

Get set for triathlon

Expert advice on preparing for your first 'novice' triathlon from **Jeff Archer**

Swimming

The swimming phase of the triathlon is the first of the three disciplines. If you are doing a novice event you're likely to be swimming about 400 metres – 16 lengths of a normal 25m pool. Here's our top tips:

- 1.** Your training needs to reflect the distance you cover – so your aim at the end of the 12th week is to be able to swim the distance to the best of your ability.
- 2.** At least once a week include a distance swim. Your muscles need to be more than capable on race day to swim the distance that you can swim well. Being just able to swim the distance on race day will leave you fatigued.
- 3.** Make sure you work on your pace to increase your speed in the water.
- 4.** Practise your technique. Consider body position, legs, arms, breathing and timing. To do this you need to get your legs near the surface, which brings the rest of your body in line, then have a good arm action, followed by a good breathing technique while getting the timing of the leg kick, arm action and breathing spot on.
- 5.** Invest in a good pair of goggles so that your head can be in the right position. You could ask a local swimming coach to analyse your technique and you will be amazed at the difference it will make to your energy levels.
- 6.** Perform several timed swims. This is important as it puts your mind in race mode and gives you an idea of how long you will need to complete the first phase.
- 7.** Try some open water swims. If you are taking part in an open water swim be sure that you get some practise in the open water.
- 8.** Check whether you will need a wetsuit.



Cycling

If you're doing a novice/beginner distance it's likely to be 20K. Here's how to get yourself prepared:

- 1.** Again, you should aim to cover at least the distance you need to cycle on the day.
- 2.** Aim to do 40 minutes of flat riding, gradually building up your distance and time at a gentle pace.
- 3.** Don't worry about hills too much at first, as you will need to build up your fitness level and confidence.
- 4.** Practise your cycling skills on braking, tackling corners and changing gears. These are vital. Once you are comfortably riding on a flat course, you can start to incorporate hills and intervals into your rides.
- 5.** Find a small hill and begin by doing five repetitions of cycling up and down the hill five times. For short, steep hills, try standing out of the saddle. For longer hills, make sure you stay in the seat.
- 6.** When coming downhill, focus on braking and turning corners.
- 7.** Try some interval training to boost your fitness. Find a road roughly two miles long which doesn't contain many junctions or roundabouts. Start with a warm-up of an easy ride for 15 to 20 minutes. Then bring in a series of bouts.
- 8.** Make sure you have the right bike, or if you have a mountain bike, make sure the frame is light and you put on the right wheels.

‘Aim for a long steady run at the weekend, taking in a few hills to develop muscle strength’

Running

Compared to the other two disciplines, running is actually a fairly simple concept. There are no complex techniques and the equipment is relatively cheap. You can also do it anywhere, at anytime. Here’s some top tips:

1. Invest in a good pair of trainers before you start running. Go to a reputable running store rather than a high street sports store where you can have your running style assessed by an expert. Visit: www.sweatshop.co.uk or www.asics.co.uk
2. Try to run on grass or a gravel path as concrete, especially cambered surfaces, can lead to injury. The softer the surface the better.
3. Aim for a long steady run at the weekend, taking in a few hills to develop muscle strength.
4. Practise the transition phase of the triathlon, which means the stage where you get off your bike, change into your running shoes and start to run.
5. Visualise yourself running the race. This will help you keep a positive frame of mind.
6. Make sure you do a number of timed runs during your training. This will condition your body to the feeling of competition.
7. Try some speed work training, such as strides, when your stamina begins to improve. Find a flat area of a slight downhill and run for 20 seconds at approximately 95 per cent effort, four to eight times.
8. Make sure you stretch your legs at the end of each run to avoid any stiffness, especially the front and rear thighs and the calves. This will also help prevent the risk of injury and lead to a greater feeling of wellbeing.



Triathlon training plans

THE SWIM - 800M	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7	Week 8
Warm-up	100m	100m	100m	100m	100m	100m	100m	100m
Workout	25m sprint, 75m recovery	25m sprint, 50m recovery	50m sprint, 50m recovery	50m sprint, 25m recovery	75m sprint, 75m recovery	100m sprint, 75m recovery	100m sprint, 75m recovery	800m sprint, 75m recovery
Repetitions	4	6	6	8	5	5	5	6
Cool-downs	100m	100m	100m	100m	100m	100m	100m	100m
Total distance (m)	600	650	800	800	825	950	950	1000

THE BIKE - 20K	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7	Week 8
Distance (km)	4.8	8	11.2	14.4	17.7	20.9	24.1	16
Workout	Steady speed	1.6K moderate hill / sprint 1.6K moderate 1.6K hill or sprint 1.6K steady speed	Steady speed	3.2K moderate 1.6K quicker. Repeat x3	Steady speed	1.6K moderate 0.8K fl at out Repeat x8 1.6K recovery	Steady speed	1.6K moderate 1.6K sprint. Repeat x5

THE RUN - 5K	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7	Week 8
Warm-up	100m	100m	100m	100m	100m	100m	100m	100m
Workout	Steady speed on fl at	Hilly course	200m sprint 200m recovery x6	Steady speed on undulating terrain	Hilly course	Steady speed on fl at	400m sprint 400m recovery x4	Steady, fast speed
Cool-downs	400m	400m	800m	800m	800m	800m	1600m	800m
Total distance (km)	3.2	4	4	4.8	4.8	5.6	6.4	4.8