

## Marathon Tapering – Phil Robertson

As you approach the final weeks before the TCS London Marathon 2024, it's essential to enter the tapering phase with a strategy that balances reducing your training load while maintaining your fitness. Research has consistently shown that a gradual reduction in mileage, ideally starting 2-3 weeks before the event, can significantly enhance performance. During this period, aim to decrease your weekly running distance by about 20-30%, focusing on quality over quantity. However, maintaining the intensity of your workouts is crucial; this means keeping up with the pace you're accustomed to but decreasing the duration. This method is proven to keep your muscles engaged and primed for race day without leading to fatigue.

Rest and recovery are paramount in these weeks. Prioritise getting ample sleep, as numerous studies have linked adequate rest with improved athletic performance and quicker recovery. During tapering, your body repairs and strengthens, and sleep is a vital component of this process. If possible, incorporate relaxation techniques such as meditation or yoga, which can aid in mental and physical recovery.

Nutrition and hydration play a critical role during this phase. Carbohydrate loading is not just a pre-race strategy; it's a tapering tactic. By gradually increasing your carb intake, you can maximise your muscle glycogen stores, which are crucial for endurance. Hydration is equally important, but balance is key. Over hydration can lead to hyponatremia, a condition caused by low sodium levels in the blood. A well-rounded diet, rich in fruits, vegetables, and lean proteins, will support your body's needs during this lower mileage period. For more information on nutrition visit:

[brainresearchuk.org.uk/nutrition-guide](https://brainresearchuk.org.uk/nutrition-guide)

or scan this code:



Mentally preparing for the marathon is as important as physical preparation. Visualisation techniques, where you mentally rehearse the race, can significantly improve your confidence and performance. Setting realistic goals and planning your race strategy, including pacing and how to handle potential challenges on the course, will help alleviate anxiety and build mental resilience.

It's also important to avoid the temptation to try new workouts or exercises during this phase. Stick to the training and routines that have brought you this far; introducing new activities can increase the risk of injury. Similarly, pay attention to your health; minor illnesses or injuries should be addressed promptly. Maintaining good hygiene and avoiding exposure to illness is particularly important as your race day approaches.

Your gear, especially your running shoes and clothing, should be familiar and comfortable. Race day isn't the time to experiment with new equipment. Ensure everything you plan to use has been tested and approved during your training runs. This includes shoes that are broken in but not worn out, and clothing that you know won't cause discomfort.

The logistics of race day should be meticulously planned. Familiarise yourself with the route, the location of water stations, and where you can find medical aid if needed. Knowing the start time, transportation options, and what you'll eat beforehand can significantly reduce stress on the day.

Finally, maintaining a positive outlook and staying relaxed is integral to your tapering strategy. Engage in light, enjoyable activities that distract you from pre-race jitters. Remember, running the TCS London Marathon, especially for this incredible charity, is a significant achievement. Reflect on your training journey and the effort you've put in. Embrace the tapering period as a time to prepare, both physically and mentally, for a rewarding and memorable race day.

— *Phil Robertson*  
*Fitness Aspirations*