

HEALTH & FITNESS

Tested: The Best Running Apps of 2024

We tried more than a dozen running apps to find the best ones, whether you're a new runner or lacing up for your next marathon.

Ashley White · Apr 3, 2024 5:37 PM EDT

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Whether you're lacing up for a long run or just starting your first couch-to-5K program, a running app can be a helpful tool on your fitness journey. While there are running apps for every fitness level and price point, it can be hard to know which is right for you and your training goals. We're here to give you all the details on the best apps for running, whether you're new to the sport or an accomplished marathoner.

Our expert testers put the apps on our list through the paces, digging into the different features and metrics they offer for runners. We also spoke with Rachel Hoffman, a certified running coach in Washington, D.C., about what to look for when choosing the best running app for you. Review this list and get ready to hit download—because the miles don't count unless you log them, right?

Our Picks for the Best Running Apps:

- **Best Free Running App:** [Strava](#)
- **Best Running App for Beginners:** [Joggo](#)
- **Best Running App for Apple Watch:** [Nike Run Club](#)
- **Best App for Interval Running:** [MapMyRun](#)
- **Best App for Treadmill Running:** [Aaptiv](#)
- **Best Running App for Marathon Training:** [adidas Running](#)

- **Best App for Running Long Distances: [Zombies, Run!](#)**
- **Best Running App for Cross Training: [Future](#)**

Best Free Running App: Strava

- **Price:** Free; premium version is \$11.99/month
- Easy to use for tracking runs and reviewing performance
- Large social media community

For a free running app to track and analyze your runs, you can't go wrong with Strava. The free version offers precise tracking and post-run analysis, including distance, average pace, and elevation gain. That's helpful if you want to chart your progress as you work toward a big goal or train for your next race. I'm training for my second half marathon, and as a consistent back-of-the-pack runner, my biggest goal is to get faster. I use Strava as a way to track my pace, measure my progress, and provide valuable insights into my performance.

Strava syncs with many popular fitness trackers and GPS watches, putting your health and fitness information at your fingertips. I love that it syncs directly with my Apple Watch, so I don't have to worry if I forget to track my run in the app. It also allows you to upload your data from other fitness apps (including MapMyRun, our choice for the best app for interval running). Tester Taylor Rojek, a long-distance runner, says she appreciates Strava's ease of use. "I wear a Garmin watch, and I like how easy it is to upload my runs to Strava—every activity I track on my watch automatically appears there," Rojek says.

In addition to its tracking features, Strava has a huge social community that connects you with—and compares you to—fellow athletes. The free version of the app lets you follow your friends and post pictures from your run and measures your speed against your previous efforts and anyone else who has run that route. (The fastest people on a given section of road win a virtual crown). I really enjoy the social aspect of Strava because I get inspiration from seeing other runners make progress on their goals. While this social element sets Strava apart from a few of the other apps on our list, some runners might feel pressure to share every detail of their runs—the good and the bad—with their followers. "The app keeps you accountable, but this can be a drawback," Rojek says. "When I was competing, I felt like I couldn't take a day off because I was constantly uploading my workouts and comparing myself to other people's fastest times."

Pros

- Strava tracks your workouts and provides post-run analytics, such as pace and elevation

- Syncs with many popular GPS devices and fitness trackers
- Allows you to connect with friends and other runners in your area for motivation

Cons

- Users can't access some features, like full leaderboards or progress charts, without a paid subscription

Best Running App for Beginners: Joggo

- **Price:** \$33 for two months; \$53 for four months; \$66 for six months
- Personalized running plans
- Geared toward new runners and those with weight loss goals

When you first start running, you might have a lot of questions. How do I control my breathing? How can I get faster? What the heck is a fartlek? Joggo acts as a digital running coach for new runners, providing customized plans to guide your runs. To start, the app has you answer questions about your fitness level and running goals. It uses this information to create a targeted running program for you. Once you start using the app, it collects more data about your fitness level and tailors your plan further.

