

# The London Marathon

## What Is the London Marathon?

The London Marathon is a long-distance running race. Runners from around the world come to take part in the route around London which is 26 miles and 385 yards long. Runners are cheered on by crowds of spectators and are treated to many famous sites in London, such as Tower Bridge.



## When Was the First London Marathon?

The first London Marathon took place on 29th March, 1981. It was the idea of John Disley and Chris Brasher, who had recently taken part in the New York Marathon. They loved the cheering crowds and carnival atmosphere and wanted to see if a London Marathon could be even better. After lots of planning, the first London Marathon had 20,000 people wanting to run. 7,747 runners were allowed to take part with thousands of spectators lining the course. It was a hit!

## Who Can Take Part in the London Marathon?

- Elite runners (the best, fastest runners in the world)
- Club and fun runners
- Wheelchair and Paralympic runners

Because the London Marathon is a challenge, many people choose to run for a charity and raise money for a good cause. Sometimes, they run the course in fancy dress.

## Where Did the Idea of a Marathon Come From?

In Greek history, there is a legend that tells of a Greek soldier who was sent from the battlefield of Marathon to Athens with the news that Greece had won the battle. It is said that the soldier ran the entire distance without stopping, bursting into the assembly with his good news before collapsing and dying. The organisers of the modern Olympics chose this legend to make the running race popular.



## Did You Know?

Major Tim Peake ran the Digital Virgin Money London Marathon on board the International Space Station. He finished in a time of 3:35.21.

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# Questions

1. What is the London Marathon?

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2. Why do you think it is important for the crowds of spectators to cheer?

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3. When was the first London Marathon?

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4. Why did John Disley and Chris Brasher have the idea for the London Marathon.  
Give two reasons.

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5. How many people entered the first London Marathon?

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6. Why do some runners choose to raise money for charity?

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7. Where did the name 'marathon' come from?

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8. Why was it unusual that Major Tim Peake ran the London Marathon?

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# Answers

1. What is the London Marathon?

**The London Marathon is a long-distance running race.**

2. Why do you think it is important for the crowds of spectators to cheer?

**Answers may vary but should include ideas about supporting the runners and creating an exciting atmosphere.**

3. When was the first London Marathon?

**The first London Marathon was on 29th March, 1981.**

4. Why did John Disley and Chris Brasher have the idea for the London Marathon?

Give two reasons.

**Answers should include two ideas from the text. For example, John and Chris had recently taken part in the New York Marathon; there were cheering crowds and a carnival atmosphere; they wondered if London could be better.**

5. How many people entered the first London Marathon?

**20,000 people entered the first London Marathon.**

6. Why do some runners choose to raise money for charity?

**Some runners choose to raise money because the marathon is such a big challenge.**

7. Where did the name 'marathon' come from?

**The name 'marathon' comes from a Greek legend where a soldier ran from Marathon to Athens to share news of a battle victory.**

8. Why was it unusual that Major Tim Peake ran the London Marathon?

**It was unusual for Major Tim Peake to run the London Marathon because he was in space at the time.**



# The London Marathon

## What Is a 'Marathon'?

The marathon race comes from a Greek legend that tells of a soldier who was sent from the battlefield of Marathon to Athens with news that Greece had beaten the Persian army. It is said that the soldier ran the entire distance without stopping, bursting into the assembly with his good news before collapsing and dying.

## What Is the London Marathon?

The London Marathon is a long-distance running race. Runners from around the world come to take part in the race, which is well known for the historic route around London and the carnival atmosphere of the thousands of spectators. The London Marathon course is 26 miles and 385 yards long and takes runners past many famous sites in London, for example, the Cutty Sark.



## When Was the First London Marathon?

The first London Marathon took place on 29th March, 1981. It was the idea of John Disley and Chris Brasher, who had recently taken part in the New York Marathon. They were keen to create a London Marathon that would show off the famous sites in the city and prove that Britain was best when it came to organising major events. The first London Marathon was a huge hit! 20,000 people entered and 7,747 runners took to the start line with thousands more filling the streets of London to cheer them on.

