

What to take in your kit bag.

Firstly find a rucksack that fits inside the baggage bag. They are far easier to carry around pre and post-race, your stuff is less likely to fall out, it is easier to find things and it offers another level of protection from the rain of someone else's water bottle leaking.

So what do you put in it?

Some things may vary depending on weather conditions. If it is bright sunshine and warm, then full waterproofs are not required.

- Spare safety pins. Amazing how they disappear from your number and can also be used to repair ripped clothing.
- Toilet paper. They always seem to run out.
- Bin bags. Take 3, one to sit on, one to wear, and one to put any dirty clothes in.
- Lubrication. I prefer [Bodyglide](#) as it does not mess your clothes up.
- Sun cream. I use [P20](#) as you apply it once and it last all day. It is also waterproof.
- Sun glasses. Not only protect your eyes but also relax the muscles in your face. I use Julbo as they have reactive lenses so you don't need to take them on and off as the conditions change.
- Money. Easy to forget.
- Complete change of clothes in a waterproof bag and a towel if you have space. You never know what state you will be when you finish. Very important if it is raining. Should also have something warm to wear afterwards.
- Change of footwear.
- Gels or food for the race and something to carry them in. I put mine in a small plastic box so they don't get squished in my bag. During the race I carry them in a Nathan Gel Pak the ones with the loops you put gels in can cause them to split. I also carry [Elete](#) which an electrolyte
- Pre-race drink. I use Pepsi.
- Post-race recovery drink. I use For Goodness Shake powder in a bottle and add the water you are given at the end of the race.
- Food for afterwards. Protein or such like, just enough until you can get some real food.
- Medical stuff or aches and blisters after the race. Ibuprofen Gel, etc.
- Your race number and chip!

Marathon Tips

In the lead up to the Event

If you need to take pain killers before, during or after a run, there is something wrong and you need to seek advice. Training may hurt but never to the point you need medication. Far better to defer and get it sorted than proceed with the race and do some long term damage.

Stress can burn almost as many calories as running. Planning and research will reduce your stress levels. So work out how you are going to get there, what you need to take, etc. Allow plenty of time to get to the event. Better to arrive a couple of hours before than 5 minutes before the gun goes off.

If staying in a hotel make sure they do an early breakfast. If not take something you can prepare in your room. Porridge pots are great and all you need is a kettle. Also ask them if you can leave your bags with them and come back for a shower. Some are surprisingly accommodating.

Cut your toe nails a week before the race, and make sure any hard skin is gently removed from your feet.

Be boring and go to bed early. You need to bank some good night's rest as you may have trouble sleeping before the race.

If you have an early start, practise getting up early the week before to get your body use to it so it is not such a shock.

The days before

Carb loading does not have to be all about eating a ton of pasta. Fish and Chips in my meal choice (recommended by a lady who has done 250+ marathons).

Check the weather and make sure you have appropriate clothing.

There are things that are inside your control (what you eat, what time you leave, etc) and things outside your control (traffic, other people, the weather, etc). No point in stressing about things outside your control as you can't do anything about them.

If you are staying in a hotel, or away from home, then make sure you know what and where you are eating the night before. Where possible make sure you have tried it before as well. Chain restaurants are always a good option as the food is the same.

Keep hydrated. Carry a bottle at all times and you should be drinking at least 1.5 litres a day.

If staying in a hotel work out how you get to the start. Walk it the day before if you can so know the route and how long it takes.

Race Day

Don't wear anything new or anything you have not tried before.

Sweat and heat can cause a rash a bit like nappy rash. Sudocrem is great for prevention as well as a cure.

Take something to sit on (bin bag, camping mat, etc.) and sit down. You are going to be on your feet for a few hours, so standing up is just wasting energy.

Rather than packing your stuff into the plastic baggage bag, pack it into a small rucksack that will fit inside the bag. Not only will your stuff be more secure it is also far easier and far more comfortable to carry around before and after the event.

Pack some toilet roll. You shouldn't need a whole roll so grab that from the bathroom that should have enough left for your needs. You may also need some for after the race as well.

If you are not sure about something or worse still forgotten something, ask around. You all have a common interest and general others are very willing to help. Have seen people lending other spare clothing before now, so just ask.

I have done the Brighton Marathon ever year and each times there was been an issue with the park and ride scheme. If you are using this arrive early. I would advise that the driver is a non-runner, that way you can jump out of the car whilst it queue and get on the bus rather than waiting for them to park.

If using a GPS device then don't forget to turn off the auto pause option. With it on it may think you have stopped and pause the timer. There is also a small tunnel section at London and this will cause the auto pause to kick in.

Lubricate areas that may rub feet, under arms, etc. Personal I prefer Bodyglide as it does not stick to your clothes. In the more intimate areas I use Sudocrem, yes the stuff you use on babies. Works really well and is waterproof. Can be used for sunburn after the event as well and is antiseptic.

Having a race plan is a great idea but make sure you have a plan B, C and D as anything can happen. For example plan A maybe to break XX time, plan B maybe XX, C XX and D to finish.

Don't give your race bag to someone to give to you at the finish, put it on the baggage truck or baggage area. Nothing worse than spending half an hour post-race trying to find them to get your warm, dry clothes and recovery food and drink.

Keep a bottle lid from the water bottle you are given to bring with! With London, as you run round the course they sometimes remove the lids from the water bottles so you can't save your water, you just throw it all over yourself!!!! Same with Lucozade bottles or pouches. At the race start they give you them with lids, hold on to the lid until you know the next bottle has a lid!