Joggo's personalized running plans are helpful for new runners who don't know where to start. "The program felt more geared toward beginner runners," says tester Rachel Pasche, an avid runner who uses Joggo during her runs two to three times each week. The app provides coaching cues as you run. "Joggo uses an automated voice that will tell you if your pace is off and will pop in with distance information during runs and speed cues if you're doing a tempo run or speed work," Pasche says. She found the app's in-ear cues distracting but thinks they are beneficial for new runners who may need motivation or guidance with their pacing. She also enjoyed using Joggo to track her speed and distance over time. "It motivated me to see my average mile pace improve each week," she says.

Pros

- Joggo's customized running plans provide helpful guidance for those new to the sport
- The app continually tailors your running plan based on your fitness level and progress

- With additional nutrition and strength training plans, Joggo encourages a well-rounded fitness approach

Cons

- Some users have reported glitches while recording their workouts.
- Joggo only pairs with Apple Watch, so you'll need to use the app on your phone if you have another device.

Best Running App for Apple Watch: Nike Run Club (NRC)

- **Price:** Free
- Syncs with Apple Watch for hands-free running
- Guided runs and training plans for beginners and pros

While plenty of running apps pair with the Apple Watch, we like how seamlessly Nike Run Club integrates it. It's the best app to track a running workout when you want to leave your phone at home and go hands-free, thanks to its clear display on the Apple Watch face. Tester Kayla Godfrey says she switched from using MapMyRun to Nike Run Club. "I really like the simplicity and just overall user interface of NRC," Godfrey says. The activity tracker syncs with your Apple Watch, making it easy to view your stats at any point during a run. However, you can also use the NRC voiceover tool, which reads your watch screen to you every 0.25 miles. "It's really helpful that the app calls out my time and pace when I am running so you don't have to look down and can stay focused on the road," says Godfrey. "Also the app will pause automatically if you stop running and resume once you start back up." One drawback, Godfrey says, is if you hit pause during your run to take a breather, the app adjusts your mile pace to reflect that.

Nike Run Club offers training plans to help you achieve your goals, whether you want to start running or beat your personal record in your next marathon. During the app's guided runs, including speed training and treadmill runs, Nike coaches offer tips and encouragement. Pasche, who also tested NRC, says the app's guided runs are more motivational than the ones available on Joggo. "Nike Run Club has a lot more audio engagement telling you how the coach wants you to feel during your run. I also thought the music integration on NRC was really well done compared to Joggo. It would get quieter during the coach's speeches, which I thought was a nice touch," says Pasche.

While NRC is a no-brainer for those with an Apple Watch, the app also syncs with other devices and apps, including Garmin and Strava.

Pros

- Voiceover feature reads your watch screen to you, so you can stay focused on the track, road, or trail
- Training plans can help beginners and experienced runners alike
- Guided runs offer playlist suggestions, coaching cues, and encouragement

Cons

- Some reviewers report glitches that prevent the app from properly tracking their runs

Best App for Interval Running: MapMyRun by Under Armour

- **Price:** Free; premium version is \$5.99/month
- Pre-designed workouts for interval training
- Compatible with popular devices and Under Armour Connected running shoes

Have you hit a plateau in your running journey? Download MapMyRun and hit the track for some interval training. Like many other running apps, it offers workouts to help you improve your speed and endurance. But MapMyRun stands out for its custom interval workouts and in-depth stats after each run. Amanda Capritto, a certified personal trainer, has tested more than 18 fitness apps and says MapMyRun is her favorite for running. "You're not getting on-screen instruction like with a strength-training app, but I was impressed with all of the guidance you do get, like split data, audio coaching, power analysis, and cadence analysis," Capritto says. With the app's premium version, you can create your own interval workouts by setting the intensity level and duration or distance. MapMyRun also provides audio guidance to crush each interval and meet your goals, whether you want to get faster or build your aerobic fitness.

In addition to its extensive library of workouts, MapMyRun offers access to millions of routes, which are mapped courses through cities, parks, and more. The routes are provided in a variety of distances and offer details on the terrain so you can find safe places to run in your neighborhood or on your next runcation. Setting up an account and syncing the app to your favorite running watch or device is simple. As an added bonus, the app pairs with select Under Armour footwear via Bluetooth, enabling you to start measuring your distance, pace, and splits as soon as your feet hit the pavement.