## Who Can Take Part in the London Marathon?

- Elite runners (the best, fastest runners in the world)
- Club and fun runners
- Wheelchair and Paralympic runners

Many people choose to run for a charity and raise money for a good cause. More than three quarters of the competitors now run for a charity. Sometimes, they run the course in fancy dress.

## The London Marathon: Facts and Figures

- Major Tim Peake ran the London Marathon on board the International Space Station!
- The fastest man to run the London Marathon was Eliud Kipchoge from Kenya in a time of 2:03.05.
- The fastest woman was Paula Radcliffe of Great Britain in a time of 2:15.25.
- The fastest marathon runner dressed as a plant was Lee Goodwin with a time of 3:02.43.
- The slowest London marathon was run by Lloyd Scott, who wore a deep-sea diving suit and finished the marathon in five days, eight hours, twenty-nine minutes and forty-six seconds! (The organisers have since set a 24-hour time limit in which to complete the London Marathon.)



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# Questions

1. In your own words, explain where the term 'marathon' comes from.  

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2. What is the London Marathon?  

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3. Why might people be keen to take part in the London Marathon?  

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4. When was the first London Marathon?  

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5. Which event inspired John Disley and Chris Brasher to create the London Marathon?  

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6. Why did they want to create a London Marathon?  

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7. How do you know the London Marathon was a hit?  

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8. What is the largest group of runners at the London Marathon?  

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9. Why do you think people choose to raise money for a good cause?  

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10. Why was it unusual for Major Tim Peake to run the London Marathon?  

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# Answers

1. In your own words, explain where the term 'marathon' comes from.  
**Answers should include reference to the Greek legend of a soldier running from Marathon to Athens with news of a great victory.**
2. What is the London Marathon?  
**The London Marathon is a long-distance running race.**
3. Why might people be keen to take part in the London Marathon?  
**People are keen to take part in the London Marathon because of its historic route, carnival atmosphere and famous sites.**
4. When was the first London Marathon?  
**The first London Marathon was held on 29th March, 1981.**
5. Which event inspired John Disley and Chris Brasher to create the London Marathon?  
**The event that had inspired John and Chris was the New York Marathon.**
6. Why did they want to create a London Marathon?  
**They wanted to create a London Marathon in order to show off the sites of the city and to prove that Britain was the best when it came to organising major events.**
7. How do you know the London Marathon was a hit?  
**We know that the marathon was a hit because 20,000 people entered the race and 7,747 actually took part, while thousands more lined the streets.**
8. What is the largest group of runners at the London Marathon?  
**The largest group of runners in the London Marathon are charity runners who make up more than three quarters of the field.**
9. Why do you think people choose to raise money for a good cause?  
**Answers may vary but could include reference to the challenge of the race, the community spirit or the fun.**
10. Why was it unusual for Major Tim Peake to run the London Marathon?  
**It was unusual for Major Tim Peake to run the London Marathon because he was in space at the time!**



# The London Marathon

The London Marathon is a long-distance running race that welcomes runners of all abilities from all over the world. It began in 1981 and since then, over one million runners have crossed the finish line.

## The London Marathon: A Brief History

In 1979, two friends took part in the New York Marathon and found the whole experience exhilarating. Back home in England, John Disley and Chris Brasher began to wonder if London could stage such an event. Were there world-famous sites? Would spectators support and cheer runners on? Could Britain be the best in organising major events?



They decided the answer to these questions was 'yes!' and on 29th March, 1981, the first ever London Marathon took place. It was an immediate hit. 20,000 people wanted to take part and 7,747 runners were accepted. Today, wheelchair and Paralympic athletes, elite and club runners, as well as thousands of charity fun runners take part.

