If you’re brand new to triathlon, trying to figure out training for swimming, cycling and running in an organized progression can be a little daunting. Sprint triathlons—which vary but are typically around a 750-yard swim, 12-mile bike and 3-mile run—are a great entry point to the sport and achievable for anyone committed to following this eight-week plan for building endurance. This program will help remove some of the training mystery for the triathlon rookie!

**BEFORE YOU BEGIN**

Before starting this plan, you should be in good health and injury free. You must be able to swim 100 yards non-stop without excessive stress (preferably freestyle). Your general fitness should allow for 20 minutes of non-stop cycling and 10 minutes of continuous running. This plan provides you with a gentle, targeted progression to get you to the start line confident you can cover the distance. 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 run and two bike workouts one week, followed by two runs and one bike the next week. Eventually you progress to two swims, two bike rides and two runs per week, with one of those runs directly after your bike ride. Note the indicated terrain. Attempt to do the listed sessions on the scheduled days to maximize effectiveness of the plan and minimize risk of injury.

**SPRINT TRIATHLON**

You can do a triathlon! Follow this road map to cross your first triathlon finish line in just eight weeks.

**WANT TO STEP UP TO AN OLYMPIC-DISTANCE RACE?**

Once you have completed your sprint triathlon, take a really easy week to recover. If you decide to target an Olympic-distance race (1-mile swim, 25-mile bike, 6.2-mile run), continue training after your recovery. The following week you can repeat Weeks 4 through 7 and simply increase the listed duration of each workout, and the tasks within; by 50 percent. Week 8 (race week) should be performed exactly the same as depicted in the sprint triathlon program, with no additional volume added, as your rest for your event.

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Garfield

**Rate of Perceived Exertion (RPE) Training**

All workouts are structured with training zones, according to the rate of perceived effort.

**Zone 1**
- Breathing rate and pace increase slightly. You should feel comfortable and relaxed.

**Zone 2**
- Breathing rate and pace increase significantly. You should feel comfortable and not be too challenged.

**Zone 3**
- Breathing is a little more difficult and you may feel like the pace is too fast, but you can still maintain it.

**Zone 4**
- Breathing is fast and forceful and you should feel like you are working hard, but you can still maintain it.

**Zone 5**
- Breathing is fast and forceful and you should feel like you are working very hard, but you can still maintain it.

**Focal Point:** Be consistent with your effort in week 1, but strong in your conviction to complete the schedule this week. Start sessions easy to warm up. BIKE 30’ RPM for revolutions per minute, which is your cadence. To determine RPM, without a cycling computer, simply count the amount of times your right knee comes up in the pedal stroke for 30 seconds, then double that number.

**Week 1: Build Consistency**

**Monday**
- **Day off.**

**Tuesday**
- **SWIM** 12x25 (30’) Pace these evenly, 3’. Zone 2.
- **BIKE** 30’ flat terrain, 1’, Zone 1 at 90–95 RPM.

**Wednesday**
- **SWIM** 30’ walk/3’ run in Zone 1.
- **RUN** 2x10’ (2’ walk/3’ run in Zone 1).

**Thursday**
- **SWIM** 2x50 (30’), 1’, Zone 1 at 90–95 RPM.
- **BIKE** 45’ rolling terrain as 15’ Zone 1.

**Friday**
- **SWIM** 10x50 (45’), 1’, Zone 1.

**Saturday**
- **RUN** 6x1’ 5’ walk/3’ run in Zone 1.

**Sunday**
- **Day off.**

**Focal Point:** You are already increasing your fitness at this point. Each session is a stepping stone to the following week. Take your rest days as scheduled and eat well.

**Week 2: Build Consistency**

**Monday**
- **Day off.**

**Tuesday**
- **SWIM** 24x25 (30’) Pace these evenly. Zone 2.
- **BIKE** 30’ flat terrain as 15’ Zone 1, 1’, Zone 2 at 90–95 RPM.

**Wednesday**
- **RUN** 2x20’ (2’ walk/3’ run in Zone 1).
- **BIKE** 12x50 (35’) Pace these evenly, Zone 1.

**Thursday**
- **RUN** 2x10’ (2’ walk/3’ run in Zone 1).

**Friday**
- **BIKE** 45’ rolling terrain as 15’ Zone 1.

**Saturday**
- **SWIM** 4x100 (45’), just a little faster in Zone 3.

**Sunday**
- **Day off.**

**Focal Point:** Always be moving forward physically and mentally with no coating of your efforts. When riding uphill, flat or downhill, pay attention to the pressure on your pedals, which is energy pushing the bike forward. When running and swimming, think about even rhythm and cadence pushing you forward. Mentally focus always on doing your best work, best effort and positive self-talk in sessions.

**Week 3: Increase Endurance**

**Monday**
- **Day off.**

**Tuesday**
- **SWIM** 12x25 (30’) as 6 in Zone 2, 3’. Zone 3.
- **RUN** 20’ rolling terrain as 15’ Zone 1.
- **BIKE** 70’ rolling to hilly terrain as 20’ Zone 1, 1’. Zone 1 at 85–95 RPM.

**Thursday**
- **SWIM** 10x100 (35’), 2’, Zone 2.

**Friday**
- **BIKE** 45’ flat terrain, 1’, Zone 1.

**Saturday**
- **Day off.**

**Focal Point:** As you reach the midpoint of this program, reconnect with why you want to do a triathlon. What do you like about sport and what makes you feel good when you are out there training? The answers to these questions are what will get you through the most challenging days, and they are what you will draw upon on race day.

