

Couch to 5k



Trust Couch to 5K and build up slowly

By Tina from Devon

I have never been a runner. I like cycling, swimming, walking — anything but running! I am overweight and I've suffered from back problems in the past. So for me, running has always seemed impossible.

I had a special birthday coming up and everyone at work encouraged me to give Couch to 5K a go, a free nine-week running programme, but I kept resisting. My partner had also completed Couch to 5K. "If I can do it, so can you," he told me. Initially I did it just so people would leave me alone!

I didn't know where to start. What if I couldn't do it? I didn't want to feel that I had failed.

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I had seen an advert for the Couch to 5K app on the OneSmallStep website. It was something I hadn't tried. I thought this might work for me as I'm quite good at following rules! In the past, I had struggled to find the motivation to start running and thought this would help. I downloaded the app and it gave me a great boost to get going.

To begin with, I made sure I was happy with where I was running and what I was wearing — no fancy running kit! At the start, you barely run at all. After choosing your celebrity running coach (I chose Michael Johnson), you slowly build your pace from a brisk walk to an easy jog. As you progress, you quickly forget you are running further and walking less. The programme builds up slowly, so when it makes a jump in difficulty you are ready for it.

I continued using the app when I went on holiday and even managed to run in the hot weather. I was proud of myself. There are some beautiful areas to run in France and it only added to my motivation.

Each Couch to 5K session is easy to fit in with your current lifestyle as it doesn't take long. The programme has shown me that running is actually quite a quick way to exercise. I love going early in the morning and then having my whole day left.

Running has really helped me switch off from work and my busy life. It has given me time to focus on myself and do something for me. My blood pressure has also improved. I wouldn't say I have lost weight but I have certainly stopped gaining it! I didn't even put on any weight during my holiday — and French pastries make a nice post-run coffee stop, I can tell you! I feel better and really good about myself.

I now include running in my routine. I am not competitive so racing and long distances are not beckoning, but I may do a park run when I am ready.

If you are thinking about doing Couch to 5K and haven't started, my advice is to do some pre-planning. I'd recommend finding an easy route which you enjoy. I am fortunate to live near a canal and know the route well which I think definitely helped me. Don't worry if it takes you multiple attempts to get going; trust the app and build up slowly. If I can do it, I think most people can!