

Rules for The Word of God 13-mile Walk-a-Thon:

1. There is no time limit for completing the 13 miles.
2. You do not have to walk continuously – if you want to take rest breaks during the walk (sit for a while, drink some water, eat a snack), you may do so.
3. If you cannot complete 13 miles, you can pick a shorter goal that is in line with your abilities & walk with us for that distance; we walk on a one-mile, circular track, so it's easy to stop whenever you reach your goal.

A Half Marathon Program Especially Designed for Walkers

[Week 1 begins April 3, 2016 for the June 25 event.]

<u>1</u>	Rest	30 min easy	20 min stroll	30 min easy	Rest	30 min stroll	3 m easy
<u>2</u>	Rest	30 min easy	20 min stroll	30 min easy	Rest	30 min stroll	4 m easy
<u>3</u>	Rest	35 min easy	20 min stroll	35 min easy	Rest	20 min stroll	2 m brisk
<u>4</u>	Rest	35 min easy	25 min stroll	35 min easy	Rest	40 min stroll	5 m easy
<u>5</u>	Rest	35 min easy	25 min stroll	35 min easy	Rest	40 min stroll	6 m easy
<u>6</u>	Rest	40 min easy	25 min stroll	40 min easy	Rest	30 min stroll	4 m brisk
<u>7</u>	Rest	40 min easy	25 min stroll	40 min easy	Rest	50 min stroll	7 m easy
<u>8</u>	Rest	40 min easy	25 min stroll	40 min easy	Rest	50 min stroll	8 m easy
<u>9</u>	Rest	45 min easy	30 min stroll	45 min easy	Rest	30 min stroll	6 m brisk
<u>10</u>	Rest	45 min easy	30 min stroll	45 min easy	Rest	60 min stroll	9 m easy
<u>11</u>	Rest	45 min easy	30 min stroll	45 min easy	Rest	60 min stroll	10 m easy
<u>12</u>	Rest	30 min easy	30 min stroll	30 min stroll	Rest	Rest	Half Marathon

Introduction: Most major half marathons are for runners – but walkers can do them too. One advantage of a half marathon over a full marathon is that you won't need to spend as much time on the course. Most reasonably fit individuals should be able to walk 13.1 miles in around four hours. Doing so is fun. It is also exciting to set goals and achieve them. But before starting to train for a race that long, assess your fitness level. Realistically: can you do it? The following 12-week walking program assumes you currently have the ability to walk for 30 minutes, three to four times a week. If that seems difficult, consider going a shorter distance – or take more time to develop an endurance base. And if you are over age 35, you probably should see your doctor for a physical examination. But assuming no major problems, most healthy people can train themselves to walk and finish a half marathon.

The secret is consistency. Make walking a regular habit – a *daily* habit, not just something you do on the weekends or when the weather is nice. Mark Fenton states: "The fitness walker must make a positive commitment to exercise a certain number of days a week over a specific distance or length of time, even if some of those days show fairly modest efforts." Fenton is a former competitive racewalker and member of the US National Team. The walking program was designed with his assistance.

The program lasts 12 weeks and begins at a fairly easy level. In Week 1, you walk only a half hour on most weekdays. Two days are for rest. One day on the weekend features a workout of a prescribed

distance (3 miles the first weekend). As the program continues, the weekday walks gradually increase to a maximum of 45 minutes. The weekend walks also lengthen to a maximum 10 miles in Week 11, the week before the half marathon. Because the increases are gradual, you should be able to accommodate them without excessive strain. You *will* become a fitness walker and achieve an ability to complete a 13.1-mile walking event.

Before starting the 12-week program, let's consider some of the terms used.

Pace: Don't worry too much about how fast you walk during most of your regular workouts – at least for the first few weeks. Walk at a comfortable pace. If you're training with a friend, the two of you should be able to hold a conversation. If you can't do that, you're walking too fast. But change of pace can be an important training tool as your fitness begins to increase. You don't need to walk at the same pace day after day. In fact, you *should* change paces if you want to increase your fitness and improve your ability to go the distance. Here are descriptions of three pace changes prescribed in the program.

