

Your Coach



Andy Blow is a respected coach and sports scientist who won the Xterra Age Group World Champs in 2000. Andy has worked as a sports scientist in Formula 1 motor-sport with the Benetton and Renault

team's Human Performance Centre. He has advised and trained drivers such as Jenson Button, Mark Webber, Fernando Alonso and Jarno Trulli. Andy is one of the founding directors of VOTwo and he is currently coaching endurance athletes and drivers, working in the sports science laboratory and presenting to corporate clients on the subject of human performance. His expertise has been picked up by 220 Triathlon magazine and he is now a regular contributor in the performance section.

Training to complete a sprint triathlon should only take a few hours per week and can fitted into even the busiest of schedules. Here we've put together a 12-week programme to either get you through your first race or help you to improve your times if you've already taken the plunge.

Now we are aware that assumption is the mother of all mess ups but there were a few assumptions that we needed to make in order to put the plan on paper. These were; you have four to six hours per week available to train; you have a basic level of fitness that allows you to complete a 40m swim session, 45min steady run and 90min steady bike ride; you require a balanced plan to improve your swim, bike and run rather than learning any one discipline from scratch.

The plan follows these principles; the key sessions are the core of each week and ideally need to be completed in order; standard sessions can be dropped if time pressures, tiredness or other factors interrupt things.

It's progressive, firstly in terms of duration, then intensity. So before moving onto the next week, it assumes that you have been able to successfully complete the previous one. Jumping ahead, missing key sessions or ignoring them isn't advisable. In general, key sessions are followed with easier days to allow recovery. The exact order of sets in a week can be modified but try not to put too many key sets on back-to-back days.

It's based on three blocks of four weeks where you build the overload (duration or intensity) each week for three weeks before having a recovery and consolidation week to allow improvements to show through. The final recovery week tapers into your race day.

Where there are blocks of time specified at certain intensities - for example, 10mins at threshold - you can either complete that block in one go or split it into two or four smaller blocks - for example, 4 x 2mins - with recoveries in between.

Fitter athletes may be able to increase the total time at higher intensities - judge this for yourself.

Good Luck

Key Terms

Overload

Placing stress on the body through training which subsequently strengthens it during recovery time.

Taper

A reduction in training volume when you are approaching an important event.

Recovery Drills

A very light swim session where you focus on the technique rather than speed.

Aerobic Pace

At an effort where you can comfortably chat while training.

Threshold Pace

You'll have to concentrate on what you're doing and find it a struggle to chat.

Turbo Trainer

A frame that supports your bike and allows you to train indoors.

Brick sets

Sessions where you switch between bike and run. The changeover needs to be rapid.

Strides

Short, running reps over approx 100m where you gently accelerate from a jog to about 90% max effort with a walk-back recovery.

Race Pace

The approximate pace or level of effort you intend to sustain for the event. (will be slightly harder than threshold pace).

Hard Pace

Effort greater than race pace that you can sustain for a few minutes only.

Troubleshooting

What if I miss a session?

If it's a key session, try to rejig the week and fit it in before moving onto the next week. If it's a standard session, chill out, put the kettle on and chalk it up as experience.

What if I go too hard or easy during key sets?

Really focus on practising your pacing. Perhaps try using devices such as heart rate monitors and treadmills that can give you some feedback on how hard you're working. Record speeds and heart rates alongside how you felt in diary, so you can refer back.

What if I've got more or less than 12 weeks to go before the race?

If you have more time simply increase the number of build weeks you can do in the early phases. If you have less than 12 weeks, follow a similar structure to that given in the final eight weeks, but bear in mind that your conditioning needs to support the higher levels of intensity, so proceed with caution!

