

5 ways to transcend the taper

1. Don't drop off a cliff!

It is tempting to think that once you have done your longest run, potentially 3 weeks out from the race, that you then just put your feet up and wait for race day. Whilst we certainly want to reduce training and get rested for race day, **it is a mistake to suddenly cut down to very little training** or, as I call it, 'drop off a cliff'.

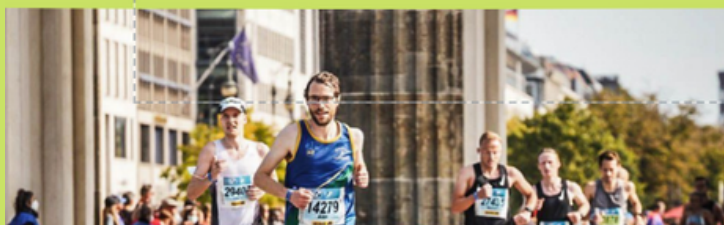
The shorter your taper, the more exaggerated your reduction will need to be but if you are following a typical 3 week taper then the first week of taper shouldn't look a whole lot different to your normal training. Your long run at the end of it will be significantly shorter but it should still be over 2 hours which for most people will be anywhere between 12 and 18 miles with 14-16 miles being quite typical.

Focus more on reducing the time of each run in the second week of taper rather than cutting out lots of runs although the odd missed session won't hurt and you may want an extra day or two's rest in the last week.

Cutting back too much too soon can add to the feeling of staleness and increase the doubts that can creep in during the taper period.



Action point: Make sure your taper is gradual at the start and more pronounced at the end:
3 weeks out - around 80-90% of peak week
2 weeks out - around 60-70% of peak week
1 week out - around 30-40% of peak week



2. Don't suddenly do a lot of other exercise

Runners can get nervous about reducing their training, thinking that they will lose fitness. Some may opt to try and make up for this lack of training with 'non-impact' forms of exercise such as swimming and cycling but this is not a good idea in the taper period.

Extra exercise still uses up energy and taxes muscles at the very time **you want to be conserving energy and rebuilding muscle**. Plus it is also likely that your body is not used to these forms of exercise in the last while as you have gone through the peak weeks of marathon training.

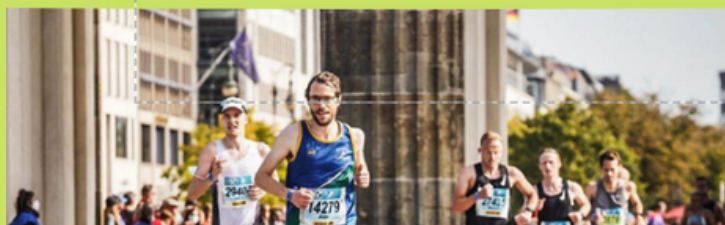
Even lots of walking which may seem relatively low grade is going to dip into those energy stores and tax the body so try and avoid long shopping trips, lots of DIY around the house or anything else out of the norm.



Action point: If you're looking for activities that will help your body, focus on relaxation. Think of hot or cold baths, a sports massage or even some foam rolling - whatever makes you feel good and doesn't take a lot of energy.



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3. Find your flow activities

One challenge for runners in the taper period is that with the reduction of training time and a list of energetic activities on the 'better left till after the marathon' list, boredom can creep in and contribute to us overthinking the marathon.

The taper period might be a time that you can caught up on a few things before your marathon, but again, make sure these aren't too physically or mentally taxing.

'**Flow activities**' can be a great way to pass the time, doing **something you enjoy and relaxing at the same time**. A few options might be:

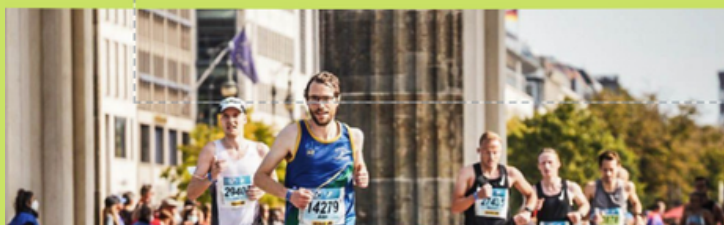
- Reading a book
- Watching films or shows
- Listening to a podcast
- Playing computer games
- Knitting / Crocheting
- Listening to or playing music
- Colouring books or other art
- Solving crosswords or puzzles
- Meditating
- Playing board games / patience games



Action point: What are your flow activities? Block out a bit of time on your calendar to spend time doing these activities in the run up to the marathon. It can help relax you and take your mind off what's to come.



