

Couch to 5K Weekly Emails

Week 1

Subject: Welcome to Week 1 of the Couch to 5K Challenge!

Body:

Welcome to the Couch to 5K Challenge! Couch to 5K Challenge | Week 1

Let's get started on the right foot. (See what I did there? I crack myself up!)

I'm so excited to see the range of skills and experience levels who have joined the challenge, and I hope you all connect on the [PacificSource Run Club](#) page to keep each other motivated, share some tips and pictures, and commit together to achieve your goals.

Challenge Resources

Each week of the challenge, I'll send you a brief message (not like this—this is not brief, I'm so sorry) with some Couch to 5K tips and resources. You'll also find me on the Run Club page for ongoing engagement throughout the challenge.

To get you started, I've attached a suggested training calendar and tracking sheet to record your progress. You'll also find these on the [Get Fit page](#). These are just for you—you won't need to submit them at the end of the challenge.

If there are other ways you prefer to track, that's great! **But please do track your progress!**

Tracking your progress through run times, distances, ratio of running to walking, habit consistency, or even general comfort level during the process are all great ways to measure improvements. These improvements makes for great intrinsic motivation to keep going. If you're not sure how you want to track your progress, let me know, I'm happy to talk through it with you so that this challenge is helpful for you and your goals.

For those of you who want to dive a little more into training resources or who are training for longer race events, here are some additional resources that may be helpful for you:

- [Nike training plans](#)
- [Hal Higdon training programs](#)
- [Eugene Marathon's training page](#)



Are you an avid runner? If so, what is your go-to training resource? What sort of resources would be most helpful for you? Send it my way or post it on the [Run Club newsfeed!](#)

Just Keep Moving—Your Personal Commitment Contract

This week's message is... Just keep moving.

The attached training calendar outlines three days per week of run/walk routines, if you choose to follow this training program. Regardless of the training program you choose, your goal is to just keep moving.

One of the best ways to make sure that you're committed to your new goal (staying engaged through the duration of this challenge) is to fill out a personal commitment contract.

A commitment contract is anything you use to indicate that you've thought through what it will take to make sure you have three or more days each week to devote to this new or ongoing hobby.

Your contract can look like:

- A post on the [Run Club newsfeed](#)
- Writing it down on a sticky note and putting it on your bathroom mirror or computer monitor
- Saving it as a wallpaper on your phone
- Telling a friend or family member
- Any other way that works for you to say, "I'm committed!"

Virtual high fives to all of you—happy running/jogging/walking!

Week 2

Subject: Couch to 5K Week 2: Start with a Warm-up

Body:

Don't Skip the Warm-up Couch to 5K Challenge | Week 2

Properly warming up your muscles before your run/walk will be key to preventing injury. Your muscles (and your heart) want an introduction to what you are about to do, so it is a good idea to mimic those movements through a less intense version.

A proper warm-up should increase your heart rate, raise your body temperature, and increase blood flow, all which will help you run more efficiently.



This typically means a light jog or brisk walk to warm up those muscles. However, a dynamic stretching routine can also do the same as long as the movements are sport-specific.

Dynamic stretches are controlled movement that improve range of motion and loosen up your muscles. A few examples of dynamic stretches specific to running form are:

- **Leg swings:** While standing tall, swing one leg across your body and then out to the side. Repeat 10 times on each side. Feel free to balance yourself by holding on to a chair or wall.
- **High knees:** With arms bent in front, keeping your elbows at your side, lift your right knee up to your right hand. Repeat opposite side, for a total of ten times on each side.
- **Butt-kicks:** Walk forward while kicking your heels up toward your buttocks. If you're feeling energetic and coordinated, try jogging with butt-kicks. Do 10 reps on each side.
- **Soldier-kicks:** Walk forward, keeping your back, knees and elbows straight. Lift your legs and arms straight out in front, while flexing your toes. Increase speed when you feel comfortable. Do 10 reps on each side.
- **Walking lunges:** While stepping forward, keep the front knee aligned with your ankle while lowering your body by dropping your back knee toward the ground. Maintain an upright posture and keep your abdominal muscles tight.

