

'Horrendous blisters': Retired UK banker, 65, attempts to run 200 marathons in 200 days

Level 1: Elementary

1 Warmer

a. Discuss the following questions in pairs.

- Do you know anyone who has done a marathon?
- Do you know how long a marathon is? How long do people prepare for a marathon?
- Why do you think people like running marathons?

2 Key words

a. Find the words from the wordpool in the article. Then use the words to complete the definitions.

attempt
horrendous
blister

gout
challenge
extreme

coast
routes
on average

keep going
data
impact

raising money
charity

1. A(n) _____ is a painful bubble on your skin that is filled with liquid.
2. Something _____ is very bad or unpleasant.
3. _____ is information, usually in numbers, that is collected and studied.
4. To _____ means to keep moving and not give up, even when you are tired.
5. _____ means collecting donations for a good cause.
6. _____ is a sickness where a person has painful swelling in their joints, often in the legs or feet.
7. A(n) _____ is when you try to make or do something.
8. A(n) _____ is a difficult task or problem that tests your skill or ability.
9. The _____ is the land next to the sea.
10. _____ means the usual amount when you add each thing together and divide by the number of things.

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11. _____ are the ways or paths from one place to another.
12. A(n) _____ is a result or change that is made by something.
13. _____ means very great, very serious or far from normal.
14. A(n) _____ is an organisation that helps people in need without making a profit.

b. Complete the sentences with words from the previous activity in the correct form.

1. The new law had a big _____ on how companies use the internet.
2. It was her first _____ at baking a cake, and she was surprised by how delicious it was.
3. The weather during our holiday was _____ – it rained every single day.
4. Even though he was very tired, he decided to _____ until he got to the finish line.
5. Climbing the mountain was a real _____ for the whole group.
6. We decided to stay in a hotel on the _____ with a view of the sea.
7. In this town, people eat fish twice a week _____.
8. The 5k run was organised to collect money for a children's _____.
9. He could not walk properly because his big toe was swollen from _____.
10. She got a painful _____ on her foot after walking in new shoes all day.
11. He loves doing _____ sports like skydiving and mountain climbing.
12. The teacher showed us the _____ from the study about how many hours students are in school.
13. The children want to _____ to buy books for their school library.
14. We took a different _____ through the forest to see the waterfall.

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Steven Morris

24 July, 2025

- 1 "The first two weeks were difficult – horrendous blisters and a visit to the hospital because of gout. I realised that running 200 marathons in 200 days would not be easy."
- 2 But Steve James, a 65-year-old retired banker from Devon, has successfully got to the 100th day of his challenge on Thursday.
- 3 "In those first two weeks, I was thinking: 'What have I done?'" James said. "I've been running for 50 years and never get blisters! The gout was also a problem, but the medicines worked."
- 4 He started in Devon, in April and went to Kent in south-east England. Now he is running south from the Scottish west coast.
- 5 He has a plan, but it changes. "In Devon, Cornwall and Wales, there is a good coast path. In Scotland, there's almost no coast paths, so you're making your own routes."
- 6 James wants to do, on average, a marathon every day. Some days it might be a bit less; others a bit more.
- 7 "I don't try for the best marathon times. There's a lot of walking, a bit of jogging, a bit of running. And I'm stopping a couple of times each day just to rest up, drink and eat, and then keep going again."
- 8 James said routine is important. "It's all about getting up at the same time, leaving at the same time; it's a bit like going to work. I love the physical challenge. I'm not especially talented at things. But I can keep going."
- 9 He is not following any special diet. When the Guardian spoke to him, James had eaten cereal, a bacon baguette, cake and was planning fish and chips and beer for dinner.
- 10 The Exeter University researchers are studying the effect of the running on James. They checked him before his challenge, and he sends them data daily. He has lost about 10kg but his health is fine.
- 11 Freyja Haigh from the University said that Steve is helping them to understand the impact of extreme sports on an older person.
- 12 James is also raising money for charity. He is listening to music and learning Welsh to order a beer in the language when he gets to Wales.
- 13 He thinks the most difficult part will be the north coasts of Devon and Cornwall.

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3 Comprehension check

a. Are these sentences True (T) or False (F) according to the article?

- | | |
|--|-------|
| 1. Steve had to stop his challenge and go to hospital. | T / F |
| 2. Steve always gets blisters when he runs. | T / F |
| 3. During his challenge, he sometimes changes plans on where he will run next. | T / F |
| 4. He isn't running the whole marathon distance every day. | T / F |
| 5. The scientists from the University of Exeter prepared a special diet for Steve. | T / F |
| 6. Steve lost weight, but his health is OK. | T / F |
| 7. Steve is learning a new language while he is running. | T / F |

4 Key language

a. Read the sentences from the article. What tense are they in? Why is this tense used?

- Now, he is running south from the Scottish west coast.
- He is not following any special diet.
- Steve is helping them to understand the impact of endurance sports on an older person.
- James is also raising money for charity.
- He is listening to music and learning Welsh.

b. Complete with the verbs in the correct tense: Present Simple or Present Continuous.

1. Steve James _____ (be) retired.
2. Steve _____ (not / eat) any special food during his challenge.
3. The scientists _____ (check) Steve's health regularly.
4. During his challenge, Steve _____ (sleep) in a different place every night.

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5. Steve _____ (not / work) because he's retired.
6. Steve _____ (have) a lot of running experience.

5 Discussion

a. Discuss these questions.

- Do you think it's a good idea to run a marathon a day for 200 days? Why / Why not?
- Are you surprised Steve's health is OK? Do you think what he is doing is bad for his health?
- Why do you think Steve is doing this challenge?

6 In your own words

a. In small groups, choose one of the running events below and prepare a small presentation about it. You should say:

- what the event is
- when and where it takes place
- how long it is
- what you have to do to participate. Do you have to pay? Do you need special equipment or clothes?
- how people prepare for this event
- why people like participating

Events:

- Boston Marathon
- Tokyo Marathon
- Ultramarathon Des Sables
- HURT 100 Hawaii
- Barkley Marathons

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- Badwater 135 Ultramarathon
- Spartathlon

b. Then give your presentation to the class.