Put any loose sweets in a sealable bag before you put them in your pocket....if you run through a shower on the course or chuck any water over yourself you will have sticky sweets and mess in your pockets rather than an energy booster!

Take a pair of small sharp scissors. Get a new gel and cut a tiny nick each side where it should open. It will tear open much easier and less chance of it spilling everywhere. Obviously this should be done before and not during the race though.

Lay your kit out and pack your bag the night before the race so you know everything is there and where everything is.

During Event

Wear sunglasses if there is any chance of sun. Not only do they protect your eyes they also relax the muscles in your face as you are not having to squint.

If your pace slips at the beginning of the race don't spend the next mile trying to make up the time. Get it in context, a minute lost in the first mile means you only need to speed up by 2 seconds a mile.

When you hit that black period when you don't think you can finish, everything hurts and you just want to curl up in a ball. Find a positive even if it "I haven't died yet" and don't forget why you are doing it.

Distraction is a great method to keep yourself moving and forgetting about what is hurting. Talk to other runners (you are all going through the same thing), do mental calculations in your head, count steps, concentrate on breathing, wave to the crowd, sing to yourself, etc.

Water stations are a potential injury zone with bottles all over the place. Watch out for bottles on the lead up to them as people dump their bottle, as well.

Don't grab drinks from the first person you see, keep running and grab them from further up the table. Prevents getting caught up with people that grab a drink and stop dead.

If you want to walk run to the side of the course and do so.

Where you can keep your distance from the person in front. If they suddenly stop you can then avoid them. Also, allows you to spot potential hazards (bottles, curbs, speed humps, etc).

Parts of the course, especially London, can be very congested. Make yourself as wide as possible to give yourself space. You will be elbowed or kicked at some point.

Be courteous to others even if they don't reciprocate, not worth getting stress about.

Don't just drop your bottle, either run to the side of the course and drop it or throw it to the side avoiding other runners.

Where possible run in the middle of the road to avoid the camber of the road. Your hips will thank you later.

If there is still drink in your bottle offer it to other runners before throwing it. Someone may have missed out at the water station.

When it starts to feel tough count your steps between mile markers then count them again for the next one. Keeps your mind of how tough it is.

If it is hot, wear a hat and pour your excess water into it as you run. Helps keep you cool.

Smile even if you don't want to. It improves your mood and you never know where the cameras are.

If things start to hurt try and work out why they hurt. How is your foot landing, are you using your core, etc. Even if there is nothing you can do about it, it will distract you for a while.

Don't put yourself under too much pressure. If you want to finish in a particular time and this look increasingly less likely let it go. It is far better to finish and be disappointed with the time (there is always another marathon) than not finish at all.

Quote can't remember the source "Running a marathon is easy, just keep running until someone gives you a medal"

Don't get disheartened if you don't see your relatives where you might have planned to see them! Major races are ram packed, I've done four London's, seen my relatives three times but last time the timings all went odd, I'd already run past when my folks arrived! It can give you something to look forward to but don't pin your hopes on it, just think of it as a bonus if you see them and get a massive cheer!

Please don't stop, it's the hardest thing to get going again. If you are going through a tough patch or think you are hitting the wall....RUN SMART! Think about your technique, shoulders relaxed, being tall, light on your feet, count yourself through a mile. Even if you really have to slow down a little bit, that's fine but be SMART about it!

Dispose of your drinks bottles and rubbish responsibly! My now ex boyfriend partially dislocated his knee during the London Marathon when he slipped on a drinks bottle someone just dropped, check behind you and if it's safe, gently throw it into a curb, away from other runner's.

Keep the course clear for your fellow runner's, respect those running behind you.

Don't set unrealistic goals. Use a pace calculator to work out what you can achieve. I set 3 goals, to finish, finish under a reasonable time and a PB target. If one slips focus on the next.

Post-event

In the words of S Club 7 "Don't stop moving" Maybe the last thing you want to do but keep your legs moving and don't sit down for too long. If you have a long journey and it is not going to be possible to make frequent stops and walk around then allow a couple of hours before setting off to stretch and walk around a bit. Your legs will thank you the next day. If doing London walk to a tube station further away much easier to get on a train as well.

Don't forget to stretch.

You need to re-fuel within ½ an hour of finish. Don't really on being able to get something after the event (remember everyone else has the same idea), so pack something in your bag.

Wear your medal with pride. Should also get you a seat on the Tube.

Stairs can be an issue. Try walking up the backwards if you can't manage it forwards.

If you are doing Brighton take a towel and some flip flops for that post run ice bath in the sea.

Male specific

Nipple bleeding can be a major issue for men. It is caused by your sweat drying on your clothes and leave salt crystals behind. This turns your vest or T-Shirt into sand paper. Don't think it will not affect

you as you have not had an issue so far. You have been training whilst it is cooler and may not have been sweating as much as you do on the day.

To stop nipple bleeding you need to put a layer between them and you clothing. Vaseline works well but can breakdown and/or wear away. Bodyglide is better. Some people apply plasters you can even buy ones designed for the task. A tight fitting base lay that does not move is also used by some.

You can get underwear that is made from technical (wick away) fabric. Much better for you have cotton ones. However, make sure your apply some form of lubrication around the seam areas to prevent chaffing.

If going commando under your shorts make sure you apply Vaseline, to prevent chaffing. Especially if they have a mesh liner as after a few hours of running this can act like a cheese grater.

Tips from

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