Sources: <http://www.runnersworld.com/stretching/should-i-stretch-my-runs>,
<http://www.runnersworld.com/stretching/dynamic-routine>

Additional Resources

- [PacificSource Run Club](#) (because everything's better with social support)

- [Get Fit program page](#)
- [Couch to 5K funning log \(fillable\)](#)
- [Hal Higdon Training Programs](#)
- [Nike 5K, 10K, Half Marathon, & Marathon Training Plans](#)

Cheers!

Week 3

Subject: Couch to 5K Week 3: Set Your Goal

Body:

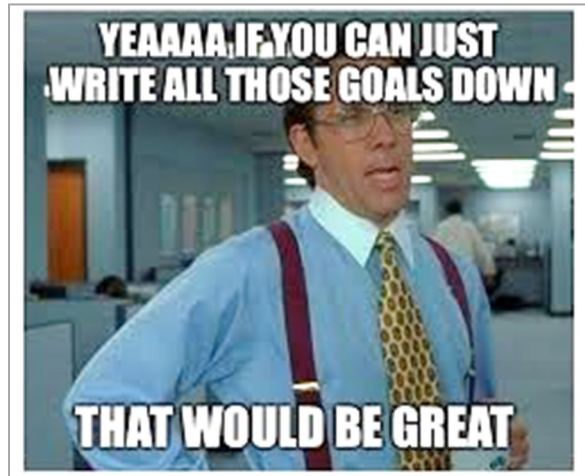
Set Your Goal Couch to 5K Challenge | Week 3

Folks participating in this challenge have a range of skill levels and experience, which is awesome!

What that means, though, is that we have different goals and different measures of success. Setting a goal and working toward it is going to be one of the best ways to keep you motivated. (We'll talk more about motivation in a later week.)

If you're not sure what your goal is for this challenge, here are some things to consider:

- **Give yourself time.** While this challenge is eight weeks, you may need more time to achieve your goals. Often, we underestimate how much time we'll need to achieve our health, wellness, or fitness goals. Don't give up! In fact, think about how much time you'll need to achieve your goal, *and then double it—at least!*
- **Align your goal with your “why”.** Why did you join this challenge? It may have been so that you had some motivation to move more during your day, to get back on track with an old habit, join a community for healthy social support, or to improve your overall cardiovascular health and fitness. With that in mind, think about how you can align your goal with your “why.”
- **Consider what improvement looks like for you.** If you're a beginner, this may mean improving your split of walking to jogging, or increasing the number of training days. If you're more experienced, it may mean improving your speed or your endurance, or incorporating hills. Regardless, you'll want to decide what improvement you're looking to make to help determine your end goal.
- **Track progress and reassess often.** Once you know what improvement looks like to you, remember to track your progress in a meaningful way, and check in regularly to make sure your training and the time you've given yourself make sense. Bonus tip: Assess your progress based on weekly averages. Things happen, progress fluctuates. Tracking based on weekly averages gives you a better big picture—but still time relevant—view on your progress.



For additional assistance in setting and working toward your goal, check out the [SMART Goal-setting Guide](#) or check in with your peers on the [Run Club page](#). Maybe you know what you want in general but would like a little more help putting some structure to that goal, and that's where a community and social support come in! If you'd like a little more help, contact me.

Additional Resources

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Happy training!

Week 4

Subject: Couch to 5K Week 4: What Running Pains are Telling You

Body:

Running Pains and What They Mean Couch to 5K Challenge | Week 4

When our bodies adjust to new movements or the additional stress as we progress in our fitness goals, sometimes there's some pain that comes along with that.

But how do you know if those pains are normal and how do you know if it's a bigger problem?

And if it's a bigger problem, what do you do about it?

This week, I'm going to share a few common pains you could experience as you're getting into running more regularly or you're more experienced and pushing yourself harder to improve.

First and foremost, when in doubt, consult with a provider, be it your primary care provider, through [Teladoc](#), or the [24-Hour NurseLine](#). Checking in with a medical professional can ease your mind and prevent risk or injury.