WEEK 1 - PHASE: BUILD 1

Day	Sport	Key/Std	Session	Time
Monday	Swim	Std	Recovery / Drills	00:40:00
Tuesday	Run	Key	Steady, aerobic run with 8mins at threshold pace	00:30:00
Wednesday	Swim	Std	Main swim set of week	00:40:00
Thursday	Bike	Key	Aerobic turbo set or spinning session with 10mins at threshold pace	00:45:00
Friday	Rest		Day off or non-aerobic activities (for example yoga, core workout etc..)	00:00:00
Saturday	Run	Std	Longer run at aerobic pace	00:45:00
Sunday	Bike	Key	Steady bike ride	01:30:00
Total				4:50:00

WEEK 2 - PHASE: BUILD 2

Day	Sport	Key/Std	Session	Time
Monday	Swim	Std	Recovery / Drills	00:40:00
Tuesday	Run	Key	Steady, aerobic run with 10mins at threshold pace	00:35:00
Wednesday	Swim	Std	Main swim set of week	00:40:00
Thursday	Bike	Key	Aerobic turbo set or spinning session with 12mins at threshold pace	00:40:00
Friday	Rest		Day off or non-aerobic activities (for example yoga, core workout etc..)	00:00:00
Saturday	Run	Key	Longer run at aerobic pace	00:50:00
Sunday	Bike	Key	Steady bike ride	01:45:00
Total				5:10:00

WEEK 3 - PHASE: BUILD 3

Day	Sport	Key/Std	Session	Time
Monday	Swim	Std	Recovery / Drills	00:45:00
Tuesday	Run	Key	Steady, aerobic run with 12mins at threshold pace	00:40:00
Wednesday	Swim	Std	Main swim set of week	00:45:00
Thursday	Bike	Key	Aerobic turbo set or spinning session with 15mins at threshold pace	00:50:00
Friday	Rest		Day off or non-aerobic activities (for example yoga, core workout etc..)	00:00:00
Saturday	Run	Std	Longer run at aerobic pace	00:50:00
Sunday	Bike	Key	Steady bike ride	01:30:00
Total				5:20:00

WEEK 4 - PHASE: RECOVERY 1

Day	Sport	Key/Std	Session	Time
Monday	Swim	Std	Recovery / Drills	00:40:00
Tuesday	Run	Std	Easy steady-state aerobic run	00:30:00
Wednesday	Swim	Key	Main swim set of week	00:45:00
Thursday	Bike	Std	Steady, aerobic turbo session or easy spinning class	00:40:00
Friday	Rest		Day off or non-aerobic activities (for example yoga, core workout etc..)	00:00:00
Saturday	Run	Key	Long run at easy pace but include set of strides at end	00:45:00
Sunday	Bike	Std	Easy longer ride	01:30:00
Total				4:50:00

WEEK 5 - PHASE: BUILD 4

Day	Sport	Key/Std	Session	Time
Monday	Swim	Std	Recovery / Drills	00:40:00
Tuesday	Run	Key	Steady, aerobic run with 12mins at threshold pace	00:35:00
Wednesday	Swim	Std	Main swim set of week	00:40:00
Thursday	Bike	Key	Aerobic turbo set or spinning session with 15mins at threshold pace	00:45:00
Friday	Rest		Day off or non-aerobic activities (for example yoga, core workout etc..)	00:00:00
Saturday	Run	Std	Longer run at aerobic pace	00:45:00
Sunday	Bike	Key	Steady bike ride	01:45:00
Total				5:10:00

WEEK 6 - PHASE: BUILD 5

Day	Sport	Key/Std	Session	Time
Monday	Swim	Std	Recovery / Drills	00:45:00
Tuesday	Run	Key	Steady, aerobic run with 15mins at threshold pace	00:40:00
Wednesday	Swim	Std	Main swim set of week	00:45:00
Thursday	Bike	Key	Aerobic turbo set or spinning session with 18mins at threshold pace	00:50:00
Friday	Rest		Day off or non-aerobic activities (for example yoga, core workout etc..)	00:00:00
Saturday	Run	Std	Longer run at aerobic pace	00:50:00
Sunday	Bike	Key	Steady bike ride	02:00:00
Total				5:50:00

WEEK 7 - PHASE: BUILD 6

Day	Sport	Key/Std	Session	Time
Monday	Swim	Std	Recovery / Drills	00:45:00
Tuesday	Run	Key	Steady, aerobic run with 18mins at threshold pace	00:45:00
Wednesday	Swim	Std	Main swim set of week	00:45:00
Thursday	Bike	Key	Aerobic turbo set or spinning session with 20mins at threshold pace	00:55:00
Friday	Rest		Day off or non-aerobic activities (for example yoga, core workout etc..)	00:00:00
Saturday	Run	Std	Longer run at aerobic pace	00:55:00
Sunday	Brick	Key	Bike/run/bike/run format, continuous set, build pace to above threshold on 2nd set	01:45:00
Total				5:50:00

