



10 TIPS FOR A #BAMR RACE

[From Another Mother Runner]

1. NUTRITION: SAME OLD, SAME OLD

Show up race day well hydrated and well fueled; if you're running a marathon, you should have carbo loaded over the past two or three days. Have a plan in place for what you will eat and drink the day before and, most importantly, the night before and morning of the race. Nothing new, ladies! Stick with what has worked.

2. GEAR: FLATTEN YOURSELF OUT

The night before, lay out everything you will be wearing; all items should have some miles in them, so they don't cause any unexpected issues for you. (Hello, chub rub!) Make sure to have your phone and/or GPS charged, and all other items (fuel belt, ear buds, gels, etc.) ready to grab and go, so your foggy, anxious morning brain doesn't forget anything critical.

3. LAY OUT THE LOGISTICS

Before the race, check out the course online—or in person, if possible—to get an idea of aid station locations, what will be served, where the hills are, etc. You don't have to study with SAT intensity (don't freak yourself out!), but knowing that there's a big climb at mile 11 or a breezy downhill to the finish line will help you temper your effort.

4. LINE UP YOUR CHEERLEADERS

If you've got friends and family cheering you on, know where they'll be on the course. The bigger the race, the more specific you need to be (*mile 13.5, left side of the street, right before runners turn left*). Then have a Solid Plan for meeting at the finish—again, the bigger the race, the more you need it. While you likely know what time you expect to finish, you may exceed your goals or not have a most excellent day. So give a wide range of time to meet, pick a place and then have everybody stay there until you reunite. (Why? Phone batteries seem to die at races.)

5. ARRIVE EARLY

Depending on the size and location of the race—and your familiarity with it—plan to get to the race site one full hour before the start. This insures a decent parking spot, time to pick up your packet if needed, get in the porta-potty line once (or twice), hand off your drop bag (a process that always seems to be more complicated than you initially planned) and complete your warm ups. If you arrive crazy early, you can just chill in your car, visualize a successful race, and enjoy the silence.

6. DON'T DISMISS THE WARM UP

Warming up is not just for the front-runners in singlets with 4% body fat. Getting your blood pumping prior to the race will help you pace yourself more efficiently at the start and help you calm your nerves.

Twenty to 30 minutes before the start, break a sweat.

Directions according to your race distance:

5K and 10K: Warm up with a slow, slow jog for 10-20 minutes, followed by dynamic stretching (running drills like high knees, butt kicks, grapevine) and 4-6 strides (20 seconds of accelerations)

Half-Marathoners: Warm up for 10 minutes, followed by dynamic stretching and a couple strides.

Marathoners: Depending on your running experience, you can skip the jogging part of the warm up; instead, use the first mile to two of the race to get in a groove. Doing some dynamic stretching as you wait for the start is a good idea, though.

7. CORRAL CORRECTLY

There are plenty of people who jockey to be towards the front or line up in a corral that isn't appropriate for their true pace. Unless you're planning on 7 minute-miles, don't be one of those people; line up in a place that corresponds to your fitness level. (If you're planning a 2:20 half-marathon and look over and see the 1:50 pacing sign, you're not in the right place.) Why does it matter so much? Because starting slow is key to a great race. Being around people who are running way too fast makes it crazy hard to keep your speed in check.

8. DIVIDE AND CONQUER—OR THE RULE OF THIRDS

Regardless of your race distance, mentally dividing the race into thirds—and then staying present in the mile you're running—is a sound strategy.

First Third: Hold Back

Aim to run your planned average race pace, or if you're running a half- or full marathon, even a little slower. On the heels of your strong training cycle and your taper, your effort should feel easy-breezy! That said, it should feel also like you are holding back; you should not look down at your GPS and see a number you rarely—or never—saw in training. Please know: this takes discipline because people are going to blow by you. Let them go! You'll see them again later.

Also, know that you can't bank time in a race. If you run 30 seconds/mile faster than you planned for the first half, thinking that'll help you nab a PR, it won't. You'll pay for your speedy miles at the front of the race at least three-fold, if not more, towards the end of the race. (Yes, that is a total estimate, but trust us: You only have so many matches to burn in a race. If you fly through the first miles, lighting one match after another, you will flame out at the end. We've done it ourselves, and it isn't pretty. Or fun.)

Second Third: Steady and Strong

Settle in and aim to nail your race pace. Check your pace occasionally to make sure you are staying on target. You should feel strong, yet definitely at an effort that is maintainable for the length of this section. This is a great segment to start playing games, especially if focusing outside your body helps you. For example, count the number of people you pass, reel them in slowly like you are fishing, or imagine a bungee chord attached to runners ahead pulling you up and past them. Keep thoughts positive as you focus on hitting consistent splits.

Final Third: Dig Deep(er)

The goal of any race should be running negative splits (running the second half faster than the first). If you started smart, and held steady through the meat of the race, you should have some energy to shift into the next gear as you make your way through this last third of the race. Don't make any sudden shifts in speed, but rather slowly pick up the pace, or hold onto your race pace, as you close in on the finish. With 200 to 400 meters to go, feel free to open it up and leave whatever you have left on the course. It's not easy but there's no better feeling than crossing the finish line like the #BAMR you are.

9. SORRY: YOU'RE NOT FINISHED YET

Spend 5-10 minutes doing super easy jogging and/or walking after you come across the finish—and that may mean just walking along the finishing corrals or walking to the car. Eat a mix of carbs and protein, replace fluids and celebrate! (And at some point sooner than later, get in some foam rolling and stretching!)

10. CELEBRATE + HAVE PERSPECTIVE

Whether you nailed the race or the race nailed you, realize that you crossed a starting line and a finish line. That is a huge accomplishment, and should be celebrated. Don't get us wrong: the time on the finishing clock matters, but remember to zoom out and be grateful for all the things that this training cycle and race has brought to your life.

(Put a more succinct way: Our friend Bart Yasso says, "Never take a finish line for granted." Amen to that.)