- **Delayed onset muscle soreness (DOMS):** This is a common type of muscle soreness when your muscles are adjusting to new movements or more strenuous movement patterns. If you're progressing in jogging or running, you may be experiencing some muscle soreness in your calves, thighs, or hips. It can take a few days to pass. While this is normal, this is a great sign to focus a bit more on warm-up and cool-down stretching and taking a day or two at lower intensity—but keep moving! Being too sedentary when you're sore can make it take longer for muscles to recover.
- **Joint pain and shin splints:** Running puts a lot of added, jarring pressure on your joints. If you're experiencing joint pain, pay closer attention and scale back or rest as needed. [This article](#) provides some good insight into various types of knee pain from running and what to do about it. To reduce some stress on your joints, check out [this video](#) for some good tips for improving your running technique. Shin splints can also cause pain and discomfort. [This article](#) goes into more detail about what they are, how to treat them, and how to prevent them.
- **Side stitches and cramps:** You know that pain you get in your side when you've been running? That's a side stitch, and there's a number of different potential causes. Regardless of the cause, it can really put a cramp in your style when you're trying to cover some

distance. (Terrible pun, I know, I know.) When this happens, slow down and focus on controlling your breathing until the pain subsides. For additional prevention tips, [check out this article](#).

Additional Resources

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Cheers!

Week 5

Subject: Couch to 5K Week 5: How's Your Motivation?

Body:

Motivation vs. Discipline Couch to 5K Challenge | Week 5

“Motivation is a feeling, but discipline is an action.” – Hamza Khan, [Discipline will take you to places where motivation can't](#)

Motivation is powerful. It gets you amped up and excited to take on new challenges, try new things, and take those initial steps to reach your goals.

The problem with motivation is that it ebbs and flows, and once the motivation fades, something else has to kick in to keep you working toward your goals.



Now that we're in week five of the Couch to 5K challenge, you might notice your motivation is waning. You've had a few weeks to get into it, but the newness has worn off and it's easy to prioritize other things in your life over your training. It happens.

This is where discipline comes in.

If discipline carries a negative connotation for you, let's reframe this as a habit. Think about the healthy habits you have, the things you do without thinking about it because you have the discipline to do it, like brush your teeth in the morning, make a pot of coffee, feed the dog—things that aren't always fun, but they're good for you.

For this challenge, self-discipline might look like scheduling your training into your day *and making it a priority*. Life happens, and some degree of flexibility is important, but so is prioritizing what it takes to achieve your goals, because your goals matter.

[Check out this article](#) for more of a breakdown illustrating the difference between (and the value of) motivation and discipline.

Additional Resources

- [PacificSource Run Club](#) (because everything's better with social support)
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Happy training!

Week 6

Subject: Couch to 5K Week 6: Time to Reflect

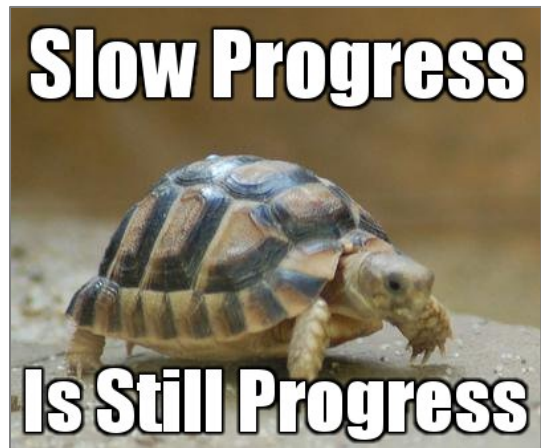
Body:

Reflect On Your Progress Couch to 5K Challenge | Week 6

The thing about health, wellness, and fitness goals that makes them a *wee bit* challenging is that progress takes time. (Ugh.)

Consequently, it's not uncommon to lose track of our goals when a couple of days or weeks go by and we haven't seen anything change.

Because change and progress happens so slowly, it also means that as you stick to the habits to help you reach your goals, you can make progress (sometimes a lot of progress) without realizing it.



