

# TRAINING FOR A TRIATHLON

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Triathlon has been given a new audience after the successful Sydney Olympic games enabled billions of world wide viewers see first hand the fitness levels and physical demands this sport can place on even the fittest of today's triathlete's.

If you either want to take part in your first triathlon, or simply improve upon your current performances, the following notes will hopefully help you.

Triathlons are a three disciplined event, combining swimming, cycling and running over three main distances.

DISTANCE	SWIM	BIKE	RUN
SPRINT	750 METERS	20 KM	5 KM
OLYMPIC	1,500 METERS	40 KM	10 KM
IRONMAN	3,800 METERS	180 KM	42 KM

By breaking up the triathlon into its three key sports (swimming / cycling / running), will enable you to train harder and wiser than if you were to concentrate on just one of the above. By training in multi sports you will develop both all round muscle toning and high levels of CV (cardio vascular - heart and lung capabilities).

This is achieved by breaking down training sessions to enable you to have a good workout, but not to be training over tired or sore muscles, as this will simple result in injury and poor performance.

With three different distances in triathlon, you will need to decide which event you wish to train for.

- **Sprint distance**, suitable for beginners wishing to experience their first triathlon.
- **Olympic distance**, the next stage up, the more common race distance, certainly among elite athletes.
- **Ironman distance**, for those that like to push their bodies and minds to the limit. (Brain Optional).

Once you have decided to take part in a triathlon, the first thing you will need to do, is enter a suitable race, this will help motivate you, and give yourself a goal to aim for. Magazines such as **Triathlete** and **220** will have a number of different

races for you to choose from, giving you what you will feel to be enough time to train for your big day.

## SOME BASIC TIPS WHEN PLANNING YOUR TRAINING SESSIONS

- **Specificity:** Ensure that all your training is specific to the event you are training for, don't run mile after mile for a sprint triathlon, ensure that each session has an aim, i.e. endurance run / speed track session.
- **Progression:** The body is a marvelous piece of engineering design, as you train it becomes stronger. However if you maintain the same training level, your body will maintain the same level of improvement. In simple terms, avoid allowing your body to become use to its workouts.
- **Overload:** This must be done carefully, to avoid causing stress on any of your body systems. Listen to your body, if it feels tired let it rest, remember fit bodies are not built in the gym, they are built whilst resting. (This is my excuse for sleeping every afternoon, and I'm sticking to it).
- **Reversibility:** Keep your training regular, if you stop for two weeks, then a lot of the previous work will be lost, make time for training, but avoid letting it take over your life, triathlete's have a high divorce level.
- **Tedium:** One of the reasons a lot of good triathlete's come from a different sporting background. Keep your training interesting and varied to keep motivation high. Train with new partners, do different runs i.e. track sessions, hill sprints, fartleg, off road, sand dunes, treadmill - try spin classes anything that will keep your mind and body working.

## THE SWIM

For complete beginners there are sprint distances races which are held in swimming pools with the swim normally being 400 meters, this would be a good start, especially if you have a poor swimming background.

If your swimming is your weakest discipline, then the more time you can spend in the pool, then the greater your confidence will become in achieving your goal. Swimming requires little equipment, a swimsuit, goggles, swim cap and a pool. The swimming pool is the most important item, as it is here that you can study how others swim and hopefully ask for advice from either coaches or strong swimmers after they have finished their workouts.

To improve your strength for the swim use the weight training program for swimmers once per week, combined with the following sessions ideally twice per week.

## BEGINNERS

WARM UP 150 M	EASY SWIM TO GET USE TO THE WATER
LEG KICK 4 X 25 M	USE A FLOAT IN FRONT FRONT CRAWL LEG KICK
DISTANCE 2 X 200	AIM TO WORK ON YOUR BREATHING @ STEADY PACE

DRILLS 6 X 25	CONCENTRATE ON HAND ENTRY AND LEG KICK
SPRINT 4 X 25	WORK TO INCREASE YOUR SPEED FRONT CRAWL ONLY
COOL DOWN 100 M	EASY SWIM FOCUS ON YOUR BREATHING

This session is a total of 1,000 meters, I have not placed any timings during the swims. As you become fitter and more comfortable aim to reduce your rest period between swims, and increase swimming speed.

