

24 week olympic triathlon training plan

24 week olympic triathlon training plan is the ultimate guide for aspiring triathletes looking to conquer the Olympic distance. This comprehensive plan breaks down the journey into manageable phases, focusing on building a strong aerobic base, refining technique, and peaking for race day. Whether you're a seasoned endurance athlete or a beginner taking on the challenge, this 24-week roadmap will equip you with the knowledge and structure needed to succeed. We'll cover everything from swim drills to bike intervals, brick workouts to strength training, ensuring a well-rounded approach to your Olympic triathlon preparation. Get ready to transform your fitness and achieve your triathlon goals.

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Understanding the Olympic Triathlon Distance

The Olympic triathlon, often referred to as the "standard" or "Olympic distance" triathlon, is a globally recognized and respected endurance event. It consists of a 1.5-kilometer (0.93-mile) swim, followed by a 40-kilometer (24.8-mile) bike ride, and culminates in a 10-kilometer (6.2-mile) run. This format demands a balanced approach to training across all three disciplines, requiring both cardiovascular endurance and muscular strength. Successfully completing an Olympic distance triathlon is a significant achievement, and a well-structured 24 week olympic triathlon training plan is crucial for building the necessary fitness and confidence.

The challenge of the Olympic triathlon lies in its versatility. Unlike shorter sprint triathlons, the Olympic distance requires sustained effort over a longer period, testing an athlete's ability to manage fatigue and maintain performance across multiple hours. The swim portion tests your ability to navigate open water and maintain a consistent stroke. The bike leg is a test of endurance, power, and aerodynamic efficiency. Finally, the run demands a resilient cardiovascular system and strong legs, especially after the exertions of the swim and bike. This comprehensive training plan is designed to progressively prepare you for each of these demands.

The Foundational Phases of Your 24 Week Olympic Triathlon Training Plan

A successful 24 week olympic triathlon training plan is built upon a progressive, phased approach. This allows your body to adapt to increasing training loads, minimize the risk of injury, and ensure you arrive at the starting line in peak condition. The plan is typically divided into three distinct phases: Base Building, Development, and Peaking/Tapering. Each phase has specific objectives and focuses on developing different aspects of your athletic performance. Understanding these phases is key to navigating the entire training journey effectively.

The Base Building phase is where you lay the groundwork for everything that follows. It's about establishing a consistent training routine, improving your aerobic capacity, and building a solid foundation of fitness in all three disciplines. The Development phase then introduces more specific intensity and volume, honing your skills and preparing you for the demands of race pace. The final phase, Peaking and Tapering, is about fine-tuning your performance, allowing your body to recover and store energy so you can perform at your best on race day.

Phase 1: Building the Base (Weeks 1-8)

The initial eight weeks of your 24 week olympic triathlon training plan are dedicated to building a robust aerobic base. This phase is characterized by lower intensity, higher volume training across swimming, cycling, and running. The primary goal is to increase your body's ability to utilize oxygen efficiently, improve endurance, and prepare your connective tissues for the more demanding phases to come. Consistency is paramount during this stage; showing up regularly to your workouts is more important than pushing the intensity too hard.

During this base-building period, you'll gradually increase the duration of your workouts. This means longer swims, bike rides, and runs, but always at an effort level where you can comfortably hold a conversation. This conversational pace, often referred to as Zone 2 training, is crucial for developing your aerobic engine. It's also an excellent time to focus on technique in each discipline, as a solid technical foundation will pay dividends later in the plan when intensity increases.

Key Swim Training for the Olympic Distance

Swimming is often the most technically demanding discipline for triathletes, and the base phase is the perfect time to refine your stroke. Focus on consistent, efficient swimming with a strong emphasis on technique. Longer, steady-state swims are the cornerstone of this phase, building your aerobic capacity in the water. Incorporate drills that focus on your catch, pull, and recovery, ensuring a smooth and powerful stroke.