As we kick off week six of the Couch to 5K challenge, take some time to reflect on where you started and where you're at now. What changes have you seen?

- Have you incorporated jogging or running where you were only walking before?
- Are you running more than you're walking?
- Are you running faster?
- Are you walking, jogging, or running farther?
- Are you comfortably training more days per week?
- Are you enjoying it more?
- Has your training and the physical activity helped you cope with stress or supported your mental health in other ways?
- Have there been any biometric improvements, such as with your resting heart rate or blood pressure?
- Have other habits improved or changed as a result of your training? (Drinking more water, better sleep habits, healthier food choices to feel your best for training, etc.)

As you think about your progress, now is also a great time to assess your initial goals and see if they need to be tweaked—just because you've set a goal, doesn't mean it can't be flexible!

- Do you need more time?
- Have you made more progress than you realized?
- What's working and what's not working?
- What support might you need to keep you on track toward your goals?

Finally, if you reflect back and you can't identify what your progress has looked like, check in with a friend or family member who knows about your goal (or who is doing this challenge with you!). Ask if they've noticed any progress from you. Sometimes it's easier for others to see than for us to see our own progress.

And if you still can't identify progress, breathe, smile, and don't give up! Again, progress takes time, and it's different for everyone.

Please don't hesitate to reach out if you have questions, and remember to connect with fellow runners and Couch to 5K-ers on the [Run Club page](#).

Additional Resources

- [PacificSource Run Club](#) (because everything's better with social support)
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Happy training!

Week 7

Subject: Couch to 5K Week 7: Prepped and Ready

Body:

Prep for Race Day Couch to 5K Challenge | Week 7

Happy April, racers!

This month kicks off spring marathon events across most of our locations. If you were on the fence about participating in an event and decided you want to go for it, check out all the details for races and reimbursements on the [Get Fit page](#).

And I know—not everyone participating in this challenge is planning on doing an organized race. That's OK!

If an organized race isn't your thing, I encourage you to consider something like scheduling your own "race day" and time your run. Go for a new PR (personal record) or other "personal best" goal.



This might also be a good option if you're in one of our fall marathon regions and have a bit longer to wait for race day.

In the meantime, here's a brief list of tips to help you prep:

- **Reduce your training intensity**—Once you're about a week out from race day, it's recommended that you reduce your mileage to give your body a chance to rest and recover. This doesn't mean don't train. Continue training, but consider shorter distances, lower intensity, and/or fewer training days.
- **Pack your playlist (and charge your devices!)**—If you're someone who needs music, podcasts, audiobooks, or some form of audio while you run, make sure you have everything prepped and your devices charged and ready to go. Dead headphones or fumbling through listening apps during your race is a drag.
- **Manage your stress and rest up**—Pre-race nerves happen. Get ahead of it by practicing stress management techniques that work for you, whether it's deep breathing exercises, meditating, yoga, dancing, baths, reading, watching funny cat videos—whatever works for you! Try making it a habit in the days leading up to the race so that nerves don't keep you awake the night before. Restful sleep leading up to the race is important to help you feel your best on race day.

- [Fuel for success](#)—What you eat leading up to a race can affect your energy levels and physical comfort during a race. Consuming carbohydrates such as pasta, bread, rice, quinoa, fruit, and others the afternoon before the race and drinking plenty of water will help give your body energy. Eat mindfully, as overconsuming before a race can be counterproductive, and eating more carbohydrates than you would on an ordinary day isn't necessary unless you're doing a longer race, such as a half marathon or marathon.

For more tips to prepare for race day, check out these articles:

- [Here Are the Best Tips Before Your First Race](#), *Runners World*
- [Race Day Tips for Running Your First 5K](#), *Very Well Fit*
- [What to Do Before Your 5K](#), *Active*

Additional Resources

- [PacificSource Run Club](#) (because everything's better with social support)
- [Get Fit program page](#)
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Happy training!

Week 8

Subject: Couch to 5K Week 8: Sustaining the Momentum

Body:

The Final Stretch Couch to 5K Challenge | Week 8

It might be hard to believe, but we've made it to week eight of the challenge!

