

Triathlete's 9 WEEKS TO YOUR FIRST SPRINT TRIATHLON

By Lance Watson

If you are new to the sport or perhaps took an extended break from triathlon, get ready for to race with this smart and simple training progression that will have you ready to finish a sprint triathlon in nine weeks.

If you are in good health, free of injury and are able to comfortably swim 50 yards nonstop (preferably free-style), ride for 30 minutes and run for 10 minutes, you are ready to begin this plan.

The goals of the plan are basic and attainable. The first goal is to integrate training into your life in a non-stressful way—it is possible to train with a busy schedule so you can reap the benefits of improved fitness and strength. Secondly, you have the goal of competing in a race, which will be a driving force behind completing the workouts.

The game plan

The program follows a routine of five training days per week, with one session per training day. Initially there are two swims per week, and alternating one or two runs and bikes per week. Eventually you progress to two workouts in each discipline, with one of your runs following a bike ride (what we term a “brick” workout).

THE OVERALL FLOW:

Weeks 1–4 Build frequency
Weeks 5–6 Build endurance
Weeks 7–8 Build speed
Week 9 Race!

Aim to do the listed sessions on the scheduled days

to maximize effectiveness of the plan and minimize risk of injury. Start the program conservatively to avoid muscle soreness, and then patiently work your way through.

How to gauge your effort

This plan uses rate of perceived exertion (RPE) to determine the intensity of your workouts.

ZONE	BREATHING AND PERCEPTION
1	Gentle rhythmic breathing. Pace is easy and relaxed. The intensity is a jog or very easy run or very easy bike spin.
2	Pace increases a little but is still comfortable. Slightly deeper breathing, and conversation is possible.
3	Pace is moderate, breathing is harder, and it's slightly more difficult to hold conversation. A stronger cycling or running rhythm, this is “feel good” fast.
4	Pace is fast and challenging to maintain, you're starting to breathe hard and are beginning to get uncomfortable. Approaching all-out 30-minute bike or run pace.
5	Pace is equivalent to all-out for one to five minutes. Breathing is deep and forceful, conversation is undesirable and mental focus is required.

KEY: 🏊 = swim workout | 🚲 = bike workout | 🏃 = run workout
* = minutes | RPM = revolutions per minute (cadence)
Zn = Zone (perceived effort zone)

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
WEEK 1 Build workout times into your daily calendar and routine. Keep a log to record each session, particularly what you did well.						
Day off.	🏊 10x50 taking a 45-second rest between each 50. Pace these evenly.	🚲 20' flat terrain, Zn 1 at 85-90 RPM.	🏃 6x(1' walk/2' run in Zn 1) flat terrain.	Day off.	🏊 12x50 taking a 30-second rest between each 50. Pace these evenly.	🚲 30' flat terrain, Zn 1 at 85-90 RPM.
WEEK 2 A little fatigue is normal in the second week. Be conservative with your effort in the sessions but firm about getting them in. Start sessions easy to warm up and stick with it!						
Day off.	🏊 20x25 taking a 20-second rest between each 25. Pace these evenly.	🏃 6x(1.5' walk/2.5' run in Zn 1) flat terrain.	🚲 30' flat terrain, Zn 1 at 85-90 RPM.	Day off.	🏊 12x50 taking a 30-second rest between each 50. Pace these evenly.	🏃 6x(1' walk/3' run in Zn 1) flat terrain.

