

FLEYDO ENGLISH SCHOOL

Reading Challenge

The Man Who Ran a Marathon Every Day

*Eddie Izzard was not a runner. Eddie was a comedian.
Then Eddie ran 27 marathons in 27 days.*

Level: A1

Skill: Reading

Duration: ~15 min

Age: Teens (11-16)

Topic: Sports & People

Person: Eddie Izzard

The Article

A **marathon** is 42 kilometres. That is very, very far. Most people cannot run 42 kilometres. Most people cannot run 10 kilometres. Running a marathon is one of the hardest things a human body can do. Now imagine running a marathon every day. For 27 days. Without stopping. That is what Eddie Izzard did in 2009. And the **incredible** part? He was not a runner. He was a **comedian**.

Who Is Eddie Izzard?

Eddie Izzard is a British **comedian** and actor. You may know Eddie from films or TV shows. Eddie is funny. Very funny. Eddie tells jokes on stage in English and French. Eddie has been in Hollywood films. Eddie is famous all around the world.

But Eddie is not a sports person. Before 2009, Eddie did not run. Not at all. Eddie did not train. Eddie did not go to the gym. Eddie smoked. Eddie ate whatever Eddie wanted. Eddie was 47 years old. Not young. Not fit. Not a runner. So why did Eddie decide to run 27 marathons?

The Reason

The answer is simple: to help people. Eddie wanted to raise money for a **charity** called Sport Relief. Sport Relief gives money to people who need help — children in poor countries, families without food, people who are sick. Eddie thought: what can I do that is so crazy, so difficult, so **incredible** that people will **donate** money?

The answer: run a marathon every day. For 27 days. Around the United Kingdom. Starting in London. Finishing in London. Total **distance**: 1,100 kilometres. Eddie had five weeks to prepare. Five weeks. Professional marathon runners train for months. Eddie had five weeks. And Eddie had never run a marathon before. Not even one.

The Training

Eddie started running. It was terrible. The first day, Eddie could not run for more than a few minutes. Eddie's legs hurt. Eddie's lungs burned. Eddie's body said: stop. But Eddie did not stop. Eddie's **trainers** hit the ground again and again. Day after day. Slowly, the body changed. After one week, Eddie could run for 30 minutes. After two weeks, one hour. After three weeks, Eddie ran a full practice marathon. It took over six hours. A professional runner does it in about two hours. But Eddie finished. That was enough.

Day 1: London

On 1 March 2009, Eddie started running from Trafalgar Square in London. Cameras were there. Journalists were there. People cheered. The first **marathon** took about ten hours. Ten hours of running. Most of it alone. On roads. In the rain. Eddie finished in the

dark. Eddie's feet were covered in **blisters**. Eddie's **knees** were swollen. Eddie was **exhausted**. Then Eddie went to sleep. And the next morning, Eddie got up and did it again.

The Pain

By day three, Eddie's body was breaking. The **blisters** on Eddie's feet were so bad that every step hurt. Eddie's **knees** were swollen and stiff. Eddie's toenails turned black. Some fell off. The **muscles** in Eddie's legs were tight and sore. A doctor checked Eddie every evening. The doctor said: your body is taking serious damage. Eddie said: I know. The doctor said: you should stop. Eddie said: no.

On day five, Eddie almost **collapsed**. The pain was enormous. Eddie was running on a road in the English countryside. Nobody was watching. No cameras. No crowds. Just Eddie, the road, and the pain. Eddie stopped. Stood still. Thought about quitting. Then Eddie thought about the children. The sick children. The hungry children. The children who had real problems — not sore feet, not tired legs, but real, life-or-death problems. Eddie started running again.

The Body vs The Mind

Something strange happened after day seven. The body stopped complaining. Not because the pain went away. The pain stayed. But the mind got stronger. Eddie found a rhythm. Wake up. Eat. Run. Eat. Sleep. Wake up. Run again. The body became a machine. A slow, damaged, tired machine. But a machine that did not stop.

Eddie ran through England. Past green fields and small villages. Eddie ran through Wales. Past mountains and sheep. Eddie ran through Scotland. Past lakes and castles. Eddie ran through Northern Ireland. Past farms and forests. The **route** went around the whole country. Every day, the same thing: 42 kilometres. Rain or sun. Pain or no pain. Every single day.

People came to watch. At first, just a few. Then more. Then hundreds. People stood by the road and clapped. Children ran beside Eddie for a few hundred metres. Old people waved from their gardens. Strangers brought water and sandwiches. Someone made a sign: "Eddie, you are a legend." Someone else made a sign: "If Eddie can do it, anyone can." The country started watching. The donations grew.

