

# Pre-Race Prep

## 1. Register early

Most races offer a lower price tag with advanced registration. Early signup also gives you first dibs on race swag like T-shirts, and it gets you in before the race sells out. If you must register on race day, expect higher prices and long lines. Some smaller races will only accept cash or check on race day, so do your research.

## 2. Read the website

It sounds basic, but you will feel like a pro when you know what to expect. Get familiar with the course map, the bathroom locations and the schedule for the day. Do you need to pick up your packet a day in advance or can you get it on race day? Will you be able to park near the course?

## 3. Invite friends

Arrange a carpool and BYO running crew. Running with a group makes you happier! And it's more fun to warm up, cool down and celebrate with friends.

## 4. Pick up your packet early

What's in a packet, you ask? It depends on the race. The most important thing is your bib, or race number. This allows the timing company to keep track of each runner, and you can't run the race without it. Some packets will have nothing but a number, and others will include swag like T-shirts, drinking glasses, coupons and more.

Depending on the race and your schedule, picking up your race bib (the number you wear) a day or more in advance can save you valuable time on race morning so you can take your time warming up instead of standing in line.

## What to pack for a 5K

- Comfortable running shoes and synthetic or thin wool running socks
- Your race bib and safety pins
- A comfortable, weather-appropriate race top, bra and bottom
- GPS watch
- Protection from chafing
- Sunscreen
- A water bottle or hydration system
- Nutrition products
- Extra toilet paper, just in case
- A change of clothes and shoes for after the race

## 5. Fuel right

Eat familiar foods that you know won't upset your stomach. Race day is not the time to try something new. Since a 5K is a short event, eat a light, carbohydrate-based meal, which will burn faster than fatty or protein-heavy foods. Try oatmeal, bananas or toast with jam. Give yourself plenty of time to digest your meal so you won't be racing on a full stomach.

## **6. Pin your bib number on your front**

Unless otherwise instructed, pin your bib onto the front of your shirt, not your back. If you can get four safety pins, use them all so it won't flap around while you're running. If you aren't wearing a shirt, pin it to your shorts. Race officials need your number to be visible while you're running.

## **7. Give yourself plenty of time**

If you must wait for race day to register or pick up your bib, arrive an hour or more before the start so you can get what you need, visit the facilities and warm up before the race.

There is a long line for the bathroom at every race. Always. Many people get race-day jitters, which can enhance tummy troubles. It's normal to use the bathroom several times before a race if you're well-hydrated or if you're nervous.

Pro tip: Use the bathroom right when you show up, before the line gets long. Bring extra toilet paper or tissues, just in case.

## **8. Warm up**

It's important to raise your heart rate, get your muscles warm and check out the course before the race. How long should you warm up before a 5K? Well, it depends on your training and fitness level. In general, you should strive for at least ten minutes of movement before the race begins, whether you're doing a dynamic warm up routine, walking briskly or jogging before the gun goes off.

Advanced runners may run from a mile to the entire length of the course ahead of time, followed by some quick bursts of speed, like 20-second strides, to prepare their bodies for a fast-paced race. No matter your experience level, a warm up should loosen up your muscles and raise your heart rate so that the faster pace of the race doesn't shock your system.

## **9. Choose your position at the starting line (front, middle, back)**

The front is for the people who expect to place at the front of the pack. You don't want to get stampeded if you're planning to walk. If you're gunning for a PR or competitive finish, don't put yourself in the very back, either. You'll lose valuable time getting around others if you underestimate yourself.

## **10. Don't start too fast**

Race-day adrenaline is a double-edged sword. It can amp you up at the start, making your normal race pace feel easy-breezy, and running with a crowd can push racers to start much faster than their ideal race pace. Be mindful of your speed, and don't go out too fast. This is the number one way to burn out too quickly.

Stick with a consistent pace that you have practiced and can maintain for the entire race. Pacing takes practice, but you are typically better off if you don't push yourself too hard at the start. Once you get to the final mile, if you can go faster, let 'er rip!

## **11. Have a plan for when the going gets tough**

Before the race, decide how you might adjust your game when you get tired. Have a mantra for yourself to help you stay positive and not give up. Think about how proud you'll be when you finish.

If needed, plan walk breaks to let your heart rate come down. Walking isn't quitting, and it doesn't mean the race is over! Think about your training and the workouts you got through to get yourself to this point. You can do this!

Runners hug at the finish line at The Big Run

#### 12. Celebrate!

When you're finished, cheer for the other finishers. Take photos, pick up your medal, check in with your friends, do a victory dance. Don't forget to cool down and rehydrate. You'll be tired, but try not to plop down in the grass immediately afterward. Walk or jog around, stretch and let your muscles recover.

Many events have post-race celebrations with music, food, drinks and awards. Celebrate your accomplishment and have a great time!

#### 13. Start planning for your next race

Memories of pain and fatigue are quickly replaced by feelings of euphoria, achievement and plans to do it even better next time. Embrace it and sign up for your next event!