How do you feel?

How has your experience been over the past seven weeks?

As you're continuing your progress in this final week of the challenge, I encourage you to be thinking about ways you can sustain and continue to build on the momentum you've built over the past couple months.

Here are some ways you can do that:



- **Set a new goal.** Maybe you joined this challenge to motivate you to get moving, and maybe now you're ready to reconsider a different next step. This is a great time to think about what you want to do next. If you want to set a new goal but you're not sure what it could look like, contact me. I'm happy to connect with you to help you set your next goal and navigate resources to help you succeed.
- **Establish an ongoing support system.** Having a support system in place makes it easier to maintain commitment and push through challenges. It also just makes the whole experience more fun—build each other up, embrace the light-hearted side, or engage in some friendly competition. Throw out a post on the [Run Club page](#) if you'd like to invite others to continue the social support. You can leverage the club page itself or make arrangements to communicate independently.
- **Sign up for another (or first!) race event.** This challenge was built around spring marathon events, but it doesn't have to be limited to these events! Consider other races that you might be interested in and use the [Get Fit reimbursement program](#). You'll get \$20 back toward your registration fees, and get to participate in an event that is raising money for a good cause. It's a win-win.

Now, let's talk prizes.

At the beginning of the challenge, I mentioned that challenge participants would be entered into a drawing and that three winners would get to choose a race-themed prize. Here are the prizes that drawing winners will get to choose from:

- [Running sunglasses from goodr](#)
- [Flipbelt classic running belt](#)
- [Bluetooth earbuds](#)
- [Foam roller set](#)

To be entered into the drawing, [complete this brief survey](#) by end-of-day, Friday, April 14. I'll announce drawing winners on Monday, April 17.

- If you want to be entered into the drawing but not provide feedback, please complete the survey and include only your name.
- If you want to provide anonymous feedback, please complete the survey **without** your name and then re-take it and include only your name to be entered into the drawing.

Additional Resources

- [PacificSource Run Club](#) (because everything's better with social support)
- [Get Fit program page](#)
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- [Hal Higdon Training Programs](#)
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Happy training!

Week 9

Subject: Couch to 5K Challenge Winners

Body:

That's a Wrap! Couch to 5K Challenge

A great big THANK YOU to all our challenge participants and congratulations to our prize winners!

Our winners are:

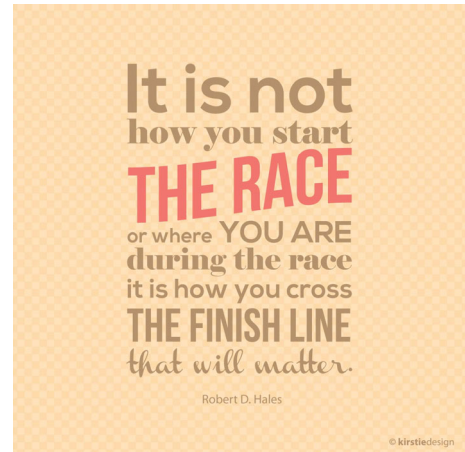
- Name
- Name
- Name

I hope this challenge helped you all to make progress toward your individual goals—eight weeks is longer than our standard challenges, so high fives all around for hanging in there!

Don't forget to check out the [Get Fit page](#) for details about this year's marathons as well as reimbursement information for individual events you choose to participate in.

If you have any questions, please contact me.

Cheers!



Week 9: Winners Only

Subject: Congrats! You're a winner!

Body:

CONGRATS! You are one of the prize winners for the Couch to 5K Challenge! If you haven't seen the announcement yet, it was sent to the email address you used for the challenge.

You can select a prize from one of the following options:

- [Running sunglasses from goodr](#)
- [Flipbelt classic running belt](#)
- [Bluetooth earbuds](#)
- [Foam roller set](#)

Please respond to this email with the following info:

- Your preferred mailing address
- The prize you'd like
- Color, if applicable

If you have any questions, let me know.

Cheers!