

The Big Day

What to do in the days and hours before your 5-K to ensure a successful race

HOW MUCH SHOULD I RUN THE WEEK BEFORE THE RACE?

Do two or three easy runs of 20 to 30 minutes. Take one or two days off before race day.

SHOULD I EAT A BIG BOWL OF PASTA THE NIGHT BEFORE?

No, loading up on carbs or anything else isn't necessary and can lead to "unloading" during the race. Eat regular portions of a healthy dinner.

SHOULD I WEAR THE RACE T-SHIRT TO THE RACE?

Unfortunately, most race shirts are made of cot-ton and become heavy as they absorb sweat, so save it for bragging rights after you cross the finish line.

ANY OTHER CLOTHING OR GEAR TIPS?

Just go with comfortable, well-fitting, technical running clothes that you've been training in.

SHOULD I WARM UP BEFORE THE RACE?

A proper warm-up will improve your performance. Do a five- to 10-minute very slow jog about 20 minutes before the start.

WHERE SHOULD I LINE UP?

Near the back of the crowd, where the atmo-sphere is relaxed. Start on a side so you can move over to take walk breaks if needed.

OKAY TO TALK TO OTHER RUNNERS?

Absolutely. At the starting line, tell others that this is your first race. Most will respond with stories of their first race and encourage you on yours.

SHOULD I RUN FAST AT THE START?

No. Even if the folks around you take off quickly—which they probably will—restrain yourself so you have energy to finish.

WHAT ABOUT FARTHER INTO THE RACE?

Do the first two miles at the speed of your long runs; if you use a run/walk method, use that in the race. Resist the temptation to run hard as soon as the starting gun goes off. Starting slow will help you finish strong, which increases the chance that you'll race again.

WHAT IF IT RAINS?

The race will still go on. Wear a cap with a lid to keep the rain out of your face, and a garbage bag with holes cut for your head and arms that you can discard before the gun goes off.

ADVICE FOR THE END OF THE RACE?

Once the finish line is in sight, finish with spirit. Then pat yourself on the back. If there's a post-race party, go ahead and partake. And stick around for the awards ceremony. Maybe you'll win something!