**Week 4: Improve Race Fitness**

**Monday**
- **Day off.**

**Tuesday**
- **SWIM** 2x200 (30’), 1’, Zone 2.

**Wednesday**
- **RUN** 40’ rolling to hilly terrain as 20’ Zone 1, 1’. Zone 2.

**Thursday**
- **BIKE** 60’ rolling to hilly terrain as 15’ Zone 1, 2x(5’ Zone 1, 2’, 5’ Zone 2, 5’ Zone 4, 2.5’ Zone 2, 15’ Zone 1 at 90–95 RPM.

**Friday**
- **Day off.**

**Saturday**
- **SWIM** 500 (2’), 5x100 (20’). All Zone 2.

**Sunday**
- **BIKE** 60’ flat terrain, 1’, Zone 1 at 90–95 RPM. Quick transition (less than 3’). **RUN** 20’ off the bike. Flat terrain, Zone 2.

**Focal Point:** You are tough. Training is “good” discomfort, where you develop strong coping skills for race day. Your Sunday transition run (which, in combination with the bike, is called a brick workout) is a perfect place to practice physical and mental race skills as well. Be organized and focused on starting your run immediately off the bike by having a place to drop your bike and run your shoes ready. Create your own transition area.

**Week 5: Increase Endurance**

**Monday**
- **Day off.**

**Tuesday**
- **SWIM** 1000 non-stop, Zone 2.

**Wednesday**
- **RUN** 35’ rolling terrain as 15’ Zone 1, 10’ Zone 3, 5’ Zone 2.

**Thursday**
- **BIKE** 60’ flat to rolling terrain as 15’ Zone 1, 1’, Zone 2, 2.5’ Zone 2, 5’ Zone 4, 2.5’ Zone 2, 15’ Zone 1 at 90–95 RPM.

**Friday**
- **Day off.**

**Saturday**
- **SWIM** 10x100 (20’). **Swim** #3, #4 and #9 faster in Zone 4, the rest in Zone 1.

**Sunday**
- **Day off.**

**Focal Point:** This is your last two-week segment before you back off for race taper week. Make the most of each session, pull in all the resources and learning from the past five weeks and write down small goals you want to accomplish with each day. Be positive and calm: This is the ideal state in which to maximize your training sessions.

**Week 6: Improve Race Fitness**

**Monday**
- **Day off.**

**Tuesday**
- **SWIM** 500, Zone 1 build to Zone 2, 10x50 (20’) as 25 fast/Zone 4, 25’ easy/Zone 1.

**Wednesday**
- **RUN** 35’ rolling terrain as 15’ Zone 1, 10’ Zone 3, 5’ Zone 2.

**Thursday**
- **BIKE** 60’ rolling to hilly terrain as 15’ Zone 1, 5’ Zone 3, 2.5’ Zone 2, 5’ Zone 4, 2.5’ Zone 2, 15’ Zone 1, 2x(5’ Zone 1, 2’, 5’ Zone 2, 15’ Zone 1 at 90–95 RPM.

**Friday**
- **Day off.**

**Saturday**
- **SWIM** 5x200 (30’), **Swim** #7 in Zone 1, #3 in Zone 3, #4 in Zone 3, 2’. Zone 1, Zone 2, 2’. Zone 1.

**Sunday**
- **BIKE** 30’ rolling terrain as 15’ Zone 1, 1’, Zone 3, 5’ Zone 4 at 90–100 RPM. Quick transition (less than 2’). **RUN** 15’ off the bike. Flat terrain as 5’ Zone 4, 2.5’ Zone 2, 5’. Zone 1.

**Focal Point:** You have accomplished a lot! At the end of this week, look back on all your sessions. This will give you a sense of confidence that you are ready to tackle the sprint distance, and it serves as a great reminder when nerves creep up. Racing will be simply doing what you have been doing in training: swimming, biking and running!

**Week 7: Race Week**

**Monday**
- **Day off.**

**Tuesday**
- **SWIM** 200 Zone 1, 1’ 8x50 (20’) as 25 fast/Zone 4, 25’ easy/Zone 1, 100 Zone 1.

**Wednesday**
- **RUN** 30’ rolling to hilly terrain as 15’ Zone 1, 12’ Zone 1, 3’, Zone 3, 5’ Zone 1.

**Thursday**
- **BIKE** 15’ Zone 1 at 90–95 RPM. **Race day!**

**Friday**
- **Day off.**

**Saturday**
- **BIKE** 15’ Zone 1 at 90–95 RPM. **Race day!**

**Focal Point:** If you are feeling excited and nervous, that is a good thing. It means that you care, and the race is important to you. This extra energy will give you a boost on race day. Follow the sessions closely and resist the urge to “test” yourself—save it up for race day! Take time to pre-organize your equipment so race day is simpler. If you can review the course, that will help ensure success. Visualize your best training efforts on the race course.

Laurie Watters, LifeSport head coach and Ironman University Master Coach, has trained a number of Ironman, Olympic and age-group champions over the past 28 years. He enjoys coaching athletes of all levels. You can find him at LifeSport Coaching on Facebook or on Twitter at @LifeSportCoach.