

## Excerpts from [www.jeffgalloway.com](http://www.jeffgalloway.com)

While the comments below are directed towards the marathon, they apply to those running the half marathon or even 10K as well, particularly for new runners.

### Walk Breaks?

Most runners will record significantly faster times when they take walk breaks because they don't slow down at the end of a long run. Thousands of time-goal-oriented veterans have improved by 10, 20, 30 minutes and more in marathons by taking walk breaks early and often in their goal races. You can easily spot these folks. They're the ones who are picking up speed during the last two to six miles when everyone else is slowing down.

The mental benefit: breaking 26 miles into segments, which you know you can do. Even sub-three hour marathoners continue to take their walk breaks to the end. One of them explained it this way: "Instead of thinking at 20 miles I had six more gut-wrenching miles to go, I was saying to myself one more mile until my break." Even when it was tough, I always felt I could go one more mile.

**Walk breaks in the marathon: how long and how often?** The following is recommended until 18 miles in the marathon. After that point, walk breaks can be reduced or eliminated as desired.

**First time marathoners** should follow the ratios used in training as long as they haven't slowed down significantly at the end of the long ones. If you struggled during the last few miles take walk breaks more often from the beginning. A minimum suggestion for first time marathoners would be one minute of walking for every 3-4 minutes of running.

**Here are my recommended ratios** of running and walking, based upon your pace per mile. Remember that long runs should be run at least 2 min/mi slower than your projected finish pace in the marathon. An additional slowdown should be made for increased temperature: 30 sec per mile slower for each 5 degrees of temperature increase above 60F. It is always safer to walk more often.

Run-walk-run ratio should correspond to the **training** pace used:

8 min/mi—run 4 min/walk 35 seconds

9 min/mi— 4 min run-1 min walk

10 min/mi—3:1

11 min/mi—2:30-1

12 min/mi—2:1

13 min/mi—1:1

14 min/mi—30 sec run/30 sec walk

15 min/mi—30 sec/45 sec

16 min/mi—30 sec/60 sec

**Why do walk breaks work?** By using muscles in different ways from the

beginning, your legs keep their bounce as they conserve resources. When a muscle group, such as your calf, is used continuously step by step, it fatigues relatively soon. The weak areas get overused and force you to slow down later or scream at you in pain afterward. By shifting back and forth between walking and running muscles, you distribute the workload among a variety of muscles, increasing your overall performance capacity. For veteran marathoners, this is often the difference between achieving a time goal or not.

Walk breaks will significantly speed up recovery because there is less damage to repair. The early walk breaks erase fatigue, and the later walk breaks will reduce or eliminate overuse muscle breakdown.

**The earlier you take the walk breaks, the more they help you!** To receive maximum benefit, you must start the walk breaks before you feel any fatigue, in the first mile. If you wait until you feel the need for a walk break, you've already reduced your potential performance.

**How fast should the walk break be?** When you walk fast for a minute, most runners will lose about 15 seconds over running at their regular pace. But if you walk slowly, you'll have lost only about 20 seconds.

Once we find the ideal ratio for a given distance, walk breaks allow us to feel strong to the end and recover fast, while bestowing the same stamina and conditioning we would have received if we had run continuously.

**Don't get too rigidly locked into a specific ratio of walk breaks, adjust as needed.** Even if you run the same distance every day, you'll find that you'll need to vary the walk break frequency to adjust for speed, hills, heat, humidity, time off from training, etc. If you anticipate that your run will be more difficult or will produce a longer recovery, take more frequent walk breaks (or longer walks) and you may be surprised at how quickly you recover.

**Do I need to take the walk breaks on the short runs during the week?**

If you can run continuously now on shorter runs, you don't have to take the walk breaks. If you want to take them, do so. Walk breaks on midweek runs will insure that you recover from the long ones at the fastest pace.