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To Marathon or Not to Marathon? by Jeff Galloway

This quiz will tell you if the 26.2 mile challenge is right for you. If it's not, we have options...

Most non-runners can't imagine why anyone would want to run a marathon. Heck, 26.2 miles is more than most people drive in a day. For many runners, though, the marathon has become the ultimate brass ring. They're convinced that to be a real runner, they need to take on the 26.2 challenge. But the marathon is definitely not for everyone, and that's totally fine. To determine if it's right for you, answer the six questions below. And remember: This is not a pass/fall quiz. While the marathon may not be your thing, another race distance may be. You just need to find the right race for you.

THE QUIZ

1. What's your motivation?

There are lots of good reason to run a marathon: you crave the challenge; you're raising money for charity; you want to get in the best shape of your life. But peer-pressure is not a good reason. Just because everyone else in your running group has run a marathon doesn't mean you should.

2. Can you plan far enough in advance?

To find out how many weeks you need to train for a marathon, subtract the distance of your last long run (within the past three weeks) from 28. So, if your longest run was 10 miles, you'll need 19 weeks to prepare. If you haven't recently run more than 2 or 3 miles at a time, plan on at least 7 months. You'll need this time to slowly increase the distance of your long runs. If you don't have enough weeks to train adequately, either choose a marathon that is later in the year, or shoot for a shorter distance.

3. Do you have enough time?

When training for a marathon, the pace of your long runs should be slower than your projected race pace. This slow long-run pace will eat up many hours of your time once you start logging 20-milers. If you can realistically only spare an hour or 2 per run instead of what will be necessary, you should choose a half-marathon instead.

4. Are you willing to take breaks?

Marathon training programs need to include regularly scheduled breaks. If you're the type of runner who has to run hard every day, your body won't make it to the marathon in one piece. To stay healthy for a marathon, you must schedule easy days and days off on a weekly basis. And taking regular 1-minute walk breaks during you long runs can reduce aches, pains, and injuries.

5. Will your body hold up?

In many cases, the slower training pace, weekly rest days, and regular walk breaks will reduce your chances of becoming injured. But if you've been battling a chronic ailment or know that you're prone to injury once your mileage begins to increase, choose a less demanding event.

6. Do you respect the distance?

If you think you can bluff your way through a marathon, having skipped some long runs or fudged on some other workouts, you should consider another race distance. There are plenty of other great but shorter events that allow you to skip an occasional workout.



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