Pasche, who also tested MapMyRun, says the app tracks similar metrics to both Joggo and Nike Run Club, but doesn't track your exertion level. "The main difference is NRC and Joggo both ask some follow-up questions, such as how the run felt or how hard it was. MapMyRun just records the run and is done with it," she says

Pros

- MapMyRun offers customizable workouts for new and experienced runners
- Premium version tracks a wealth of information, like splits and cadence
- Connects with many apps, devices, and heart rate monitors

Cons

- Some reviewers report bugs with the app's GPS tracking
- Custom interval training with audio guidance is only available with the premium version

Best App for Treadmill Running: Aaptiv

- **Price:** \$14.99/month
- Unlimited access to thousands of classes
- Curated music selection and audio guidance

Love them or hate them, treadmill workouts have their place in many training plans, especially if you're dealing with subzero temperatures or sweat-inducing humidity. When you need an app to track your treadmill runs accurately, look no further than Aaptiv. Other apps on our list, like Joggo, Strava and MayMyRun, are designed for outdoor running and use GPS to track your distance. However, runs on Aaptiv are created specifically for the treadmill, and the company says they are some of the most popular workouts offered on its app. You can choose different runs from the treadmill category based on your goals, whether you're training for a race or working to improve your form. The subscription-based app uses audio guidance, so there's no squinting down at your phone or tablet while you're running.

While we've chosen Aaptiv specifically for treadmill running, you can use the app for any type of workout, including outdoor runs, strength training, and stretching. The app allows you to filter for different workouts by type, length, muscle group, fitness level, and equipment. We think this is especially helpful if you want to add cross-training to your routine, or need stretching sessions to help your recovery. Capritto tested Aaptiv,

and likes that it uses expert trainers to create the workouts, so you can feel confident about following the built-in plans. Capritto notes not all of the workouts show the instructor on screen and instead use an animation which she thinks could be confusing to some. Overall, however, Capritto found Aaptiv to be well worth the cost of a subscription. "This app offers a variety of workouts and programs," she says. "It easily has the best value out of all the apps I tried because I don't think users will get bored."

Pros

- Subscription gets you access to over 8,500 guided workouts
- In-app music selection keeps you engaged, even during long treadmill runs
- Aaptiv uses certified trainers to create expert-level workout plans

Cons

- App periodically removes classes from the platform, so your favorites might disappear
- More expensive than most other running apps on our list

Best Running App for Marathon Training: adidas Running

- **Price:** Free; premium version is \$9.99/month
- Training plans for the marathon and half marathon
- Guided runs with voice coaching

Running a marathon is a big commitment. If you're looking for a running app to guide your training, we recommend adidas Running. Formerly known as Runtastic, adidas Running has training plans to meet your specific goals. The premium version offers a marathon training plan to build endurance and mental toughness over a 12- to 16-week period. There are also guided plans for half marathons, 5Ks and 10Ks, weight loss, and more. You can choose the duration and how many days per week you want to train for each plan. As you use the app, it tracks your fitness level and adjusts your recommended pace.

The adidas Running app offers real-time GPS tracking, and our tester noted its accuracy. Capritto says while running the same route on two different runs, the app recorded less variation in distance than her **smartwatch**. She also says the voice coaching provides valuable instructions and feedback during her runs. "While the

voice is annoying, I thought the feature itself was helpful,” Capritto says. “I liked being able to leave my phone in my pocket during my run and not have to look at my watch to see when I’m at an interval.”

You can sync the app with a variety of devices and apps, such as Garmin Connect, Apple Health, and MyFitnessPal. Capritto says it’s quick to upload your workouts after syncing to a wearable device, even if you don’t have your phone. “I liked that I could sync this app with my Garmin,” she says. “Even when I didn’t log my run or yoga class, the information still uploaded into the adidas app because I had a watch on.”

Pros

- Detailed training plans for various distances can offer guidance for your next race
- App offers precise GPS tracking
- As you use the app and offer feedback, it adjusts your training plan to your fitness level

Cons

- App doesn’t connect with some popular wearable devices, like Fitbit
- Some users, including our tester, find the voice coach to be annoying

Best App for Running Long Distances: Zombies, Run!

