



# walking

From Cooking Light, By Mark Fenton

Walking is touted as a great stress reliever anyone can do. But many people don't know that walking can be a fantastic workout to help you tone up, lose weight, and get into great shape. The remarkable thing about walking is that absolutely anybody—from novices to serious athletes—can get a solid workout.

Even if you're relatively new to walking, you can train to complete a 10k (that's 6.2 miles) race. First, get an entry form for a 10k running or walking event that's about 10 weeks in the future (for more motivation, enlist a friend as a training partner). Then sign up and pay the entry fee. After that, you're committed. This 10-week program will provide all the preparation you need; it's long enough to

## HOW FAST SHOULD YOU TRY TO WALK A 10K?

get you in shape but short enough that the payoff is in clear sight. Start now, and you'll cross the finish line by midsummer. At less than 18 minutes a mile—a comfortable but fitness-building pace—it would take a little under two hours. Move up to a brisk 14:30 minutes per mile, and you can finish in under 90 minutes. That's a great target if you want to burn lots of calories. Tackle a speedy 12-minute-per-mile pace, and you can break the 75-minute barrier. The ideal pace is one that you can maintain for 6.2 miles.

To find your pace, do a one-mile time trial on an outdoor track or other marked path. Warm up with some easy strolling, then walk a mile at a challenging but pain-free pace.

- If it takes more than 19 minutes to finish, follow the Health Walker program.
- If you walk a mile in 14 to 19 minutes, the Fitness Walker plan is for you.
- If you speed through a mile in less than 14 minutes, aim for the Athletic Walker regimen.

## Find the Shoes That Fit

Flexible shoes that fit properly are a serious walker's best friend. Have both feet measured with your walking socks on, shop late in the day (when feet are most swollen), and give the pair a spin. Make sure your heels don't slip, toes don't touch the end of the shoe, and there's no pinching or binding.

A walking shoe that passes the following tests will have a smooth heel-to-toe roll and allow you to hit maximum speed:

**Bend it.** Hold the shoe in your hands and bend. It should flex easily through the ball of the foot, but never at the arch.

**Poke it.** Place the shoe on a flat surface, then poke down at the very back of the heel inside the shoe with a pencil. The heel should be rounded or beveled enough that the toe lifts off the ground—the position your foot takes on every walking step.

## Walkers' Resources

Visit local sporting-goods stores and rec centers to find entry forms for events in your area. To find more races, check the Web:

- [www.coolrunning.com](http://www.coolrunning.com) provides a comprehensive list of links to road races nationwide.
- [www.ava.org](http://www.ava.org) is the official site of the American Volkssport Association (800-830-9255), which organizes noncompetitive *volksmarches* (literally, people's walks), including 10K courses.
- [www.racewalk.com](http://www.racewalk.com) is a clearinghouse of competitive racewalk events and links to training tips.

Former competitor and coach of the U.S. racewalking team, Mark Fenton is now the host of *America's Walking* on PBS and the author of *The Complete Guide to Walking for Health, Weight Loss, and Fitness* (Lyons Press, 2001).

# health walker

Three keys for healthy walking, whether you're window shopping or going for broke:

- Walk tall, with your eyes forward, not looking down at the ground.
- Keep your shoulders back (no slouching), and avoid excess sway in the lower back.
- Focus on quicker, not longer, strides. Maintain a natural stride length.

Plan to walk at least three times a week so that you fit in the three essential workouts. You can add extra walks of 30 to 50 minutes as time permits. Essential workouts include one long walk per week at a

comfortable pace to gradually increase the time from 30 minutes to 2 hours. The second essential workout is a sustained walk at your target pace (building from 20 minutes to 70 minutes). It's a good idea to walk on a measured course so it's easy to be sure that you stay on pace. The third important workout helps increase your speed. Begin with a 20-minute workout in which you warm up for the first five minutes, then walk as fast as possible for 10 minutes, and cool down for the final five minutes.

## Health Walker: 4–5 days per week (3–3.5 mph | race pace=17:45/mile for 1:50 10K)

Week	Monday (Easy)	Tuesday (Race Pace)	Wednesday (Optional)	Thursday (Speedwork)*	Friday	Sat or Sun (Long Walk)
1	:45	:20	:20–:40	5-10-5 (:20)	Rest	:30
2	:45	:30	:20–:40	5-10-5 (:20)	Rest	:45
3	:45	:30	:20–:40	7-15-8 (:30)	Rest	:60
4	:45	:40	:20–:40	7-15-8 (:30)	Rest	1:15
5	:45	:40	:20–:40	10-20-10 (:40)	Rest	1:30
6	:45	:50	:20–:40	12-20-13 (:45)	Rest	:60
7	:45	:60	:20–:40	10-25-10 (:45)	Rest	1:45
8	:45	:70	:20–:40	10-20-10 (:40)	Rest	2:00
9	:45	:60	:20–:40	10-25-10 (:45)	Rest	1:10
10	:45	:40	:20–:40	5-10-5 (:20)	Rest	Race Day!

\*For example, warm up for 5 minutes, walk as fast as possible for 10 minutes, then cool down for 5 minutes, for a total of 20 minutes.

