A FREE 4-WEEK PLAN

Back on your feet, *one easy week at a time*

A return-to-run plan for runners coming back after a busy quarter: work, travel, family, life. Three short runs and one strength session a week, in minutes, not miles.

Hi, I'm Eduardo. I coach runners and engineering leaders in Atlanta, and I've had plenty of quarters where running was the first thing to go. The comeback is where most people get hurt: the legs remember the old paces, the tendons don't, and three hard runs later you're on the couch again.

These four weeks aren't about getting fit fast. They're about getting the habit back without a setback, so that by week five you're ready to train for something.

Get clear on the goal
For four weeks the goal is simple: show up three times a week and finish feeling like you could do more.

The smallest plan that works
About 80 to 100 minutes of running a week. Short enough to fit a busy week, enough to rebuild.

Protect recovery
Mostly easy running, a rest day between runs, and time on your feet up by about 10% a week, no more.

How hard is "easy"?

Easy (RPE 3–4)	You can talk in full sentences. If you can't, slow down or walk. At least 80% of every week is here.
Steady (RPE 5–6)	Comfortable but focused; you can speak in short sentences. Only a few minutes, in week 4.
Strides	20 seconds of quick, relaxed running, about 85% effort, never a sprint. Walk back to recover fully.

RPE is rate of perceived effort on a 1–10 scale. Ignore pace for now; your watch will catch up.

Before you start

- **Start at week 1** if you've run less than once a week for six weeks or more. If you've kept running twice a week, you can run the same minutes without the walk breaks.
- **The days are suggestions.** Move them to fit your week; just keep a rest or strength day between runs.
- **Every run starts with 5 minutes of brisk walking.** It's included in the times below.

WEEK 1 Rebuild the *habit*

About 80 minutes on your feet

Run/walk, all easy. Finish every session feeling you could have done more.

DAY	SESSION	EFFORT
Mon	Rest, or a 20–30 min walk	—
Tue	**25 min run/walk:** 5 min walk, then 5 × (3 min run, 1 min walk)	Easy, RPE 3–4
Wed	**Strength,** 20–25 min (page 3), 2 rounds	Controlled
Thu	**25 min run/walk:** same as Tuesday	Easy, RPE 3–4
Fri	Rest	—
Sat	**30 min run/walk:** 5 min walk, then 5 × (4 min run, 1 min walk)	Easy, RPE 3–4
Sun	Rest, or an easy walk or bike ride	Very easy

WEEK 2 Longer *running blocks*

About 90 minutes on your feet

Same days, fewer walk breaks. If something ached in week 1 and hasn't settled, repeat week 1 instead.

DAY	SESSION	EFFORT
Mon	Rest, or a 20–30 min walk	—
Tue	**30 min run/walk:** 5 min walk, then 5 × (4 min run, 1 min walk)	Easy, RPE 3–4
Wed	**Strength,** 20–25 min, 2–3 rounds	Controlled
Thu	**25 min run/walk:** 5 min walk, then 4 × (4 min run, 1 min walk)	Easy, RPE 3–4
Fri	Rest	—
Sat	**35 min run/walk:** 5 min walk, then 5 × (5 min run, 1 min walk)	Easy, RPE 3–4
Sun	Rest, or an easy walk or bike ride	Very easy

The niggle rule

A small ache that fades in the first ten minutes and isn't worse the next morning is usually fine: carry on, but **hold**, and repeat the week rather than moving up. If it's still there the next day, take two or three days off running, then restart at the last week that felt good.

WEEK 3 Continuous *easy running*

About 100 minutes on your feet

Run the whole time if it stays easy. Walk breaks are still allowed whenever you can't talk.

DAY	SESSION	EFFORT
Mon	Rest, or a 20–30 min walk	—
Tue	**30 min:** 5 min walk, 25 min easy running	Easy, RPE 3–4
Wed	**Strength,** 20–25 min, 3 rounds	Controlled
Thu	**30 min:** 5 min walk, 20 min easy, then 4 × 20 s strides with a full walk back	Easy; strides quick and relaxed
Fri	Rest	—
Sat	**40 min:** 5 min walk, 35 min easy running	Easy, RPE 3–4
Sun	Rest, or an easy walk or bike ride	Very easy

WEEK 4 Hold and *consolidate*

About 90 minutes on your feet

A lighter week on purpose. This is where the last three weeks turn into fitness.

DAY	SESSION	EFFORT
Mon	Rest, or a 20–30 min walk	—
Tue	**25 min:** 5 min walk, 20 min easy running	Easy, RPE 3–4
Wed	**Strength,** 20–25 min, 2 rounds	Controlled
Thu	**30 min:** 5 min walk, 20 min easy, 4 × 20 s strides	Easy; strides quick and relaxed
Fri	Rest	—
Sat	**35 min check-in run:** 5 min walk, 25 min easy, last 5 min steady	Easy, then RPE 5–6
Sun	Rest, or an easy walk or bike ride	Very easy

The strength session (20–25 minutes, body weight)

- Split squat, 8 per leg
- Glute bridge, 12
- Calf raises, 15 with straight knees, 15 with bent knees
- Step-ups onto a stair or bench, 8 per leg
- Side plank, 20–30 s per side
- Dead bug, 8 per side

Rest a minute between rounds. Slow and controlled beats heavy. If it's too easy by week 3, hold a backpack with a few books in it.

WHEN TO STOP

Stop the run *and walk home* if

- a pain makes you change how you run, even a little;
- a pain is sharp, sits on one spot, or gets worse as you go;
- you feel dizzy, faint, unusually short of breath, or have chest pain.

Pain that lasts more than a few days, or any of the last three, is a reason to see a doctor or physical therapist before you run again.

WHEN LIFE GETS IN THE WAY

If you *miss days*

- **Missed one run:** let it go. Don't double up the next day.
- **Missed two runs in a week:** repeat that week.
- **Missed a whole week, or were ill:** go back one week and build from there.
- **Short on time:** cut a run to 20 minutes rather than skip it. Short and easy still counts.

WEEK 5 AND BEYOND

After *week 4*

- **If week 4 felt easy,** add a fourth easy run of 20–30 minutes, or add 5 minutes to Saturday each week. Raise one thing at a time.
- **Keep the strength session** once a week, all year. It's the cheapest injury insurance there is.
- **Wait two more consistent weeks** before adding a harder workout, like a tempo run or hills.
- **Pick a goal.** A race 10 to 16 weeks out gives the next block a shape: a 5K or 10K if you're rebuilding, a half if you were there before.

Want the next 12 weeks *built around your week?*

Book a free 20-minute consult. Tell me about your goal and your calendar, and we'll work out where a plan should start, with someone who notices when Tuesday's run felt wrong.

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This plan is general guidance, not medical advice. If you're returning from an injury or illness, check with your doctor before you start.