - you don't want to be rushing out the door.
- Tuck into a suitable breakfast - something you know works for you - again, it's not wise to try something new on race day. Take a look at our feature on pages 18/19 for some breakfast ideas. Eat breakfast nice and early, so that your body has plenty of time to digest it - running on a full tummy is a recipe for disaster.
- If your feet are susceptible to blisters, get plasters on them now, equally - if chafing has been a problem in training cover up those nipples to avoid irritation during the race.
- Gather everything you already had lying out, make one last visit to the loo and step out of the door. Aim to arrive at the race a good 60 minutes before the start time.

ON YOUR MARKS

- If applicable, make sure you locate the correct start position that correlates to your predicted finish time.
- If you need the toilet - now is the time to pay one last visit.
- Depending on the event, either leave your post race bag with one of your supporters or get it on the post-race baggage van.
- Warm up - some events will organise a pre-race warm up while other events you will have to do this yourself. Make sure you get the blood pumping and your muscles nice and warm before you set off.
- Get in the zone, think about what you want to achieve. A PB, to 'just get round', whatever it is visualise the goal and picture yourself crossing that finish line.

AND THEY'RE OFF

- Take it nice and easy - don't go hell for leather as soon as you cross the start line. Keep some petrol in the tank for the home straight.
- As you work your way round the course keep focused and imagine crossing that finish line.
- Enjoy the atmosphere, relish the cheers and claps - you deserve it.
- If it is a PB you are going for, keep an eye on your time, if you are feeling good then push yourself in the second half of the race. You will only regret it if you miss out by just a couple of seconds.
- Make use of the water stations and keep yourself hydrated. This is more important on distances over 10K and particularly on warm days.
- If you are running a half marathon or marathon then utilise the sports drinks on offer (if you have practised with them). Also - remember those jelly babies you stashed in your pocket!

THEY THINK IT'S ALL OVER, IT IS NOW

- Immediately after completing the race you should remain standing and continuing to walk, doing so allows your body to work its way back to its resting state and helps to reduce lactic acid build up in your muscles.
- Make sure you change into clean, dry clothes as soon as possible.
- We all know the importance of stretching after a run, but in the excitement of race day this can be all too easy to overlook. Making sure you carry out a thorough stretching sequence will go far in returning your muscles to their pre-race state, helping to avoid unnecessary injury and minimise stiffness the following day.
- In the minutes after crossing the finishing line, make sure you pick up a drink and something to eat - perhaps a sports energy drink and a banana to start the process of replenishing what your body has lost during the race.
- Continue to hydrate yourself throughout the day with water and other electrolyte fuelled drinks.

WHAT NEXT

- Feed me! It's usually better to snack over the course of the day than to have one large meal. And it goes without saying that at least one of these snacks should be a super indulgent sweet and tasty treat!
- Take advantage of a post race massage - a great way to soothe aches and strains and to aid recovery!
- Celebrate with a beer or glass of wine, but remember you will still be a little hydrated so have a large glass of water for every alcoholic beverage you drink.
- Before bed time take a soak in a cold bath, not exactly a treat but this will help relieve your aches and pains. As tempting as a hot bath may be, it is not advisable as the heat may further irritate already lactic acid-soaked muscles.

AND SO TO BED

- Get yourself to bed nice and early; plenty of rest will aid your recovery as this is the time that your body builds muscle and repairs any damage.

RACE DAY CHECKLIST

1. Kit that is tried and tested - now is not the time to try out new shoes or gear.
2. Race number and safety pins. You will also need to fill out emergency info on the back of your number.
3. Timing chip (if applicable).
4. Something warm to wear at the start (an old jumper that you don't mind discarding or bin bags are popular pre-race 'cover-ups').
5. Fully charged ipod/mp3 player with your running playlist.
6. Fully charged garmin (if applicable).
7. Sweet, energy booster. You might consider jelly babies, beans or a tried and tested specialist energy booster.
8. Tissues (for runny nose syndrome and also useful when using portaloos at start).
9. Something clean and warm to change into at the end of the race.
10. Plasters
11. Painkillers
12. Ice pack
13. Towel
14. Camera

[More great advice here](#)