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
WEEK 3 At this point, you have already increased your fitness! Your foundation is starting to take shape, and every session is a building block for the next. Take your rest days as scheduled, and eat well.						
Day off.	🏊 10x75 taking a 30-second rest between each 75. Pace these evenly.	🚲 30' flat terrain as 15' Zn 1, 15' Zn 2 at 85-90 RPM.	🏃 20' flat terrain Zn 1.	Day off.	🏊 20x25 taking a 20-second rest between each 25. Pace these evenly.	🚲 45' rolling terrain as 15' Zn 1, 30' Zn 2 at 90-95 RPM.
WEEK 4 All athletes train and race because there is a sense of purpose. What is your passion for sport? What makes you happy when you are out there training? On the hard days, the answers to those questions are what will get you through: Identify what you love about sport and OWN it!						
Day off.	🏊 16x50 taking a 20-second rest between each 50. Swim #3, #6, #9 and #12 faster.	🏃 25' rolling terrain as 15' Zn 1, 10' Zn 2.	🚲 55' flat terrain as 20' Zn 1, 35' Zn 2 at 90-95 RPM.	Day off.	🏊 10x75 taking a 30-second rest between each 75. Pace these evenly.	🏃 30' flat terrain Zn 1.
WEEK 5 Focus on being tough. Think of training as “good” discomfort, and this mental fortitude will pay off on race day. Your Sunday transition run is also a perfect place to practice race-day skills: Designate a place to drop your bike and work on efficiently transitioning from cycling to running gear.						
Day off.	🏊 10x100 taking a 10-second rest between each 100. Pace these evenly.	🏃 40' rolling terrain as 15' Zn 1, 25' Zn 2.	🚲 70' rolling to hilly terrain as 20' Zn 1, 50' Zn 2 at 90-95 RPM.	Day off.	🏊 12x75 taking a 15-second rest between each 75. Pace these evenly.	🚲 45' flat terrain Zn 1. Make a quick transition (less than 3'). 🏃 30' off the bike, flat terrain Zn 2.
WEEK 6 Never coast! When riding, pay attention to the pressure on your pedals, which is energy pushing the bike forward. When riding flat and downhill, be aware of pushing evenly on your pedals through both legs. You can apply the “never coast” analogy to the mental side as well: Focus on always putting forth your best effort.						
Day off.	🏊 10x100 taking a 20-second rest between each 100. Swim #3, #6 and #9 faster.	🏃 45' rolling terrain as 15' Zn 1, 25' Zn 2.	🚲 80' rolling to hilly terrain as 20' Zn 1, 25' Zn 2, 15' Zn 3, 20' Zn 2 at 90-95 RPM.	Day off.	🏊 500 nonstop, followed by 5x100 as 50 fast/50 easy, taking a 25-second rest between each 100. Pace these evenly.	🚲 60' flat terrain Zn 1. Quick transition (less than 3'). 🏃 30' off the bike, flat terrain Zn 2.
WEEK 7 Think about how far you have come and how much you have accomplished. Use training sessions to anticipate how the race will feel (probably intense) and how you will deal with that—this will help you be mentally prepared to get the most of the fitness you have built for the past few weeks.						
Day off.	🏊 1,000 nonstop, even paced.	🏃 35' rolling terrain as 15' Zn 1, 10' Zn 3, 5' Zn 4, 5' Zn 2.	🚲 60' flatter to rolling terrain as 15' Zn 1, 2x(5' Zn 3, 2.5' Zn 2, 5' Zn 4, 2.5' Zn 2), 15' Zn 1 at 90-95 RPM.	Day off.	🏊 5x200 taking a 30-second rest between each 200. Progressively swim each 200 faster.	🚲 40' flat terrain as 15' Zn 1, 15' Zn 3, 10' Zn 4. Quick transition (get it down to less than 2'). 🏃 20' off the bike, flat terrain as 10' Zn 4, 5' Zn 2, 5' Zn 1.
WEEK 8 This is your last big week before you back off for the taper. Make the most of each session, pull in all you've learned in the past seven weeks and create small goals you want to accomplish each day. Stay relaxed and calm: This is the ideal state in which to maximize your training sessions. By the end of the week, all you have to do is rest up for the big effort of race day.						
Day off.	🏊 500 nonstop, followed by 10x50 as 25 fast/25 easy, taking a 20-second rest between each 100.	🏃 35' rolling terrain as 15' Zn 1, 10' Zn 3, 5' Zn 5, 5' Zn 2.	🚲 60' rolling to hilly terrain as 15' Zn 1, 5' Zn 3, 2.5' Zn 2, 5' Zn 4, 2.5' Zn 2, 5' Zn 1 at 90-95 RPM.	Day off.	🏊 5x200 taking a 30-second rest between each 200. Progressively swim each 200 faster.	🚲 30' flat terrain as 15' Zn 1, 10' Zn 3, 5' Zn 4. Quick transition (less than 2'). 🏃 15' off the bike, flat terrain as 5' Zn 4, 5' Zn 2, 5' Zn 1.
WEEK 9: RACE WEEK A sense of building excitement or nervousness is OK. It means that you care, and the extra energy will give you power on race day. Resist the urge to test yourself in sessions. Taper training is designed to keep you sharp, so sessions are short. Stay organized prior to the race so that all you have to focus on that day is racing.						
Day off.	🏊 16x50 taking a 20-second rest between each 50. Swim #3, #6, #9 and #12 faster.	🏃 20' flat terrain as 12' Zn 1, 3' Zn 3, 5' Zn 1.	🚲 30' rolling to hilly terrain as 15' Zn 1, 2x(2.5' Zn 3, 2.5' Zn 2), 5' Zn 1 at 90-95 RPM.	Day off.	🚲 15' Zn 1 at 90-95 RPM.	RACE DAY!

LifeSport head coach Lance Watson has coached a number of Olympians, Ironman and age-group champions. He enjoys coaching athletes of all ages and abilities who are passionate about sport and personal excellence. Visit Lifesportcoaching.com.