WEEK 8 - PHASE: RECOVERY 2

Day	Sport	Key/Std	Session	Time
Monday	Swim	Std	Recovery / Drills	00:40:00
Tuesday	Run	Std	Easy steady-state aerobic run	00:30:00
Wednesday	Swim	Key	Main swim set of week	00:45:00
Thursday	Bike	Std	Steady, aerobic turbo session or easy spinning class	00:40:00
Friday	Rest		Day off or non-aerobic activities (for example yoga, core workout etc..)	00:00:00
Saturday	Run	Key	Long run at easy pace but include set of strides at end	00:45:00
Sunday	Brick	Std	Easy longer ride	01:30:00
Total				4:50:00

WEEK 9 - PHASE: RACE PREP 1

Day	Sport	Key/Std	Session	Time
Monday	Swim	Std	Recovery / Drills	00:40:00
Tuesday	Run	Key	Acceleration run, build pace from jog to race over 15mins plus long cool down jog	00:40:00
Wednesday	Swim	Std	Main swim set of week, include 5x100m at race pace	00:45:00
Thursday	Bike	Key	Turbo set or spinning session, include 3x4mins at race pace	00:50:00
Friday	Rest		Day off or non-aerobic activities (for example yoga, core workout etc..)	00:00:00
Saturday	Run	Std	Moderate paced run including 8x1mins hard pace (above race pace with 1min walk between)	00:45:00
Sunday	Brick	Key	Long bike ride on race bike, 30 mins at threshold pace.	01:30:00
Total				5:10:00

WEEK 10 - PHASE: Race Prep 2

Day	Sport	Key/Std	Session	Time
Monday	Swim	Std	Recovery / Drills	00:40:00
Tuesday	Run	Key	Acceleration run, build pace from jog to race pace over 20mins plus long cool down jog	00:45:00
Wednesday	Swim	Std	Main swim set of week, include 6x100m at race pace	00:45:00
Thursday	Bike	Key	Turbo set or spinning session, include 3x5mins at race pace	00:55:00
Friday	Rest		Rest Day	00:00:00
Saturday	Run	Std	Moderate paced run including 10x1mins hard pace (above race pace with 1min walk between)	00:50:00
Sunday	Bike	Key	Long bike ride on race bike, 30 mins at threshold pace.	01:40:00
Total				5:35:00

WEEK 11 - PHASE: Race Prep 3

Day	Sport	Key/Std	Session	Time
Monday	Swim	Std	Recovery / Drills	00:40:00
Tuesday	Run	Key	Acceleration run, build pace from jog to race over 20mins plus long coold down jog	00:45:00
Wednesday	Swim	Key	Main swim set of week, include 7x100m at race pace	00:45:00
Thursday	Bike	Key	Turbo set or spinning session, include 3x6mins at race pace	00:55:00
Friday	Rest		Rest Day	00:00:00
Saturday	Brick	Key	Bike/run/bike/run; 15min bike, 10min run X 2; set1 at threshold pace, set 2 at race pace	01:20:00
Sunday	Bike	Std	Easy ride to spin off yesterday's effort	01:00:00
Total				5:25:00

WEEK 12 - PHASE: Taper

Day	Sport	Key/Std	Session	Time
Monday	Swim	Std	Recovery / Drills	00:40:00
Tuesday	Bike	Key	Turbo session or spin easy pace including 3 x 3mins at race pace	00:30:00
Wednesday	Run	Std	Easy acceleration run gradually from easy jog to near race pace over 10mins plus cool down	00:20:00
Thursday	Swim	Key	Easy swim set 8 x 50m at race pace; full recovery between reps	00:40:00
Friday	Rest		Rest Day	00:00:00
Total				2:10:00
Saturday	Race	Key	Race Day	
Sunday	Race	Key	Race Day	