

Hello! We at MIT Triathlon are excited to present a new “Couch to Sprint” program directed at first-timers wanting to complete the New England Season Opener sprint triathlon. It’s on May 9th in nearby Hopkington, MA. Hopefully this document will answer most of your questions.

Who this plan is aimed at: The schedule is aimed at people who have minimal recent experience in any of the three sports of triathlon (swimming, biking, and running). It assumes that you have access to a bike (or will get one in the next month), have a basic knowledge of freestyle (but may not have great technique or speed), and are generally healthy.

The training time involved ranges from 4-7 hours a week as written (see below for how you might modify this).

Disclaimers: If you have any concerns about whether you are healthy enough to begin this or any other new exercise program, please consult your doctor.

Please complete a waiver (available on website) before your first club practice.

NO ONE TRAINING PLAN IS RIGHT FOR EVERYONE!

We can’t stress that enough. What you see here is not a hard and fast rule of “this is what you must do.” Not even close. As Kristin is fond of saying, training is a really poorly controlled experiment of one. That’s one of the things that makes triathlon challenging, but also something that keeps it interesting- learning by trial and error how to prepare for your best result come race day, given the constraints of your job or school and the other responsibilities of your life. That said, we’ve put this together as a guideline for those of you who are “ready to tri” and like to see things laid out in detail. Feel free to make changes in order to make this work better for *you*.

Ways in which you might modify this plan:

Of course, if you’re already an avid swimmer/cyclist/runner, the sessions described in this plan may be too easy for you. Use your best judgment to add or lengthen sessions, but resist the temptation to focus too much of your time on the sport you’re already best at. You may find that because of increasing training volume in the other sports, you can slightly reduce your volume in your primary sport without sacrificing performance.

The plan is set up so there are always at least 2 workouts in each sport per week. That’s about the minimum to aim for. There are 4-week cycles of [swim, bike, run, recovery] where the swim week has a 3rd swim, the bike week has a 3rd bike, etc. Every fourth week is a recovery week where you cut back on the volume and intensity to give your body a chance to catch up with the changes you’re making.

The first 3 days (M, T, W) are shorter sessions, then a rest day, then the other days (F, Sat, Sun) are longer sessions. If you need to swap what day you do what workout in the schedule, you can swap the order of the short sessions and the order of the long sessions amongst themselves- BUT- and this is key- avoid doing the same sport on back-to-back days (because then you'll go too long without practicing it for the rest of the week).

If you want to add to the plan, I'd suggest cycling and/or running. Cycling takes up the most time in a standard triathlon race, so it gives you the most "bang for your buck," but it can also take a decent amount of time to train for. Running takes the next most time, and swimming is usually over the quickest.

If you are pressed for time, cut out the midweek "weekly focus" workout or the strength. Obviously, both of those things will help you, but the most important thing is to get adequate volume for the sports you'll be doing on race day. Building up the long weekend runs and rides is especially important since they increase in a progressive fashion.

Illness and injury:

The most common cause of injury is *too much, too soon*. In terms of triathlon, the injury risk is lowest in swimming, and highest in running. For this reason, it is especially important to hold back with the intensity in running and biking as you are starting out. For the first month or two, don't worry about your pace! It will naturally come down over time as your fitness increases. A ballpark way of judging this is that you should be able to hold a conversation, but not sing a song, on an easy run. There's no need to be a "workout hero"- the most important thing at this stage is getting in the volume. In contrast, for swimming, short intervals pose less of a risk and can be introduced earlier.

If your shoes are more than a few months old, you would do well to go to Marathon Sports or a running specialty store and get a new pair. They will look at your gait and how your foot strikes the ground and recommend something appropriate. (Since we are now sponsored by City Sports, I am obligated to say that you should go to a running specialty store to have your gait analyzed... then buy the shoes at City Sports.) Typically shoes are good for ~ 500 miles of running + walking around in.

Side note: I know the pseudo-barefoot running thing (i.e. vibram five fingers) is the new trend. This isn't something I've tried myself, but from what I have heard, you'll still want a pair of lightweight trainers for the transition, because just going out and jogging 30 minutes without shoes right off the bat can lead to calf and ankle (esp. Achilles tendon) problems.

As for illness, if you have a fever, don't work out! Don't try to "make up" lost days either, just let your body recover. If you have minor cold symptoms, it's probably ok to do a run or bike, just keep it at low intensity (easy easy) and monitor how you feel.

Signing up for the race (do it now!):

Here's the link:

<http://www.maxperformanceonline.com/neopenerrace.html>

Register as soon as you can- this race WILL fill up, and because it is the first of the season it will probably sell out well before the race. If you aren't a USAT member already, you'll also have to pay \$10 for a one-day license in addition to the \$65 for the race. If you plan on doing 3 or more triathlons this year, you might as well get the annual membership with USAT.

There's a ton of good FAQs for first-timers (and anyone really) on the website. Read 'em.

It's winter still. Can I bike and run inside?

It's fine if you want to start out using a spin bike/trainer/rollers and a treadmill occasionally until the weather co-operates. Set your treadmill at 1% grade for a better effort approximation of outside. However, by midway through the plan (i.e. late March), you should be doing nearly all your workouts outdoors, especially the long bikes and runs, to prepare yourself for the conditions you'll face in the race.

Is it going to be cold in the water?:

Answer: Yes. Probably in the 60s, so unless you are part polar bear, you're going to want a wetsuit. It's possible to rent one at quadmultisport.com, xterrawetsuits.com, or wetsuitrental.com. If you happen to be the same size as someone on the team that's not racing that weekend they might be nice and let you borrow one. The bonus is that it will give you flotation and probably help you swim faster!

We highly recommend, if the weather cooperates, going out to Walden Pond or some other destination for an open water swimming session a weekend or two before the race.

Where are the rest of the swim workouts?

They'll be sent out every couple of weeks if you enter your email in the google spreadsheet.

I don't have a Garmin. How do I know how long my run/bike is?

Map it at www.gmap-pedometer.com.

Also, you can find a map with distances for loops around the Charles River bridges at <http://www.soundkeepers.com/running/boston.html>.