The Numbers

Here is what 27 marathons do to a body. Eddie lost 5 kilograms. Eddie's feet had more than 20 **blisters**. Eddie lost 5 toenails. Eddie's **knees** swelled to twice their normal size. Eddie's heart rate got lower — the heart got stronger from all the running. Eddie's body started eating its own **muscle** for energy because there was not enough food. The doctor said it was like running a car on an empty tank. The car should stop. But Eddie's

car did not stop.

Eddie ran for about 10 hours every day. That means Eddie spent 270 hours running. More than 11 full days of running. The total **distance** was 1,100 kilometres. That is further than London to Rome. On foot. In less than a month. In **trainers**.

Day 27: London

On 27 March 2009, Eddie ran the last marathon. Back in London. Back to Trafalgar Square. Thousands of people were waiting. The last few kilometres were the hardest. Eddie's body had nothing left. Every step was pain. But the crowd was cheering. People were crying. Strangers were hugging. And Eddie kept running.

Eddie crossed the finish line. The crowd exploded. Eddie stopped. Stood still for a moment. Then Eddie smiled. That big, famous smile. "I have done it," Eddie said. "27 marathons. 27 days. And I am still alive. Just about." The crowd cheered. The cameras flashed. And the money counter showed the total donations: over 1.1 million pounds for **charity**. More than a million pounds. Raised by one person. Running.

After the Run

Eddie did not stop after 2009. In 2016, Eddie ran 27 marathons again — this time in 27 days in South Africa, in memory of Nelson Mandela. In 2020, during the Covid lockdown, Eddie ran 31 marathons in 31 days on a treadmill inside a garage. At home. Alone. Watched by millions on TV. Eddie was 58 years old. Still not a professional runner. Still a comedian. Still running.

"People think you need to be an athlete," Eddie said after the 2009 run. "You do not. You need **determination**. The body is amazing. It can do much more than you think. The problem is not the body. The problem is the mind. The mind says: stop, this hurts, you cannot do this. And you have to say back: yes, it hurts. Yes, it is hard. But I am going to do it anyway."

Eddie Izzard is not the fastest runner. Eddie is not the strongest. Eddie is not the youngest. But Eddie might be the most **determined**. And that is the lesson. You do not need to be the best. You need to be the person who does not quit. The person who gets up the next morning, puts on their **trainers**, and says: one more day. One more marathon. One more step. That is all it takes. One more step.

Vocabulary Cards

Comprehension Quiz

Key Vocabulary

Word	Meaning
Marathon	A running race that is 42.195 kilometres long
Charity	An organisation that helps people who need it
Comedian	A person whose job is to make people laugh
Blister	A painful bubble on your skin, usually from rubbing
Exhausted	Extremely tired, with no energy left
Muscle	A part of your body that helps you move, like in your legs or arms
Distance	How far it is from one place to another
Collapse	To fall down suddenly because you are too weak or tired
Determination	A strong feeling that you will do something, even when it is hard
Route	The road or path you follow to get somewhere
Trainer	A type of sports shoe for running or exercise
Knee	The joint in the middle of your leg where it bends
Donate	To give money or things to help other people
Challenge	Something new and difficult that tests your ability
Incredible	Very hard to believe; amazing

Comprehension Quiz

1. How many marathons did Eddie Izzard run in 2009?

- A) 10 marathons in 10 days
- B) 27 marathons in 27 days — one every day for almost a month
- C) 5 marathons in one week
- D) 100 marathons in a year

2. Why did Eddie run the marathons?

- A) Because he wanted to become a professional runner
- B) To raise money for the charity Sport Relief, which helps people in need
- C) Because his doctor told him to exercise
- D) To win a prize

3. What was Eddie Izzard's real job?

- A) A professional athlete
- B) A comedian and actor — he had no running experience before the challenge
- C) A marathon coach
- D) A sports teacher

4. What happened to Eddie's body during the challenge?

- A) Nothing — he felt fine every day
- B) He got blisters, swollen knees, damaged toenails, and lost weight, but he kept going
- C) He broke his leg on day three
- D) He got faster every day

5. What is the main message of Eddie Izzard's story?

- A) That marathons are easy if you practise
- B) That an ordinary person can do extraordinary things through determination — the body gives up before the mind does
- C) That only athletes should run marathons
- D) That running is dangerous and people should not try it

Answer Key

#	Ans	Question
1	B	How many marathons did Eddie Izzard run in 2009?
2	B	Why did Eddie run the marathons?
3	B	What was Eddie Izzard's real job?
4	B	What happened to Eddie's body during the challenge?
5	B	What is the main message of Eddie Izzard's story?

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