

8 WEEKS TO YOUR FIRST SPRINT TRIATHLON

Ready to tackle your first race? Start here.
By Ian Murray

A sprint triathlon is the perfect introduction to the sport, and you can get to the finish line triumphantly using this eight-week plan.

Before you get started, get clearance from your doctor. This plan is for someone who has been exercising at least four days a week for the past few months and is injury-free.

Technique should be a priority for beginners—avoid the tendency to do too much too soon so you can stay injury-free. Rather than just going for a swim, swim mindfully. Rather than tearing after a ride, ride with intention. And rather than struggling through a run, run with perfect form for as long as you can and take short walk breaks so you can run perfectly again.

Training Paces

Easy: Your go-all-day pace. Using the “talk test,” you should be able to say completely full sentences with no problem.

Moderate: A steady, consistent intensity. Talk test: 2–3 words at a time.

Hard: A close to all-out effort, should be challenging but sustainable for the given interval. Talk test: One word at a time.

Run or bike on flat terrain and keep pace easy unless otherwise noted.

Sprint-Distance Training Plan Key:

- = swim workout
- = bike workout
- = run workout
- ' = minutes
- " = seconds
- hr = hour



Ian Murray is a USAT Level 3 Coach and host of the “Triathlon Training Series” DVD.

WEEK 1

Weeks 1–4 goal: Keep things comfortable and make technique the priority in every workout.

MONDAY

45'
Keep cadence 80–90 RPM.

TUESDAY

Rest.

WEDNESDAY

30'
Do short intervals (such as 10x50) with perfect technique. Rest 15–30" between each effort. Keep body level at the surface and focus on proper head position, looking down with chin tucked.

THURSDAY

35'
5' warm-up, 25' moderate, 5' cool-down.
Run tall. Walk for 60–90" as often as needed to keep quality posture.

FRIDAY

Day off

SATURDAY

90'
Aim for 80–90 RPM with fluid, efficient pedal circles.

SUNDAY

30'
Do short intervals with perfect technique. Rest 15–30" between each effort. Work on rolling entire body side to side to work hip power into each stroke.

WEEK 2

MONDAY

50'
Focus on scraping on the bottom of the pedal stroke and pulling up on the back side.

TUESDAY

Day off

WEDNESDAY

40'
Confirm level body and a long axis rotation.

THURSDAY

30' of limiter (your worst sport).

FRIDAY

Day off

SATURDAY

40'
Focus on timing the entry hand with hip drive.

SUNDAY

90'
30' easy, 30' moderate, 30' easy.

WEEK 3—RECOVERY WEEK

MONDAY

45', hilly terrain.
Shift early to keep cadence high, even on climbs.

TUESDAY

Day off

WEDNESDAY

45'
Start to include longer intervals (5x100) followed by 20–40" rest, but keep focus on technique.

THURSDAY

50'
15–20' easy and the rest of the time at a moderate pace.

FRIDAY

30' of limiter (your worst sport).

SATURDAY

45'
Reduce kick but keep body level with changes to head and lead arm.

SUNDAY

1:45, moderate.

WEEK 4

MONDAY

45', hilly terrain.
Keep stride short and look up when climbing. Walk 60" when needed to keep heart rate under control.

TUESDAY

Day off

WEDNESDAY

45'
Try to swim as silently as possible by relaxing and slipping through the water rather than fighting it.

THURSDAY

60'
10' easy, 40' moderate, 10' easy.

FRIDAY

35'
Limit your walk breaks and focus on short, quick strides.

SATURDAY

50'
Get a feel for the “catch”—start to grip the water with the lead arm at the moment the recovery fingers enter the water.

SUNDAY

2 hr
Make last 15' as strong as the first.

WEEK 5

Weeks 5–8 goal: Workouts increase in duration but not much in intensity. Technique is still the top priority—challenge yourself to hold perfect form, even at the end of long workouts.

MONDAY

45'
Loosen legs with easy, fluid circles.

TUESDAY

Day off

WEDNESDAY

30'
Include short intervals with 15–30" rest.

THURSDAY

35'
5' warm-up, 25' moderate, 5' cool-down.

FRIDAY

Day off

SATURDAY

75'
Spin the bike up to speed 80–90 RPM with heart and lungs, not by mashing the pedals at 60–70 RPM.

SUNDAY

30'

WEEK 6

MONDAY

60'
Focus on perfect circles.

TUESDAY

Day off

WEDNESDAY

45'
Turn head early to breathe and look back toward shoulder for easier air.

THURSDAY

45', hilly terrain.
Warm up 7' on flat then run hills moderate and flats easy.

FRIDAY

75'
Warm up 10', then climb a few hills in a big gear at 60 RPM, spin on flats.

SATURDAY

45'
Build more relaxation into each and every stroke.

SUNDAY

90'
15' easy, 60' moderate, 15' easy.

WEEK 7

MONDAY

45'
Extend the duration of the intervals (4x150) but keep the 15–30" rest to ensure quality.

TUESDAY

Day off



WEDNESDAY

50'
10' warm-up, then 3x5' moderate to hard. Take a full 2' rest between each. Test race pace to find what you can comfortably hold.

THURSDAY

60'

FRIDAY

35'
5' warm-up, 10' moderate, then 4x1' hard with 3' recovery.

SATURDAY

50'
Match the entry hand with the catch and the hip rotation for greatest power.

SUNDAY

2 hr
1 hr easy, 1 hr with 3x 5' hard with 3' recovery.
 10'
Easy off the bike.

WEEK 8

MONDAY

30'
Loosen legs from yesterday's brick.

TUESDAY

Day off

WEDNESDAY

30'
Include 3–4 fast 75s with 15–30" rest. The remainder should be easy.

THURSDAY

25' easy.

FRIDAY

Day off

SATURDAY

10' easy.
 10'
Easy with 3 30-second fast pickups with 2' recovery.

SUNDAY

Race day! Pre-race warm-up:
 Jog for 8' overdressed.
 5' or do arm circles to warm up the shoulders.