

12-Week Sprint Plan

Sprint is one of the most accessible ways to get into multisport. **Andy Blow** shows you how to get up to speed with his three-month programme



Andy Blow is a respected coach and sports scientist who won the Xterra Age Group World Champs in 2000

Training to complete a sprint triathlon should only take a few hours per week and can fit 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 to improve your times if you've already taken the plunge.

Now, we are well aware that assumption is the Mother of all mess ups, but there were a few 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 40min 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

WEEK 1 – PHASE: BUILD 1				
DAY	SPORT	KEY/STD	SESSION	TIME
Monday	Swim	Std	Recovery/drills	0:40:00
Tuesday	Run	Key	Steady, aerobic run with 8mins at threshold pace	0:30:00
Wednesday	Swim	Std	Main swim set of the week	0:40:00
Thursday	Bike	Key	Aerobic turbo set or spinning session with 10mins at threshold pace	0:45:00
Friday	Rest	Std	Day off or non-aerobic activities (for example, yoga, core workout and so on)	0:00:00
Saturday	Run	Std	Longer run at aerobic pace	0:45:00
Sunday	Bike	Key	Steady bike ride	1:30:00
				Total 4:50:00
WEEK 2 – PHASE: BUILD 2				
DAY	SPORT	KEY/STD	SESSION	TIME
Monday	Swim	Std	Recovery/drills	0:40:00
Tuesday	Run	Key	Steady, aerobic run with 10mins at threshold pace	0:35:00
Wednesday	Swim	Std	Main swim set of the week	0:40:00
Thursday	Bike	Key	Aerobic turbo set or spinning session with 12mins at threshold pace	0:45:00
Friday	Rest	Std	Day off or non-aerobic activities (for example, yoga, core workout and so on)	0:00:00
Saturday	Run	Key	Longer run at aerobic pace	0:50:00
Sunday	Bike	Key	Steady bike ride	1:45:00
				Total 5:15:00
WEEK 3 – PHASE: BUILD 3				
DAY	SPORT	KEY/STD	SESSION	TIME
Monday	Swim	Std	Recovery/drills	0:45:00
Tuesday	Run	Key	Steady, aerobic run with 12mins at threshold pace	0:40:00
Wednesday	Swim	Std	Main swim set of the week	0:45:00
Thursday	Bike	Key	Aerobic turbo set or spinning session with 15mins at threshold pace	0:50:00
Friday	Rest	Std	Day off or non-aerobic activities (for example, yoga, core workout and so on)	0:00:00
Saturday	Run	Std	Longer run at aerobic pace	0:50:00
Sunday	Brick	Key	Bike/run/bike/run format; continuous set; build pace above threshold effort on second set	1:30:00
				Total 5:20:00
WEEK 4 – PHASE: RECOVERY 1				
DAY	SPORT	KEY/STD	SESSION	TIME
Monday	Swim	Std	Recovery/drills	0:40:00
Tuesday	Run	Std	Easy, steady-state aerobic run	0:30:00
Wednesday	Swim	Key	Main swim set of the week	0:45:00
Thursday	Bike	Std	Steady, aerobic turbo session or easy spinning class	0:40:00
Friday	Rest	Std	Day off or non-aerobic activities (for example, yoga, core workout and so on)	0:00:00
Saturday	Run	Key	Long run at easy pace but include set of strides at end	0:45:00
Sunday	Bike	Std	Easy longer ride	1:30:00
				Total 4:50:00
WEEK 5 – PHASE: BUILD 4				
DAY	SPORT	KEY/STD	SESSION	TIME
Monday	Swim	Std	Recovery/drills	0:40:00
Tuesday	Run	Key	Steady, aerobic run with 12mins at threshold pace	0:35:00
Wednesday	Swim	Std	Main swim set of the week	0:40:00
Thursday	Bike	Key	Aerobic turbo set or spinning session with 15mins at threshold pace	0:45:00
Friday	Rest	Std	Day off or non-aerobic activities (for example, yoga, core workout and so on)	0:00:00
Saturday	Run	Key	Longer run at aerobic pace	0:50:00
Sunday	Bike	Key	Steady bike ride	1:45:00
				Total 5:15:00
WEEK 6 – PHASE: BUILD 5				
DAY	SPORT	KEY/STD	SESSION	TIME
Monday	Swim	Std	Recovery/drills	0:45:00
Tuesday	Run	Key	Steady, aerobic run with 15mins at threshold pace	0:40:00
Wednesday	Swim	Std	Main swim set of the week	0:45:00
Thursday	Bike	Key	Aerobic turbo set or spinning session with 18mins at threshold pace	0:50:00
Friday	Rest	Std	Day off or non-aerobic activities (for example, yoga, core workout and so on)	0:00:00
Saturday	Run	Key	Longer run at aerobic pace	0:50:00
Sunday	Bike	Key	Steady bike ride	2:00:00
				Total 5:50:00

Troubleshooting

What do I do 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 too 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 a 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!

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 to four smaller blocks – for example, 4 x 2.5mins – with recoveries in between.