Pace	Description	Breathing	How to do it
Stroll	"Window shopping" walking	Normal	Enjoy your walk
Easy	Continuous comfortable walking	Almost normal	Move somewhat faster
Brisk	Walking with real purpose	Harder, but still conversational	Quicker-than-normal steps

Distance: Most of the workouts are prescribed in *minutes* rather than miles. Don't worry about how far you walk; just walk for the prescribed length of time. If you know about how fast you walk (see below), you can estimate distance, but during the week, distance is not important. You just want to get out on a regular basis and exercise your legs. On Saturdays, however, the training schedule does dictate workouts at distances from 3 to 10 miles. Don't worry about walking *precisely* those distances, but you should come close. Pick a course through the neighborhood, or in some scenic area where you think you might enjoy walking. Then measure the course either by car or bicycle. Or you can purchase a GPS watch like the Garmin Forerunner, which uses satellite technology to accurately measure your pace and distance and record your heart rate. In deciding where to train, talk to other walkers or runners. They probably can point you to some accurately measured courses for your workouts.

Time: Comparing time and distance sometimes can be a trap. If you become fixated on how fast you walk, you can push yourself too hard and increase your risk of injury. But it's handy to know *about* how fast you are walking, particularly if you are worried about finishing the half marathon in less than four hours. To get a precise measurement of your ability, go to a track for an occasional workout. Outdoor tracks at colleges and high schools are generally 400 meters long. Two laps (800 meters) walked in the inside lane is about a half mile; four laps (1600 meters) is just short of a mile. If you don't want to do a full workout going in circles, schedule a walk near a track and slip in the gate for a few laps to see how fast you're going.

Rest: Rest is as important a part of your training as the workouts. You will be able to do the long walks on the weekends better – and limit your risk of injury – if you rest before and rest after.

Long Walks: The key to getting ready to finish a half marathon is the long walk, progressively increasing in distance each weekend. Over a period of 12 weeks, your longest walk will

increase from 3 to 10 miles. Don't worry about making the final jump from 10 miles in practice to 13.1 miles in the race. Inspiration will carry you to the finish line, particularly if you taper (reduce your mileage) the final week. The schedule suggests doing your long walks on Saturdays, but you can do them on any convenient day, as long as you are consistent. (See "Juggling," below).

Cross-Train: As a variation, you may want to substitute some other activities on different days of the week. Runners usually refer to this as "cross-training." What form of cross-training works best for a fitness walker? It could be swimming, cycling, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, or even some combination that could include stretching or strength training in a gym. The type of cross-training you select, should you choose to go that route, depends on your personal preference. Don't make the mistake of cross-training too vigorously.

Jogging: One way to get to the finish line faster is to do some jogging. If you were a competitive racewalker, you could get disqualified for starting to run, but since you are not competing for a prize, feel free to jog occasionally, either in training or in the half marathon itself. Jog in small segments: 50 to 100 meters every 10 minutes or so might be enough at first. Eventually you might want to expand your jogging segments, or even run the entire way, but don't do too much at first. Running is a more high-impact exercise than walking, so be cautious. Your goal should be to finish the half marathon, not finish it fast. (If you do plan to do some jog/walking in a race that offers prizes in a "walking" category, you need to enter in the "running" division. It's unfair to those who walk the whole way for you to finish faster because you ran.)

Take Time: Does the 12-week progression from 3 to 13.1 miles seem too tough? Do you have more than a dozen weeks before your half marathon event? Lengthen the schedule; take 18 or even 24 weeks to prepare. Repeat the week just completed before moving up to the next level. Don't be afraid to insert "stepback" weeks, where you actually cut your distance every second or third week to gather forces for the next push upward. This training schedule is not carved in stone. Feel free to innovate if you feel you need more time to prepare.

Juggling: It's also possible to juggle the workouts from day to day and week to week. If you have an important business meeting on Thursday, do the Thursday workout on Wednesday instead. If your family is going to be on vacation one week when you will have more or less time to train, adjust the schedule accordingly. Be consistent with your training, and the overall details won't matter.

Walking 13.1 miles is not easy. If it were easy, there would be little challenge to an event such as the half marathon. Whether you plan your Half as a singular accomplishment or as a stepping stone to the even more challenging full marathon (running or walking), crossing the finish line will give you a feeling of great accomplishment.