### **INTERMEDIATES**

WARM UP 300M	50 M CRAWL 50 M LEG KICK REPEAT 3 TIMES
BREATHING 4 X 100	BREATH EVERY 5 STROKE THEN 4 / 3 / 2 FOR EACH 100
DISTANCE 2 X 300	MAINTAIN PACE THROUGHOUT 80% EFFORT
SPRINTS 4 X 50	90% EFFORT 15 SECONDS REST BETWEEN SPRINTS
LEG KICK 4 X 50	USE A FLOAT IN FRONT FRONT CRAWL LEG KICK
DRILLS 6 X 50	WORK ON ARM TECHNIQUE AND TUMBLE TURNS
COOL DOWN 200M	EASY SWIM PRACTICE BI-LATERAL BREATHING

This session is 2,200 meters, take adequate rest between each part of the workout, concentrating throughout on good technique. If you race in a pool spending time on tumble turns will be beneficial.

### **ADVANCED**

WARM UP 400M	100 WITH PADDLES 100 POOL BUOY REPEAT TWICE
4 X 200 M FAST	USE PADDLES + BUOY IF YOU HAVE THEM
8 X 50 M	SWIM WITH ONLY 1 ARM ( CHANGE ARM ON RETURN)
2 X 400 M	1500 M RACE PACE 30 SECONDS REST BETWEEN
8 X 50 M	BREATH 8 / 6 / 4 / 2 REPEAT TWICE 15 SEC REST PER 50
LEG KICK 6 X 50	USE A FLOAT IN FRONT FRONT CRAWL LEG KICK
6 X 100 SPRINTS	20 SECS REST BETWEEN SPRINTS 80 % EFFORT
COOL DOWN 400M	PRACTICE BREATHING AND BUTTERFLY KICK OFF WALL

This session is 4,100 meters a hard session for either good swimmers or Olympic distance triathlete's, aim to perform this session fresh, not after a run or bike workout.

### **THE BIKE**

You can do a triathlon on any type of bike, it does not need to be expensive, but it should be both road worthy and reliable. Another expense will be a Snell or ANSI approved cycle helmet, (NO HELMET - NO RACE). For nearly all triathlete's the cycle section is where the most time is spent during the race, so if you are a weak cyclist concentrate your training efforts on improving both your cycling speed and endurance.

As with the swimming section of this program, there is a weight training guide to help improve the muscles used whilst cycling. Aim to perform this weight training program once per week, if you are also doing the weight training program for swimmers, alternate the weight training sessions each week, remember not to train sore muscles, as this leads to injury and poor performance.

The bike section of a triathlon is a good time to take in energy and fluid supplies in the form of a suitable energy drink. Whilst training make use of a water bottle, and test suitable drinks prior to your race, do not use an energy drink that you have not tested, as it may not be favorable with your body, and you may have to pull out of the event with stomach cramps.

It is also wise to carry a puncture repair kit and know how to change a tire, you don't want to train for your big day, to be defeated due to mechanical problems.

### **PUTTING IN THE MILES**

Cycling like running is best performed with fellow athletes, as it is more fun and motivational. The distance you ride will greatly depend on both your fitness levels and also your race distance. You should aim to go out on your bike 2 - 3 times per week, varying your distances and route. Aim for a long steady cycle on the weekend, taking in a few hills to help develop muscle strength, cycle the approximate distance of your race twice per week, with at least one of these sessions followed by a suitable distance run (Half the distance of your race).

Group cycling sessions (Spinning / Cycle Reebok) and turbo training are good, especially during the cold wet winter months, however nothing beats cycling on the road, it is here that you are forced to work against the wind, bumpy roads, and learn the gears that best suit you for cycling.

If you can find a suitable triathlon or cycling club in your area, most members are keen to offer help and advice, especially to novices in the sport. Unlike other sports, the triathlon and cycling community is a friendly place.

### **RUNNING**

There are some good notes for running advice in the training for a marathon program obviously you will need to adjust the distances to suit your fitness level and own race distance. With the only equipment needed for running being a good pair of

trainers, and the fact that running is a high impact activity, especially for those persons who are slightly overweight, it is wise to invest in a good pair of trainers, and break them in before your race.