Fitter athletes may be able to increase the total time at higher intensities – judge this for yourself. **220**

Jargon buster

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

Taper A reduction in training volume when approaching an important event.

Recovery/drills A very light swim session where you focus on 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 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.

WEEK 7 – PHASE: BUILD 6

DAY	SPORT	KEY/STD	SESSION	TIME
Monday	Swim	Std	Recovery/drills	0:45:00
Tuesday	Run	Key	Steady, aerobic run with 18mins at threshold pace	0:45:00
Wednesday	Swim	Std	Main swim set of the week	0:45:00
Thursday	Bike	Key	Aerobic turbo set or spinning session with 20mins at threshold pace	0:55:00
Friday	Rest	Std	Day off or non-aerobic activities (for example, yoga, core workout and so on)	0:00:00
Saturday	Run	Std	Longer run at aerobic pace	0:55:00
Sunday	Brick	Key	Bike/run/bike/run format; continuous set; build pace to above threshold pace on second set	1:45:00
				Total 5:50:00

WEEK 8 – PHASE: RECOVERY 2

DAY	SPORT	KEY/STD	SESSION	TIME
Monday	Swim	Std	Recovery/drills	0:40:00
Tuesday	Run	Std	Easy, steady-state aerobic run	0:30:00
Wednesday	Swim	Key	Main swim set of the week	0:45:00
Thursday	Bike	Std	Steady, aerobic turbo session or easy spinning class	0:40:00
Friday	Rest	Std	Day off or non-aerobic activities (for example, yoga, core workout and so on)	0:00:00
Saturday	Run	Key	Long run at easy pace but include set of strides at end	0:45:00
Sunday	Bike	Std	Easy longer ride	1:30:00
				Total 4:50:00

WEEK 9 – PHASE: RACE PREP 1

DAY	SPORT	KEY/STD	SESSION	TIME
Monday	Swim	Std	Recovery/drills	0:40:00
Tuesday	Run	Key	Acceleration run; build pace from jog to race over 15mins plus long, cool-down jog	0:40:00
Wednesday	Swim	Std	Main swim set of the week; include 5 x 100m at race pace	0:45:00
Thursday	Bike	Key	Turbo session or spinning; include 3 x 4mins at race pace	0:50:00
Friday	Rest	Std	Rest day	0:00:00
Saturday	Run	Key	Moderate paced run including 8 x 1min hard pace (above race pace with 1min walk between)	0:45:00
Sunday	Bike	Std	Long bike ride on race bike; 30mins on tri bars at threshold pace	1:30:00
				Total 5:10:00

WEEK 10 – PHASE: RACE PREP 2

DAY	SPORT	KEY/STD	SESSION	TIME
Monday	Swim	Std	Recovery/drills	0:40:00
Tuesday	Run	Key	Acceleration run; build pace from jog to race over 20mins plus long, cool-down jog	0:45:00
Wednesday	Swim	Std	Main swim set of the week; include 6 x 100m at race pace	0:45:00
Thursday	Bike	Key	Turbo session or spinning; include 3 x 5mins at race effort	0:55:00
Friday	Rest	Std	Rest day	0:00:00
Saturday	Run	Std	Moderate-paced run including 10 x 1min hard pace (above race pace with 1min walk between)	0:50:00
Sunday	Bike	Key	Long bike ride on race bike; 2 x 20mins on tri-bars at threshold pace	1:40:00
				Total 5:35:00

WEEK 11 – PHASE: RACE PREP 3

DAY	SPORT	KEY/STD	SESSION	TIME
Monday	Swim	Std	Recovery/drills	0:40:00
Tuesday	Run	Key	Acceleration run; build pace from jog to race over 20mins plus long, cool-down jog	0:45:00
Wednesday	Swim	Key	Main swim set of the week; include 7 x 100m at race pace	0:45:00
Thursday	Bike	Key	Turbo session or spinning; include 3 x 6mins at race pace	0:55:00
Friday	Rest	Std	Rest day	0:00:00
Saturday	Brick	Key	Bike/run/bike/run: 15min bike, 10min run x 2; set 1 at threshold pace, set 2 at race pace	1:20:00
Sunday	Bike	Std	Easy ride to spin off yesterday's effort	1:00:00
				Total 5:25:00

WEEK 12 – PHASE: TAPER

DAY	SPORT	KEY/STD	SESSION	TIME
Monday	Swim	Std	Recovery/drills	0:40:00
Tuesday	Bike	Std	Turbo session or spin easy pace including 3 x 3mins at race pace	0:30:00
Wednesday	Run	Std	Easy acceleration run; build gradually from easy jog to near race pace over 10mins plus cool down	0:20:00
Thursday	Swim	Std	Easy swim set with 8 x 50m at race pace; full recovery between reps	0:40:00
Friday	Rest	Std	Rest day	0:00:00
Saturday	Bike	Std	Easy ride, 30mins to test bike out and loosen up; no real effort	0:30:00
Sunday	Race	Key	Race day	
				Total 2:40:00