

Dutch Start to Run Programs

What are the Start to Run Programs?

The Dutch Athletics Federation (Atletiekunie) created an initial running program that has since been revised explaining the description of two programs. The original *Start to Run* Program was tested on individuals interested in progressing from being physically inactive to continuously running a total of 5 km over a 6 week training period (Ooms, Veenhof & de Bakker, 2013). What is most impressive about this program is the drop-out rate was very low (2%) and participants spent on average 152 minutes more of high-intensity physical activity each week 4 to 5 months after the program ended. To facilitate greater participation, a second program variation was created after the research. Now the program lasts seven weeks and prepares inactive people to run 3 km continuously.

Recognized Injury Prevention Strategies Incorporated into the Start to Run Programs:

- Running on alternating days to give a 48-hour rest period for the legs;
- Limiting each running session to 30 minutes;
- Limiting running sessions to two to three times per week;
- Including a 10 to 15-minute active warm-up before each running session to prepare muscles and joints.
- Conducting a cooling-down period at the end using stretching exercises;
- Using progressive “walk / run” sequences in the training sessions over many weeks;
- Maintaining the running program to progress over a minimum of six weeks to support muscles, bones and joints adaptation;
- Including periods of high-intensity running (e.g. running faster) in the training sessions followed by short low-intensity recovery periods (e.g. walking) to optimize fitness progression and endurance; and
- Offering individual training sessions and group sessions to provide social interaction and self-motivation.

Individual Screening Prior to the Running Program:

In the Netherlands program, participants are asked about chronic conditions, current/past injuries and/or other problems that could influence their fitness training. In Canada, individuals are invited to pass a self-fitness health check prior to starting a running program. This screening is called the Get Active Questionnaire.

The Dutch Athletics Federation “Start to Run” Programs and Schedules:

The 7-week 3K run program is more gradual and now used in the Netherland for inactive individuals. It provides time for the body to adapt to the new and increased mechanical stress. This program option can also easily be adapted to a distance of 5 km by adding 3 more weeks to the training as outlined in weeks 4 to 6 in the five kilometer program schedule.

The 6-week 5K run program is the original program that was assessed and recognized as being safe and effective.

The 3 km Running Program Training Schedule

Week	Training in Group Day 1	Training on your own Day 3	Training on your own Day 5 (Optional)
1	Runs: 1-1-2-1-1-2 min (zone 1) Walk between runs = 3 min	Runs: 6 x 2 min (zone 1) Walk between runs = 2 min	Runs: 1-2-3-2-1 min. (zone 1) Walk between runs = 3 min
2	Runs: 1-2-3-2-4 min. (zone 1) Walk between run = 2 min	Runs: 4 x 3 min (zone 1) Walk between runs = 2 min	Runs: 2-3-2-3 min (zone 1) Walk between runs = 2 min
3	Runs: 2-4-5 min. (zone 1) 3 x 2 min. (zone 2) Walk between runs = 2 min	Runs: 5 x 3 min (zone 1) Walk between runs = 2 min	Runs: 6 x 2 min (zone 2) Walk between runs = 3 min
4	Runs: 4-5-6 min. (zone 1) 3 x 2 min (zone 2) Walk between run = 2 min	Runs: 4 x 5 min (zone 1) Walk between runs = 2 min	Runs: 1-2-3-1-2-3 min. (zone 2) Walk between runs = 2 min
5	Runs: 3 x 8 min (zone 1) Walk between runs = 2 min	Runs: 4 x 6 min (zone 1) Walk between runs = 2 min	Runs: 6 x 3 min (zone 2) Walk between runs = 2 min
6	Runs: 5-10-12 (zone 1) Walk between runs = respectively 2 and 4 min.	Runs: 4 x 4 min. (zone 2) Walk between runs = 2 min	Runs: 6-5-4-2 min. (zone 1,1,2,2) Walk between runs = 2 min
7	3 kms of consecutive running		

Note: Each session starts with 10 to 15 minutes of active warm-up exercises (e.g. walking gradually faster/ standing exercises). After each session, there is a cooling-down with stretching exercises.

Zone 1 = Easy running; **Zone 2** = Running faster

The 5 km Running Program Training Schedule

Week	Training in Group Day 1	Training on your own Day 3	Training on your own Day 5 (Optional)
1	Runs: 8 to 12 x 1 min (zone 1) Walk between runs = 3 min	Runs: 4 to 6 x 1 min (zone 1) Walk between runs = 1 min	Runs: 3 to 5 x 2 min (zone 1) Walk between runs = 2 min
2	Runs: 8 to 10 x 2 min (zone 1) Walk between runs = 3 min	Runs: 3 to 5 x 2 min (zone 1) Walk between runs = 2 min	Runs: 3 to 5 x 3 min (zone 1) Walk between runs = 3 min
3	Runs: 3 to 4 x 5 min (zone 1 + R) Walk between runs = 3 min	Runs: 2 x 5 min (zone 1 + R) Walk between runs = 3 min	Runs: 2 x 7 min (zone 1 + R) Walk between runs = 3 min
4	Runs: 10-10-12 min (zone 2) Walk between runs = 10 min	Runs: 1 x 15 min (zone 1)	Runs: 2 x 10 min (zone 1 + R) Walk between runs = 5 min
5	Runs: 3 x 10 min (zone 2) Walk between runs = 5 min	Runs: 3 x 10 min (zone 1) Walk between runs = 3 min	Runs: 10-8-6-4-2 min (zone 2) Walk between runs = 5-4-3-2 min
6	Test run of running 3-4 km continuously (20 to 25 minutes)		

Note: Each session starts with 10 to 15 minutes of active warm-up exercises (e.g. walking gradually faster/ standing exercises). After each session, there is a cooling-down with stretching exercises.

Zone 1 = Easy running; **Zone 1+R** = easy jogging with a focus on relaxed jogging (controlling the breathing); **Zone 2** = Running faster

Reference: Ooms, L., Veenhof, C., & de Bakker, D. H. (2013). Effectiveness of Start to Run, a 6-week training program for novice runners, on increasing health-enhancing physical activity: A controlled study. BMC Public Health, 13, 697. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2458-13-697>

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