

---

## Lace Up Your Running Shoes

Whether you're taking on a new challenge or were training for a canceled race, you can virtually chalk up a personal best.



Credit... Ashley Gilbertson/Vii Photo

- May 1, 2020

Want to run your first 5k? There's a virtual race for you. Were you supposed to run a half marathon? You can run that virtually, too. Were you planning on running a marathon, or an ultra marathon? We've got you covered.

Here's how to find, and train for, your next race.

## Choose Your Goal

You want to pick a race that gives you plenty of time to get to your own start line.

“Ask yourself what’s going to be best for your overall health and wellness,” said Rebeka Stowe, a certified strength and conditioning specialist and coach with Nike Run Club NYC. “If a race fits in the schedule in that capacity, then you say yes to that. And if it doesn’t, you get out the door and keep moving.”

If you are starting to run consistently for the first time, start with a mile, or at most, a 5-kilometer race. If you were planning on doing a race that was canceled, perhaps continue training for that race and complete that distance around the same date.

The key is not going overboard because you may have more time on your hands, Michael Conlon, the owner and founder of [Finish Line Physical Therapy](#) in Manhattan, said.

- Help us report in critical moments.

“You want to train with the same guidelines that we would utilize if we were training you in person,” Mr. Conlon said.

What you don’t want is an overuse injury because of a sudden increase in mileage or intensity. Set yourself up for success by adding strength and mobility work to your repertoire.

“There should be a schedule you are following,” he continued. “Utilize the time wisely.”

## Find Your Race, and a Training Schedule

Once you’ve picked your desired distance, seek out a training plan to get you to the start line — we’d recommend starting with Hal Higdon, a well-known writer and running coach, who has various plans for distances and abilities. The key is finding a schedule that works for you mentally as much as it does physically.

“Right now, it has to be whatever is going to get you moving,” Ms. Stowe said. “The best approach is finding what’s going to create consistency. We are all looking for structure because we have all lost it.”

Would you like recommendations for more stories like this?

Yes

If you crave accountability and community, find a training plan that is group based, culminating in a race.

Many of the most popular virtual races are routed through Strava, a social fitness app with [various challenges](#) that ask participants to log a certain number of miles or race a specific distance within a set period of time. Zwift, an online platform that gameifies running on a treadmill, is another option for [finding a running team](#) in the virtual world. And the training platform VDOT has set up a [virtual challenge series](#) too, complete with prizes for top finishers.

There are many community-based options as well. In New York, Harlem Run is doing [virtual runs and challenges](#) on both Instagram and MapMyRun. [DC Front Runners](#) is holding both a virtual race circuit and virtual runs and walks. And Kelly Roberts, who organizes community running groups around the world, has created [flexible virtual training challenges](#) in four week increments that culminate in a mile time trial. Many local running stores across the U.S. are also hosting practices and races digitally during this time.

To compete on these platforms, you need to record your runs using a GPS watch or an in-app tracker. Most apps work with one another, so if you usually record your runs on MapMyRun or on a Garmin watch, you can still sync that data to another virtual race site. Be sure to read the fine print before beginning your race to make sure you are tracking your run as required.

If you were signed up for a now-canceled race, see if its organizers have created a virtual option. The [Marine Corps Historic Half](#), the [Brooklyn Half](#) and [Grandma's Marathon](#) have all gone virtual.

## Line Up for Race Day

It's still a race, even if you don't have a bib attached to your shirt. So do what you'd do on a more ordinary race day: Plan your nutrition and hydration, lay out your race outfit and guilt your friends and family members into cheering for you.

While they may not be able to line up along a course for high fives, if you are able to safely wear earbuds, you can have a friend join you for a mile or two to cheer over the phone.

Once you finish (we recommend a toilet paper finish line, if possible), upload your results to the virtual race page and celebrate your accomplishment.

The race may look a bit different than expected. But miles are miles.

**Subscribe for \$1 a week.**

EXPAND

**The New York Times**