# fitness walker

## Fitness Walker: 5–6 days per week (4–4.5 mph | race pace=14:30/mile for 1:30 10K)

Week	Monday (Moderate)	Tuesday (Race Pace)	Wednesday (Easy Walk)	Thursday (Speedwork)*	Friday (Optional)	Sat or Sun (Long Walk)
1	2 mi. < :32	:20	:40	5-10-5 (:20)	:30–:40	:30
2	2 mi. < :32	:30	:40	5-10-5 (:20)	:30–:40	:45
3	2 mi. < :32	:30	:40	7-15-8 (:30)	:30–:40	:60
4	2 mi. < :32	:40	:40	7-15-8 (:30)	:30–:40	1:15
5	2 mi. < :32	:40	:40	10-20-10 (:40)	:30–:40	1:30
6	2 mi. < :32	:50	:40	12-20-13 (:45)	:30–:40	:60
7	2 mi. < :32	:60	:40	10-25-10 (:45)	:30–:40	1:45
8	2 mi. < :32	:70	:40	10-20-10 (:40)	:30–:40	2:00
9	2 mi. < :32	:60	:40	10-25-10 (:45)	:30–:40	1:10
10	2 mi. < :32	:40	:40	5-10-5 (:20)	:30–:40	Race Day!

\*For example, warm up for 5 minutes, walk as fast as possible for 10 minutes, then cool down for 5 minutes, for a total of 20 minutes.

Runners don't keep their arms straight, and neither should you. Straight arms just slow you down. To pick up the pace:

- Bend your arms 90 degrees at the elbows; hands should trace an arc from waistband at the back of the hip to chest height (no higher) in front.
- Don't let your elbows flap from side to side in the notorious—and energy wasting—chicken-wing swing.

Plan to walk at least three times a week so that you fit in the three essential workouts.

You can add extra walks of 30 to 50 minutes as time permits. Essential workouts include one long walk per week at a comfortable pace to gradually increase

the time from 30 minutes to 2 hours. The second essential workout is a sustained walk at your target pace (building from 20 minutes to 70 minutes). It's a good idea to walk on a measured course so it's easy to be sure that you stay on pace. The third important workout helps increase your speed. Begin with a 20-minute workout in which you warm up for the first five minutes, then walk as fast as possible for 10 minutes, and cool down for the final five minutes.

# athletic walker

## Athletic Walker: 6 days per week (4.5+ mph | race pace=12:05/mile for 1:15 10K)

Week	Monday (Moderate)	Tuesday (Race Pace)	Wednesday (Easy Walk)	Thursday (Speedwork)*	Friday (Optional)	Sat or Sun (Long Walk)
1	2.5 mi. < :35	:20	:30-:50	5-10-5 (:20)	:30-:50	:30
2	2.5 mi. < :35	:30	:30-:50	5-10-5 (:20)	:30-:50	:45
3	2.5 mi. < :35	:30	:30-:50	7-15-8 (:30)	:30-:50	:60
4	2.5 mi. < :35	:40	:30-:50	7-15-8 (:30)	:30-:50	1:15
5	2.5 mi. < :35	:40	:30-:50	10-20-10 (:40)	:30-:50	1:30
6	2.5 mi. < :35	:50	:30-:50	12-20-13 (:45)	:30-:50	:60
7	2.5 mi. < :35	:60	:30-:50	10-25-10 (:45)	:30-:50	1:45
8	2.5 mi. < :35	:70	:30-:50	10-20-10 (:40)	:30-:50	2:00
9	2.5 mi. < :35	:60	:30-:50	10-25-10 (:45)	:30-:50	1:10
10	2.5 mi. < :35	:40	:30-:50	5-10-5 (:20)	:30-:50	Race Day!

\*For example, warm up for 5 minutes, walk as fast as possible for 10 minutes, then cool down for 5 minutes, for a total of 20 minutes.

minutes). It's a good idea to walk on a measured course so it's easy to be sure that you stay on pace. The third important workout helps increase your speed. Begin with a 20-minute workout in which you warm up for the first five minutes, then walk as fast as possible for 10 minutes, and cool down for the final five minutes.

Subtle details will help you hit top speed.

In addition to bending your arms:

- Really extend the ankle and push off of your toes with each step. This gives your stride more power.
- Feel your hips driving forward and back—never side to side—for even more power.

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# stretch it out

Make stretching part of your routine to minimize soreness. Here are three moves to do after every workout. Don't bounce, never stretch to the point of discomfort, and hold each stretch for at least 5 deep breaths.

**Calf/hip stretch:** Take a giant step forward with your left foot, keeping right leg straight and right heel on the ground. Bend your left knee until it's above (but not beyond) the left foot; if your knee bends beyond your toes, move your right leg back. Keep your back flat, not arched, and feel the stretch in the right calf and hip. Hold, then switch sides.

**Thigh/shin stretch:** Stand on your right foot, bend your left knee, and bring your left foot up behind you. Grasp the toes with your left hand. Your heel doesn't have to reach the buttocks; just pull until you feel a stretch in the thigh and shin. Keep your left knee pointed toward the ground, not forward or off to the side. Hold, then switch sides.

**Hamstring/back stretch:** Standing with knees soft (not locked), bend forward from the hips and let your arms and head hang toward the ground; your hands do not have to touch the ground. Hold for 5 to 10 breaths, stand slowly, and repeat.