



12 weeks to go...

If you're new to triathlon, 12 weeks gives you plenty of time to train and be ready to complete a sprint-distance triathlon. Here, MSTC Head Coach Neil Giles gives some tips and training session ideas to get you ready for race day.

Swim

Efficient movement through the water equals less effort and a faster swim. Work on a smooth, light kick to keep your body high up in the water and to help in the rotation of the freestyle stroke.

Session to try:

After a warm-up, do a length doing front crawl kick only. Have your arms outstretched (you can hold a pull buoy or a float). At the end of the length, put the float or pull buoy between your legs (if you have used one) and swim back. Repeat this 2-length pattern 5-8 times. Aim to take 15 seconds rest after each 2 lengths.



Transition 1 (T1)

Getting out of the pool and into T1 can be a bewildering experience. You're transitioning from a horizontal position (swimming) to an upright position (running), so all the blood can drop from your head, making you feel light-headed and dizzy.

Session to try:

In your pool swims, practise hauling yourself out of the deep end and walking to the shallow end to resume swimming. This helps build upper-body strength and gets you used to the transition from horizontal to upright. Aim for 5-6x per session.



Bike

Understand your pedal cadence: this is how quickly you turn the pedals. For an endurance event like a triathlon, it is good to have a fairly high cadence of between 80-90 rpm. This gives you a balance of power through the pedals without too much fatigue through the leg muscles. Remember, you've got to do a run at the end of the bike, so keep those legs fresh!

Session to try:

On an indoor bike trainer, or when it's safe to do so on the road, ride hard for 3 minutes in a medium to hard gear. Aim to pedal at about 90rpm. You can calculate this by counting completed revolutions on one leg for 15 seconds. Multiply this by 4 to give you an approximate rpm.

After the 3-min effort, do 3-min easy pedalling to recover. Repeat this 3-min hard, 3-min easy 5 or 6 times in a session.

Make sure you are comfortable with the race distance bike leg. Aim to cycle this distance at least 3 times before race day. It's also a good idea to do longer rides of 1.5 – 2x race distance to help build cycling endurance.



Transition 2 (T2)

You head into transition 2 at the end of the bike. Time to get your thoughts together as you finish the bike. Think through the transition process; dismount, rack your bike, helmet off, run shoes on, go! Think about having an energy gel with your shoes in case you are running on empty at the start of the run.

Session to try:

Bike mount & dismount practice: On a quiet road or driveway, practise running to your bike, picking it up, run with it for 10m before getting on it and starting to pedal. Repeat 3-5 times.

Do the reverse: cycle to a fixed point that represents the transition line, practise dismounting the bike and running with bike for 10m. Repeat this 3-5 times.



Run

Running 5k after you've swum and cycled is tough. Your legs will feel as though they belong to somebody else! So training yourself to run off the bike is essential to completing your triathlon well.

Session to try:

At least once a week, complete a 'brick' session by running straight after a bike session. Start off by simply putting on your running shoes and running at an easy pace for 6-10 minutes (or 1-2km).

As you progress, try increasing your run pace and increasing how long you run for (you could try running the full 5k if you feel up to it).

You can mix things up by doing multiple bike and run chunks: for example, 10-minute bike into 6 minute run, repeated 3-4x.

This type of session is much easier if you have an indoor bike trainer. Don't forget to practise drinking while on the bike to stay hydrated.