


Boston Marathon Survival Guide

It is finally here! You have put in months of training, and it is time to celebrate. Training is the real grind- the marathon is the **PARTY!** But you need to be prepared to have the best experience.

 Boston is unique because it **starts late** (10:00 AM – 11:30 AM). You cannot fuel like a normal 7:00 AM race. If you don't adjust, you **will** be hungry before the starting gun even fires.

The Fueling Strategy

Most runners will be awake by 5:00 AM to catch the buses, meaning you have 5+ hours of "waiting time."

The Goal: Aim for **2–4 grams of carbs per kilogram** of body weight.

- **The Math:** Your weight (lbs.) ÷ 2.2 = Your weight in kg.
- *Example:* A 125 lb. runner is **56kg**. Target = **112g to 224g** of carbs before the start. For an early start, 2 grams might be enough, but I would aim for 4 grams for a race like Boston

How to eat it:

- **The 5:00-6:00 AM Breakfast:** Eat half your total carb goal as soon as you wake up.
- **Eat like a toddler:** Eat small, "boring" snacks all morning. Don't get stuffed; just stay topped off.
- **The "Picnic":** Pack a bag of snacks for the bus and the Athlete's Village. Stop one hour before the gun goes off.
- **Hydration:** Drink 18 oz with breakfast, then sip to thirst. Stop heavy drinking one hour before the start to avoid bathroom emergencies.

Quick Carb Reference

CARB CHEAT SHEET (Common Snacks)

Item	Carbs (g)	Item	Carbs (g)
Vafels	50g	Bobo's PBJ Bar	36g
Plain Bagel	45g	Belvita (4 pack)	36g
Clif PB Bar	40g	Nature's Bakery Fig Bars	36g
Maurten Bar	40g	Banana	30g
TJ's Pop Tart (1-2)	36-72g	Cereal Bar (TJ's)	28g
Toast w/ Jam or PB (2)	30-40g	Oatmeal	27g
100cal Pretzel Bag	25g	Smash Bars Bites	25g
Honey Stinger	20g	6oz Juice (Apple/Beet)	20g
Clif Mini PB Bar	17g		

Logistics: Bus & Village

1. **Dress in Layers:** Bring "throw-away" clothes you don't mind losing.
 2. **The Village:** You'll wait in a big field. Listen for your wave call, then head to the exit **early**.
 3. **The Walk:** It's a 0.7-mile walk from the Village to the Start. Use this time for dynamic warm-ups (skips, high knees).
 4. **Pro Tip:** There are port-a-potties near the CVS on the way to the start—usually a better bet than the Village lines!
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BOSTON MARATHON: THE COURSE STRATEGY

The Boston Marathon is a "net downhill" course, but it is notoriously difficult to pace. If you race it like a flat course, the Newton Hills will break you. To conquer Boston, you must run by the Rate of Perceived Exertion (**RPE**), not by your watch.

1. THE MENTAL GAME

- **Ditch the Watch:** Looking at your watch every 30 seconds is a mental energy drain. We typically only look at our watch when we feel bad or anxious. Don't do it.
- **Mile Splits Only:** Set your watch to beep at the mile marker. Check your split, adjust your effort if needed, and then get your head back "in the race."
- **Intuitive Running:** Trust the work you've done. Respect the course but be confident in your training.
- **Mantras:** Have your mental cues ready and practice them in training so they become automatic. Identify your "gremlins" now and prepare exactly what you'll say to them when the race gets gritty.

2. THE FIRST HALF: RESIST THE TEMPTATION

The first 13.1 miles have a lot of downhill. You will naturally go faster here with less effort. **This is not "banking time."** if you come by it honestly.

Don't "Bank" Time: If you push to go even faster than your natural downhill pace, you will shred your quads. You need those muscles for the hills later.

- **The "Honest" Split:** Your first half may be slightly faster than your second, but it should feel "easy." If you are huffing and puffing before Mile 10, you are overcooking it.
- **Trust Your Effort:** Aim for a **4/10 effort level** in the early miles. If you're at 7/10 before the hills start, back off immediately.

