

The Basics: Write Your Own Program

Want to put your own training program together? Here's how according to Triathlon Australia's national manager coach development, Wayne Goldsmith.



Wayne Goldsmith is the national manager of coach development for Triathlon Australia.

WORDS: WAYNE GOLDSMITH | IMAGES: JUN SATO

Ok, ok, I know, as the national manager of coach development for Triathlon Australia I should be telling everyone to go find a triathlon coach and ask them to put together an individualised, personally tailored training program designed just for you.

And, without doubt, working with a currently accredited triathlon coach, one with the skills, knowledge, experience and commitment to help you realise your training and racing goals, is the best way I know to learn and master the intricacies of swim, bike, run and transition.

However, sometimes it's just not practical, time efficient or cost effective to source a triathlon coach, and the reality is that many triathletes will at some

time sit down and try to write a training program for their own training and racing needs.

So, here's a simple, practical guide to writing your own one-week training program. It's easier than you think.

Complete or compete?

There are two types of triathletes – completers and competitors.

A completer is a relatively inexperienced triathlete who is aiming to complete a triathlon as a personal goal, fitness challenge or sporting bucket-list activity.

A competitor is a more experienced triathlete who is striving to improve on their past racing performances, achieve a racing target like a qualifying time, improve on a personal best finishing place, etc.

This article is primarily focused at the completer triathlete.

Five steps to designing your own program

- 1. Plan** – take time to really think about your training program plan. Aim to do what your mind and body need to do at every training session – it's your training program, no one else's.
- 2. Preview** – think about it – does the program you've put together make sense?
- 3. Practise** – early on in each training session, take time to evaluate how you're feeling and if you need to make any changes or modifications to your planned training activities, do so.
- 4. Perform** – do the training, and enjoy it!
- 5. Plan** – (yes I know 'plan' is

here twice – but that's how important planning is). Only in this context, 'plan' means have a think about the training session you just did and how you may be able to plan to improve on it next time.

Putting it all together: THE PLAN, THE PLUG INS AND THE PACE

1 THE PLAN

There are millions of free templates for triathlon training program planning available on the internet and most are okay.

No matter what tool you use to plan your training program, keep it simple and make it flexible enough to meet your personal training needs. If work or school or family life gets a bit crazy and hectic, your training plan should be flexible enough to allow you



to take a session or two off until things settle down.

2 THE PLUG INS

When you decide which training program design template is right for you, the next step is to 'plug in' the training sessions you are planning to complete during the coming week.

You have six basic triathlon training workouts to choose from as plug-ins.

- Swimming training
- Cycling training
- Running training
- Transition training
- Gym or other type of strength/general fitness training
- Rest and recovery activities

There are literally millions and millions of variations of triathlon training plans around but here are a few general principles to get you started.

1. A training session is one where you demand more of your body and mind than you've previously experienced – and in doing so, you stress your body and mind to adapt to a new level of performance.
2. A recovery session is one where you demand less of your

body and mind than you've previously experienced with the aim being to allow your body time to recover, regenerate and become restored.

3. As much as practical try to alternate training sessions with recovery sessions.

3 THE PACE

While there are as many theories about training pace as there are triathletes who wear lycra, managing and monitoring training intensity is the most important aspect of any training program.

So, what's the best way to set and maintain the pace (intensity) of your training program?

EMH (easy, moderate, hard) is a good place to start. As a general rule, adopt a 3,2,1 rule; that is, for every six training sessions you complete, three should be easy, two should be moderate and one should be hard.

Or you can try the PACE (Preparation pace, Aerobic pace, Competition pace and Electric pace). This uses four simple training zones to help manage and monitor training intensity.

Pace one – Practise and

prepare pace. Pace one is slow, easy, relaxed sessions (but with good technique and skills of course). It is the ideal pace for warm up, warm down, skills, drills and recovery.

Pace two – Aerobic Pace.

The core training zone of most triathlon training programs, Pace two creates, builds and develops endurance capacities.

Pace three – Competition preparation pace. Pace three is about preparing triathletes for the specific demands of training racing, i.e. to be able to race at the targeted race pace.

Pace four – Electric pace. Electric pace is speed development. It is work performed at maximum speed over short

distances with the aim of developing real speed through stimulating neuromuscular adaptation mechanisms.

Another simple and practical system is the RPE – Rating of Perceived Exertion system. A good basic RPE scale to use in triathlon training is:

1. Very easy, relaxed
2. Comfortable
3. Moderate
4. Hard
5. Very hard, difficult and challenging

Regardless of the intensity management and monitoring system you adopt, keep it simple and keep it consistent across all swim, bike and run training activities.

SUMMARY

1. **It is easier than you think.** Anyone can put together a simple training program for a short course fun triathlon however, if you are planning to do something even more extraordinary like an ironman, please find a suitably qualified, experienced and skilled triathlon coach.
2. **Keep it simple.** Always commence a training session with this simple question, "What am I trying to do?" Then think about the training you have planned and ask "does this session make sense?"
3. **For every training session you do, spend just as much time resting, recovering and regenerating.** As a general guide, alternate training sessions and recovery sessions to ensure you're in the sport for the long haul and illness and injury never get in the way of you achieving your personal triathlon goals.

The aim of this article is to introduce inexperienced triathletes to the general principles and concepts of planning a triathlon training program. It is a very simple look at a very complex issue and if you are looking at training and racing seriously, please consult an appropriately trained, qualified and experienced triathlon coach. It's worth it! 

For every six training sessions you complete, three should be easy, two should be moderate and one should be hard.

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