Train to run in a race

Competing in a local running competition can be exciting.

Running and jogging are great ways to be active and enjoy the outdoors. If you would like a goal to aim for when you run, one idea is to sign up for a running competition in your area. Here's how to get started.

Find a run
Many communities host races in the spring and summer that families can sign up for. A popular race is a 5K, which is a distance of 5 kilometers (about 3.1 miles). Your town's recreation website may list upcoming 5K races. Or you can search for local races online by going to websites such as runsignup.com or race-find.com. Look for the words "fun run" in the name or description, which usually means the race will be kid-friendly, with a mix of runners and walkers. To give yourself time to train, search for races that will take place about two months from now.

Start slowly
First, ask a parent if you need to talk to your doctor before starting to train. Once you have that answered, you can begin to plan. Six to eight weeks is about the right amount of time to train for a 5K. This will give you enough time to gradually build up to your distance and speed. Doing too much too fast can cause an injury. It's a good idea to always have an adult with you during a run, or ask your parent for permission to jog with a friend.

Make a schedule
Aim to train three days a week. Space out your training days so you have rest days in between. For example, you could practice running on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. Write the days you plan to train on your calendar and check them off as you do them. For each session, start by briskly walking to warm up your muscles. Then work up to a jog, which is like a slow run. Finally, test out your running pace. Use a watch or a timer to help you alternate between walking for two to three minutes and running for 30 seconds.

Lace up your sneakers.

Increase your running time
Each week, gradually aim to jog or run a little more than you did the previous week. When there are just about three weeks before the race, try to jog, run, or walk continuously for 30 minutes without stopping. It's OK if you walk for some of it. Walking is allowed in most races, so take the breaks you need.

Drink and eat well
In addition to training for the race, make sure your body is ready to run in other ways. Drink plenty of water before, during, and after your training sessions. On race day, eat a healthy breakfast that is a mix of carbohydrates and protein. The carbohydrates will give you energy, and the protein will keep you feeling full.

4 types of runs to know about

Across the country, many communities are starting to add extra elements to their races to increase excitement.
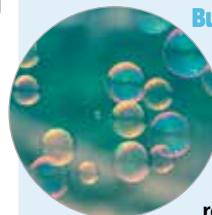
Color run

This run gets its name from the fact that participants are sprayed with colorful powders as they run through the course. Plan to wear an old white top, which will look tie-dyed by the end.

Bubble run

At different points within this run, you'll reach areas filled with bubbles that you jog through.

Blacklight run

As you jog through this course, you'll get covered in a colorful powder that glows in the dark when you run through sections of the race that feature giant black lights.

Tough Mudder Kids

This event lives up to its name because participants get covered in mud. The courses tend to be about a mile long and can include a mud pit, climbing wall, and other obstacles.