🏁 Mile 16: The "Real" Halfway Point

- Forget 13.1, in Boston. **Consider Mile 16 to be your mental halfway point.** Think of everything prior as your "commute"—the true battle begins once you hit the first of the Newton hills and the race starts at mile 21!
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3. HOW TO RUN DOWNHILLS (WITHOUT BRAKING)

Downhill running is technically harder than uphill running. Most runners "brake" by leaning back and landing on their heels. This sends a massive shock through the legs.

- **Lean In:** Stay perpendicular to the road. Lean from the ankles into the downhill so gravity pulls you.
 - **Midfoot Strike:** Imagine "pulling the road back" with your feet. Avoid landing heavily on your heels.
 - **Core Engagement:** Keep your core tight to stabilize your hips.
 - **Arms for Balance:** Let your arms move naturally to balance your stride; they may flail slightly more than usual, and that's okay.
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4. THE NEWTON HILLS: SURVIVE, DON'T ATTACK

The hills (Miles 16–21) are where the race is won or lost. The goal is to reach the top of Heartbreak Hill feeling **relieved**, not **gassed**.

- **Same Effort, Slower Pace:** Accept that your pace will drop on the climbs. Keep your effort level (RPE) exactly the same as it was on the flats.
 - **"Spin" Your Legs:** Think like a cyclist in a low gear. Increase your cadence (turnover) and take shorter, quicker steps. Imagine the "Roadrunner" cartoon—quick, powerful feet.
 - **The "Rope" Trick:** Focus on the top of the hill. Imagine throwing a rope around a tree or sign at the crest and pulling yourself up. This keeps your posture upright and your arms pumping.
 - **The "puppet" cue:** Imagine a string attached to the top of your head pulling you toward the sky. This keeps you from "slumping" into the hill.
 - **The Surge:** After you crest a hill, don't just coast. Give a small 5-second surge to get your momentum back.
 - **Don't Let Your Ego Win:** You will get passed on the uphills by people who are over-exerting themselves. **Let them go.** You will likely pass them on the downhills while they are struggling with cramped quads.
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5. THE GRAND FINALE (MILES 21–26.2)

Once you spot the **Heartbreak Hill Gorilla**, the hard climbing is over! There is no better feeling in the world than sailing down toward the Boston College crowds knowing you tackled the hills the right way.

- **The BC Party:** The students will be loud, happy, and possibly offering you a beer. Enjoy the high-fives and the wall of sound—it's the ultimate energy boost. Just watch your footing—don't let the trolley tracks at the bottom trip you up!

Welcome to Brookline

By now, the race will feel like a tough tempo workout. But remember **you know how to work on tired legs.**

* **The Downhill Myth:** While the course is technically downhill from here, your legs might not believe it. Don't be discouraged if it still feels like work. Keep your composure and dig deep.

- **The CITGO Sign:** After the BC crowds, it gets a bit quieter along the trolley tracks. Keep your eyes peeled for the iconic **CITGO sign**—it's your North Star. Once you see it, you're almost home. The Coolidge Corner crowds will energize you.

Welcome to Boston: The Final Push

- **The "Pesky" Overpass:** Between miles 25 and 26, there is one last "stealth" hill over the Mass Pike. It's tough, but survive it and get ready to push.
- **Fenway & Boston Strong:** You'll pass Fenway Park on your right and the famous "**Boston Strong**" graffiti under the Comm Ave bridge. Let the chills give you one last burst of adrenaline to get up the underpass hill.
- **Right on Hereford, Left on Boylston:** The turn onto Hereford is a bit of an uphill "surprise," but stay focused on the flags at the Expo Center ahead.
- **The Finish:** Turning onto Boylston is the most electric 600-meter sprint in the world. Soak in the crowds, remember the history of this finish line, and finish like the rock star you are.

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