



How To Create A Successful Triathlon Training Plan

While the open waters of the state may still be too cold to permit open water swimming, or the roads too slick for an outdoor ride, it is not too soon to end the off-season training and start to focus on race specific training. Whether you're new to triathlon or you have years of experience, here are some tips to incorporate into your training.

Allocating Your Training Time. There are several approaches to how to allocate the time available to train. One is an equal distribution across all disciplines. This may work for sprint distance training but for longer distance events, you would need to do multiple workouts for swim and run to match even a single workout on the bike. Another approach is to allocate your time based on the percentage of time you are doing that discipline during a race. Again, for sprint distance, this approach may work since the allocation of time is about the same for bike and run but swim would come up short all the time. The best approach is allocating the largest segment of time on your weakest discipline and allocating the least amount of time for your strongest discipline.

Train All Three Energy Systems. All movement of the body needs energy. The body creates this energy by converting carbohydrates and lipid fuels aerobically and carbohydrates anaerobically. Each of these contribute different percentages of the total energy needed based on the intensity of the physical activity. To have each ready to do their part, you need to train each one. Be sure each discipline gets training time in Zones 1 through 5. Even for an Olympic distance or longer event, your body will still need to create energy anaerobically whether that is to pass a slower competitor or for the final kick to the finish. And while you will compete mostly in Zones 3 and 4, training in Zone 2 helps your endurance and speed in those middle zones, so do some EZ effort workouts.

Practice Transitions. Transition is where time can be lost, or you can close the gap on a competitor. I have seen on more than one occasion in the HMF Women's Triathlon where the 2nd woman into transition was the 1st one out. Just as you train to improve your time for swim, ride, and run, you can do training to improve your transition time. I have a client in Maryland who set up his children's kiddie pool to get his whole body wet before heading into his mock transition area to practice T1. Practicing T2 can be done as a standalone workout just as you might do repeats for a short interval run, or it can be incorporated into your regular run workout as the thing you do before heading out on the run. And don't forget to practice dismounting. Having the skill to get out of your shoes while still clipped in before you get to the dismount area can save you time on T2. If you have a trainer at home, maybe best to practice when not having to also deal with steering and balance on the bike. Once good at it indoors on a stationary bike, take it outdoors on a moving bike.

Practice Sighting in the Pool. Specificity is the key for improved performance. If your event is on a hilly course, train on a hilly course. If it has lots of turns, do your runs and rides on a route that has lots of turns. While the pool is better than no swim training in the months when the water temperature is too cold, there are still things that can be done to prepare for open water swims. There will be no lines on the bottom of the lake or pond so practice sighting. Find an object in the pool and maybe just to one



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side or the other from the center of your lane and use that to sight on as if it were the turn buoy on an open water course. During a pool swim, practice lifting your head to sight that object.

Practice the What Ifs: While we all hope our preparations for a race ensure that nothing will go wrong, it is better to be prepared for the “What If” situations. Consider such “what ifs” if your goggle strap breaks right before the start or while you are in the water. What would you do? Whatever that might be, practice it. Would you swim without the goggles or tread water as you knotted the two ends together, get the goggles back on and continue the swim? We all hope no tire goes flat on the course but to be ready if it does, practice with your flat repair kit so you know how to use the slime injector and the gas cartridge.

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