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4. Plan your race but don't over analyse or obsess

At this stage, you want to have a good idea of your strategy for the race in terms of you fuelling, pacing and what gear you will need. You should also jot down all the other things around the race like your travel and accommodation details, expo and travel to the start line and even have some plans to deal with different weather conditions possible on the day.

However, you should avoid over analysing and second guessing things at this point. It is quite easy to get nervous and start tinkering about with your race pacing or thinking about a new gel or shoe that you could throw into the mix at the last minute.

The best thing to do is to jot down what you're going to do and then revisit it a few days before. But you don't need to keep going over it on a daily basis.

You should also avoid obsessively checking the weather. This is something you cannot control. You should have a couple of plans up your sleeve for different conditions, but you don't need to look further than that until 1 or 2 days out.

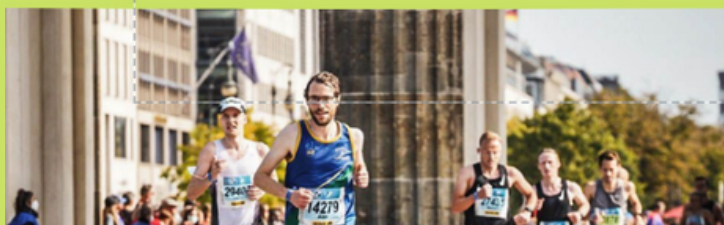
Checking and rechecking these things will only cause you mental fatigue.



✓ Action point: Start a race plan document either handwritten or printed out that you can jot down all relevant details. Put this away during most of the taper period and revisit it again when you get close to race day.



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5. Keep eating normally until your carb load

As the miles drop off during the taper, some runners may think that their calorie intake should drop too. This is not something I would recommend as **the body needs nutrients for repair and calories to power the rebuilding process.**

We also want to keep topping up the glycogen stores, even ahead of the main carb load (if you are doing one) so that we're not starting off from a low base.

Fuelling yourself adequately during the taper period will help you to feel more recovered and less tired too since a lack of calories can leave you feeling lethargic.

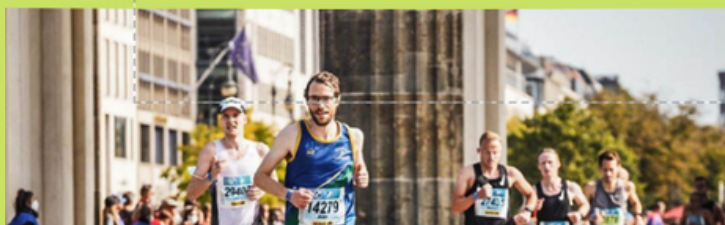
Your diet should still be a well balanced one focusing on natural foods, protein sources and with plenty of carbohydrates. There is no need to avoid any particular foods until the few days before when you will be better served opting for higher carbohydrate, low fibre and fat sources.



✓ Action point: Keep eating and drinking well through the taper. Try to avoid missing meals and keep focusing on a well balanced diet. If you are carb loading then you can switch your diet to include more carbohydrate and less fat and fibre from 3 days out.



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We'll cover the areas you really need help with from training to nutrition, mindset to execution. You get hands on coaching and accountability with loads of guides and resources just like this to help you get to the next level. Find out more at the link below!

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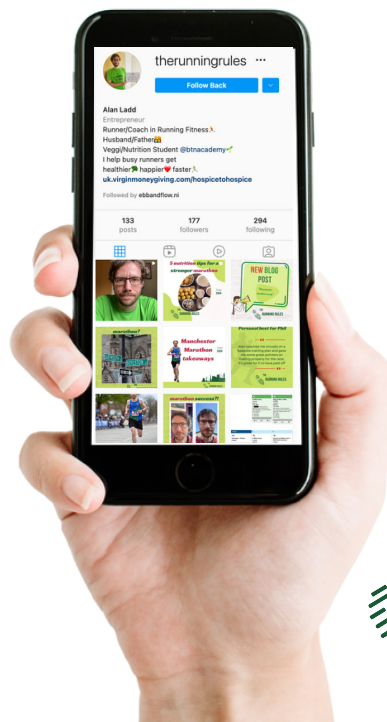
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