With most triathlete's suffering with the transition from bike to run leg, i.e. getting into their running stride as quickly as possible it is a good idea to simulate this feeling by performing a simple cross training session using either an gym exercise bike / rowing machine and running machine, or a turbo trainer and running track.

Simple aim to work on the bike hard for 2 minutes, followed by an immediate change into your running trainers and run for 400 meters, getting to your race speed as soon as possible.

If working indoors on gym equipment, this can be an excellent workout with a training partner, one of you should run and the other cycle. Use the runner as your timer, aim for 400 meters at your running speed, whilst your partner is recovering on the bike. Once you have finished your run, slow the running machine down so that your partner can then perform their run whilst you recover. **BE CAREFUL WHEN GETTING ON AND OFF THE RUNNER.** You should aim for at least 4-5 runs at a fast pace, as you get fitter increase both the speed and distance, if you are working with somebody a lot fitter than you, get them to run further in order to give you a chance to recover on the bike.

## **THE FORTH DISCIPLINE IN TRIATHLON THE TRANSITION**

Putting dry socks on wet feet, tying special knots in trainers, changing from cycling shorts into your running shorts, drying your hair, stopping to eat or have a drink, its all been done and watched as the clock ticks on, then is no need to do any of these. Spending just 1 hour on how you're going to get changed from the swim to the bike, and the bike to the run, will save you not seconds but possible minutes.

Transitions are an event which change at every race, speak to the organizers and find out where you can place your bike, and where you can first start pedaling and also where you have to come off.

On your last part of your swim, you should be thinking about what you need to do in the transition, either goggle and swim cap off from a pool, or start to take the top part of your wet suit off as you are running to your bike.

Once at your bike, pull your leggings down on your suit, aiming to step out of them whilst putting on both your helmet and glasses.

If you are an advanced triathlete, then you should be starting with your cycling shoes already inserted into your pedals. Don't try to perform this routine for the

first time at the race, either have your cycling shoes next to your bike, with all straps open, or if wearing trainers aim to get some lace locks or elastic laces so that you can slip on your shoes quickly. If the run from the swim to your bike is quite far, it's a good idea to put your trainers on as soon as you get out of the water, however make sure that they will not be removed.

Remember when you come in off the bike, do not unclip your helmet until you have dismounted before the cycling cut off point, and crossed over the line, there are many rules in triathlon designed for your safety, by breaking these rules you may incur penalties or simply be disqualified. Simple ask an official about the rules, or turn up at the race briefing, **a must for all novice triathlete's.**

### **SAMPLE PROGRAM FOR BEGINNERS INTERMEDIATE**

DAY OF WEEK	SWIM	BIKE	RUN	WEIGHTS	OTHER
MONDAY	SWIM SESSION	NO BIKE	NO RUN	CYCLING WEIGHTS SESSION	GOOD STRETCH
TUESDAY	NO SWIM	RACE DISTANCE	HALF OF RUN DISTANCE	NO WEIGHTS	PRACTICE TRANSITION
WEDNESDAY	REST	REST	REST	REST	REST
THURSDAY	SWIM MORNING OR LUNCH	NO BIKE	TRACK OR FARTLEG SESSION	NO WEIGHTS	GOOD STRETCH
FRIDAY	NO SWIM	RACE DISTANCE	NO RUN	NO WEIGHTS	GOOD STRETCH MASSAGE
SATURDAY	SWIM SESSION	NO BIKE	STEADY ENDURANCE RUN	NO WEIGHTS	CHECK AND CLEAN BIKE
SUNDAY	NO SWIM	LONG STEADY BIKE RIDE 45 MINS + (HILLS)	NO RUN	NO WEIGHTS	LOOK FOR RACE TO ENTER

The above program at first glance may seem to hard for most people, because you are training 6 days a week. This is the good thing about triathlon training, because you are training for three different sports, you are allowing your body muscles to recover. If time is a problem, look at cycling or running to work, or adjusting the session to fit into your lunch break, any employer should be keen to allow its staff a little extra bit of time to appreciate the benefits of exercise.

Remember there is a fifth discipline in triathlon, that is your own self believe, if you think you can do it, you will. Aim to overcome all the negatives in your life complete your first triathlon and experience the positive feelings of your own achievement.