- **Price:** Free; premium version is \$5.99/month
- Zombie chases push you to keep running
- Choose from different missions on each run

If you’ve ever needed extra incentive to push through a long run, consider adding a zombie chase to the mix. Zombies, Run! stands apart from the other apps on our list because it’s part running app and part video game, motivating you to get moving once the undead appear. The app has over 500 missions you can listen to on your runs as you work to determine the source of the zombie plague—and ultimately save humanity.

As you run, you listen to a story interwoven with your own music or workout playlist. Once you hear the guttural growls of the undead, it’s time to get moving and run like

your life depends on it. Frieda Johnson, a certified nutrition coach, found the stories to be a fun way to mix up a long run. "I really enjoyed this app, and I think it could be great if you regularly run long distances," Johnson says. "The stories made me want to run longer to see how it unfolds. The app has hundreds of 'missions,' so it should take a while before feeling bored." While Zombies, Run! gamifies running, we like that it also tracks your metrics such as distance, time, splits, pace, and more.

Zombies, Run! is available as part of the ZRX app, which includes other running games. Johnson says while this may cause some confusion, navigating the app is easy once you get used to it. It may also take some time to adjust the settings to your preferences. "The first episode was a lot of just zombie noises," Johnson says. "So I adjusted the settings before my next run to shorten the time between stories, which was much more entertaining."

Pros

- Zombies, Run! gamifies running to motivate users
- App comes with hundreds of stories to making each mission entertaining, especially if you're running long distances
- Tracks metrics such as distance, time, pace, splits, and more

Cons

- Free version only provides initial access to four missions, followed by one new story each week
- You may need to adjust the zombie noises to your preferences

Best Running App for Cross Training: Future

- **Price:** \$199/month
- Personalized workout plans from credentialed coaches
- Can choose a coach based on your preferred style

If you're a runner, health experts say adding **cross-training to your routine may improve your fitness level, prevent injury, or help you recover from an injury**. That's where Future comes in. The **personal training app** connects you with a coach who will create a customized workout routine based on your fitness goals, experience level, and injury history. Each week, your coach provides daily motivation and monitors your progress.

Ali Nolan, four-time marathoner and author of *Master the Marathon: The Ultimate Training Guide for Women*, tested Future after a calf strain stopped her from running. “As soon as I started rehabbing my calf, I realized strength training was crucial to protect my muscles from injuries,” says Nolan. Nolan credits the app’s personalization with helping her get back to running regularly and without pain. “I thought a personal trainer was the best route for me, and Future was exactly what I needed.” After using the app for several weeks, she started to notice results. “During my second month of using Future, I started to feel stronger, have more endurance, and see improvements in my muscle tone,” she says. “I’m back to running nearly two miles pain-free.”

Using Future, you can view your weekly workout schedule, watch detailed exercise videos, and chat with your coach about your progress, setbacks, or questions. The app also tracks your consistency and allows you to earn achievements to stay motivated toward your goals. It’s the most expensive app on our list, but we think it’s a worthwhile investment if you want personalized support and training, especially if you’re recovering from an injury.

Pros

- Future provides personalized coaching and support to help you meet your specific goals
- Custom weekly workout plans prevent plateaus and exercise fatigue
- Users can choose their trainer based on experience and background and switch trainers if they feel it’s not a fit

Cons

- Monthly subscription is expensive and may not be suitable for all budgets

Benefits of Running Apps

While you certainly don’t need an app to start running or improve your performance, it can be helpful. One recent study **found apps to be an accessible way for people to increase their physical activity**, while another study found **apps can be especially helpful for runners training for a specific event**, like a marathon.

Rachel Hoffman, a certified running coach, has used several different apps over the past 15 years, and likes to use them to check in with clients and measure their progress. “If you’re a beginner just looking to work out a couple of times a week and not striving for a particular goal, there are apps that can help facilitate a really easy fitness experience,” Hoffman says, noting many apps offer videos, guidance, and entry-level programs. “As you get more experienced, apps can be a good way to ensure you progress appropriately.”

