

# FitFacts®

## How to Train for a Sprint Triathlon

THE SPRINT TRIATHLON DISTANCE (0.47-MILE SWIM, A 12.4-MILE BIKE RIDE AND A 3.1-MILE OR 5K RUN) IS THE MOST POPULAR RACE IN THE TRIATHLON WORLD, AND MOST TRIATHLON COACHES CONSIDER THIS DISTANCE THE PERFECT BEGINNER'S RACE FOR THE FOLLOWING REASON: WITH A SOLID 12-WEEK TRAINING PLAN AND ONE WORKOUT A DAY (EXCLUDING RECOVERY OR OFF-DAYS), EVEN PEOPLE WITHOUT A SWIMMING, BIKING OR RUNNING BACKGROUND WILL BE ABLE TO COMPLETE THIS DISTANCE IN ABOUT 90 MINUTES AND HAVE LOTS OF FUN ALONG THE WAY.

### ASK YOURSELF: WHAT IS MY CURRENT CARDIO FITNESS LEVEL?

If you've been training in any of the three sports, you have likely already established a "base" in one or more of the three sports.

If you need to get started in all three sports, you want to build an endurance base focusing on distance first. Build gradually and progress your weekly distance by no more than 10 percent to prevent injuries. This rule applies to all three sports.

### STARTING YOUR SWIM TRAINING

Swimming is the most technical of the three sports and often the biggest challenge for beginners. Hiring a coach or entering a swim program will give you the fastest and best results for learning proper technique.

### STARTING YOUR BICYCLING TRAINING

If you haven't been bicycling much and plan to enter a road race, ask yourself how comfortable you are riding on the street. Join group rides or a bicycling club for motivation and support.

### STARTING YOUR RUNNING TRAINING

If you're an experienced runner, practicing running off the bike (or bike-to-run brick workouts) will give you a new appreciation for running.

If you've never run before, joining a local running club or participating in organized training runs can teach you proper technique, pacing and how to avoid running-related injuries. If you had a previous injury or a physical condition that will make running difficult, visit your doctor first.

### TRAINING IN PHASES (PERIODIZATION)

The best way to condition your body for the rigors of an endurance event is to approach training in cycles or phases (also known as periodization training).

Let's look at the individual phases:

#### BASE PHASE

This phase is designed to create a foundation of safe and gradual progression to build aerobic fitness and endurance. Most of the training is done at a moderate intensity where you can hold a conversation. Some beginners who merely want to cross the finish line keep training in this phase until race day, which is perfectly fine.

#### BUILD PHASE

Once you've established a good base, your body can handle more high-intensity training

to build sport-specific strength and power. Increase your aerobic fitness and your ability to resist fatigue at higher speeds in all three sports. Warm up before long or hard sessions and perform a cool-down.

#### PEAK PHASE

In this phase, the top training priority is the performance of workouts that are highly race-specific. You also want to practice transitioning from one sport to another, which is best done via brick workouts which involve doing one workout immediately following another (e.g., doing a running workout right after completing a cycling workout).

#### TAPER

During this cycle, your training load is steadily reduced to give your body time to rest and get ready for maximum performance on race day.

### RACE SIMULATION

For many beginners, putting all three sports together is often the biggest concern.

The best way to know what it will feel like to ride a bike after swimming 500 yards and to run off the bike is to practice transitions. Some ideas for transition workouts (2 to 3 weeks prior to race day) include swimming for 500 yards (preferably in open water) and then riding your bike for 30 minutes near race pace, or perform a 45-minute easy bike ride followed by an immediate transition to a 20-minute run.

### PREPARING FOR RACE DAY

- Practice setting up your race gear prior to race day.
- Make a checklist of all of your equipment to ensure that you've packed everything.
- Don't do any hard workouts during the week prior to race day.
- Get plenty of sleep, eat healthy and rest the week prior to race day.
- Hydrate well prior to race day and carbo-load the night before.
- Review the race course and rules.
- Don't try anything new on race day.
- Don't clutter the transition area. Thank the volunteers and your supporters.
- Have fun!

### ADDITIONAL REFERENCES

[\*The Triathlete's Training Bible\*](#) and [\*Your First Triathlon\*](#) by Joel Friel

[\*Triathlon 101\*](#) by John Mora

[ACE Blog](#)