## The London Marathon: The Course

The Marathon course is 26 miles and 385 yards long. Runners weave through the historic sites of London with thousands of spectators lining the route, cheering and creating a carnival atmosphere. The marathon is a race steeped in history. Greek legend tells of a soldier who was sent from the battlefield of Marathon to Athens with news that Greece had beaten the Persian army. It is said that the soldier ran the entire distance without stopping, bursting into the assembly with his good news before collapsing and dying. In 1896, the organisers of the modern Olympics chose this legend to make the running race popular.

### Who Can Take Part in the London Marathon?

- Elite runners (the best, fastest runners in the world)
- Club and fun runners
- Wheelchair and Paralympic runners

More than three quarters of runners choose to run for a charity and raise money for a good cause. Sometimes, they run the course in fancy dress. Since 1981, the event has raised over £450 million for charity.

### The London Marathon: Facts and Figures

- Major Tim Peake ran the Digital Virgin Money London Marathon on board the International Space Station. He finished in a time of 3:35.21.
- The fastest man to run the London Marathon was Eliud Kipchoge from Kenya in a time of 2:03.05.
- The fastest woman was Paula Radcliffe of Great Britain in a time of 2:15.25.
- The fastest marathon runner dressed as a plant was Lee Goodwin with a time of 3:02.43.
- The slowest London marathon was run by Lloyd Scott, who wore a deep-sea diving suit and finished the marathon in five days, eight hours, twenty-nine minutes and forty-six seconds! (The organisers have since set a 24-hour time limit in which to complete the London Marathon.)
- One of the most impressive challenges was completed by John Farnworth. He kicked a football with every step he took, keeping the ball off the ground for the entire course. Although he took twelve hours and fifteen minutes, the ball never touched the ground!
- The London Marathon course takes in many historical sites. At the six to seven-mile mark, runners pass the Cutty Sark in Greenwich. Built in 1869, she was the fastest tea clipper of her time.



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# Questions

1. What is the London Marathon?  

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2. Who created the London Marathon?  

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3. When was the first London Marathon?  

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4. In the text, which word means 'making one feel happy, animated or elated'?  

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5. What did John Disley and Chris Brasher consider before planning the London Marathon?  

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6. Which fact shows you that the first London Marathon was success?  

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7. In your own words, explain where the term 'marathon' comes from.  

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8. Which is the largest group of runners in the London Marathon?  

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9. Why do you think people choose to raise money for good causes?  

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10. Why is the achievement of John Farnworth quite so amazing?  

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# Answers

1. What is the London Marathon?  
**The London Marathon is a long-distance running race, welcoming runners of all abilities from all over the world.**
2. Who created the London Marathon?  
**John Disley and Chris Brasher created the London Marathon.**
3. When was the first London Marathon?  
**The first London Marathon took place on 29th March, 1981.**
4. In the text, which word means 'making one feel happy, animated or elated'?  
**'Exhilarating' means making one feel happy, animated and elated.**
5. What did John Disley and Chris Brasher consider before planning the London Marathon?  
**Before planning the London Marathon, John and Chris asked themselves: Did London have world-famous sites? Would spectators support the runners? Could Britain be the best when organising major events?**
6. Which fact shows you that the first London Marathon was success?  
**The fact that 20,000 people wanted to take part shows that the marathon was a success.**
7. In your own words, explain where the term 'marathon' comes from.  
**Answers should include reference to the Greek legend of a soldier running from Marathon to Athens with news of a great victory.**
8. Which is the largest group of runners in the London Marathon?  
**The largest group of runners are those running for charity - about three quarters of all runners.**
9. Why do you think people choose to raise money for good causes?  
**Answers may vary but could include reference to the challenge of the race, the community spirit or the fun.**
10. Why is the achievement of John Farnworth quite so amazing?  
**John's achievement is amazing because he managed to kick a ball along the entire route without it touching the ground even once.**