Running apps can also be essential to training smart and avoiding injury. According to Hoffman, most running-related injuries are caused by a disproportionate increase in volume or intensity. “Apps can be a good way to rein some people in,” she says. “For the people inclined to do too much, apps are really effective for managing load.”

How to Choose the Best Running App For You

Do your research before choosing the best running app for you. Consider these factors:

Price

Running apps come in a range of price points. Some on our list are free, while others require a subscription. If you're interested in a running app that requires a subscription, we recommend checking to see whether it offers a free trial so you can decide whether you like it before committing.

Compatibility

If you use a running watch or other device, like a heart rate monitor, make sure you choose a compatible app. Many running apps pair directly with a smartwatch, but others require using your phone.

Accountability

Many running apps offer accountability features, such as push alerts and community feeds. Prioritize these features if you need extra motivation to get your run in.

Safety

Review an app's privacy terms and conditions before allowing it to track your location via GPS. “My biggest thing is always safety first,” Hoffman says. “You have to be confident it's not sharing your location with the general public.”

Training

If you want a running app with a training element, such as Joggo or adidas Running, review the plan to ensure it's right for your current fitness level. Hoffman recommends increasing your mileage by no more than 10 percent each week. Additionally, she says a long run shouldn't be more than one-third of your total weekly volume.

How We Tested And Chose the Best Running Apps

Our team tested dozens of running and fitness apps, using them for several runs and workouts. Our testers noted what they liked and disliked about each app, and how most people might benefit the most from it. They considered the following categories:

Design: Is the app easy to navigate? Can you find all the functions you need quickly? Does it provide an intuitive user experience overall?

Value: How do the features offered by this app stack up with its price, especially when compared to other products in its category?

Customization: Does the app offer personalized plans and tips where it can be beneficial?

Why You Should Trust Us

We personally tested each app on this list, putting each one to the test for runs on roads, tracks, trails, and treadmills. Testers used the apps for several workouts at minimum, and sometimes far longer (for example, one of our testers has used Strava consistently for more than ten years). Our testing experts included certified personal trainers, a certified nutrition coach, and several marathoners. We also spoke with Rachel Hoffman, a running coach certified through the International Sports Sciences Association (ISSA), about the benefits and factors to consider when choosing a running app.

Running App FAQs

Can I Use My iPhone to Track My Run?

With the Health app, your iPhone can track the steps and miles you walk or run each day. However, if you want an app specifically for run tracking, you'll want to download one on our list or another third-party app.

How Do You Start Training for a Marathon?

For a long-distance race like the marathon, it's essential to have a training plan. We recommend purchasing the premium version of adidas Running, our pick for the best app for running a marathon.

What Is the Best App to Find Running Routes?

Some running apps provide a list of running routes in your neighborhood or city, including several on our list. MapMyRun allows you to search for routes by city, and Strava also offers community-recommended routes with a paid subscription.

The Takeaway: Is a Running App Right for You?

Whether you want to start running, build endurance, or train for a race, an app can be a valuable tool in your running belt. No two runners are the same, so choose a running app based on your personal needs, fitness level, and goals. "I tell people that what you're going to use consistently is usually the best for you," Hoffman says. "Some people might benefit from chasing zombies, and some people might benefit more from people liking their posts. There's not really a one-size-fits-all, since running is so individualistic."

Use our top picks to guide your decision and download the best running app for you.

Our Experts

- **Taylor Rojek**, long-distance runner and certified personal trainer; former Runner's World editor
- **Rachel Pasche**, avid runner
- Amanda Capritto, Certified Personal Trainer, American Council on Exercise; Corrective Exercise Specialist, ISSA; Certified Nutrition Coach, National Academy of Sports Medicine (NASM); Certified Sports Nutrition Coach, NASM; **CrossFit** Level 1 Trainer, CrossFit Inc.
- Frieda Johnson, Certified Nutrition Coach, NASM
- **Ali Nolan**, author of Master the Marathon: The Ultimate Training Guide for Women; former Runner's World editor
- **Rachel Hoffman**, Certified Running Coach, ISSA; Certified Strength and Conditioning Coach, ISSA
- Kayla Godfrey, runner

Prices are accurate and items in stock at time of publishing.