- **Frequency:** Aim for 2-3 swim sessions per week.
- **Duration:** Gradually increase swim duration, building towards 60-75 minute sessions by the end of this phase.
- **Intensity:** Primarily Zone 2 effort, focusing on consistent pacing.

- **Drills:** Include drills like single-arm swimming, catch-up drills, and kick drills to isolate and improve specific aspects of your stroke.
- **Volume Progression:** Increase the total distance swum each week by no more than 10% to avoid overuse injuries.

Developing a comfortable and efficient swim stroke is crucial for the Olympic distance. By focusing on technique and building endurance in the water during these early weeks, you'll reduce the impact on your legs for the bike and run, and make the swim less of a mental hurdle on race day.

Developing Cycling Endurance and Strength

The cycling portion of your 24 week olympic triathlon training plan in the base phase is all about building time in the saddle and developing leg strength. Longer, steady rides at a conversational pace are essential for building aerobic fitness and muscular endurance. This is also a great time to practice proper cycling form, including efficient pedaling and maintaining a comfortable posture.

Focus on increasing the duration of your rides consistently. Include at least one longer ride per week, gradually extending the time spent cycling. Explore different terrain if possible, but prioritize consistent effort over aggressive climbing during this base phase. Comfortable pacing allows your body to adapt without excessive fatigue.

- **Frequency:** Aim for 2-3 bike sessions per week.
- **Duration:** Start with rides of 60-90 minutes and build towards 2-3 hour rides by the end of the phase.
- **Intensity:** Predominantly Zone 2 effort.
- **Terrain:** Flat to rolling terrain is ideal for building consistent aerobic power.
- **Cadence:** Practice spinning a lighter gear at a higher cadence (85-95 rpm) for efficiency.

By spending ample time on the bike at a sustainable pace, you'll develop the muscular endurance required for the 40km Olympic distance, ensuring you have a strong foundation for the later stages of your training.

Running Fundamentals for Triathlon Success

Running in the base phase of your 24 week olympic triathlon training plan should focus on building mileage and improving running form. Similar to swimming and cycling, the emphasis is on low-intensity, long-duration runs. This builds the aerobic capacity and muscular resilience needed for the run leg, especially after the swim and bike.

Consistency is key. Aim for 2-3 runs per week, gradually increasing the distance of your longest run. Focus on maintaining good running posture: upright torso, relaxed shoulders, and a natural stride. Avoid pushing the pace; the goal is to build mileage comfortably.

- **Frequency:** Aim for 2-3 run sessions per week.
- **Duration:** Begin with 30-45 minute runs and build towards 75-90 minute runs for your longest session.
- **Intensity:** Zone 2 effort, conversational pace.
- **Focus:** Good running form, consistent pacing, and gradual mileage increases.
- **Progression:** Increase weekly running volume by no more than 10%.

Establishing a solid running base ensures your legs can handle the demands of the 10km Olympic distance run, setting you up for success without unnecessary strain.

Integrating Strength and Mobility

While endurance training is primary, incorporating strength and mobility work during the base phase of your 24 week olympic triathlon training plan is crucial for injury prevention and building functional strength. Focus on exercises that strengthen your core, glutes, and upper body, as these muscle groups are vital for all three disciplines.

Strength training sessions should be performed 1-2 times per week, focusing on compound movements. Mobility work, such as dynamic stretching and foam rolling, should be integrated into your routine regularly to improve flexibility and aid recovery. This proactive approach to strength and mobility will support your overall training load.

- **Frequency:** 1-2 strength sessions per week.
- **Focus:** Core strength (planks, Russian twists), glute activation (squats, lunges), upper body (push-ups, rows).
- **Mobility:** Dynamic stretching before workouts, static stretching and foam rolling after.
- **Bodyweight exercises:** Excellent for building a foundation.

A strong, mobile body is more resilient to the stresses of triathlon training, helping to prevent injuries and improve overall efficiency.

Phase 2: Developing Specificity and Intensity (Weeks 9-16)

As you move into Phase 2 of your 24 week olympic triathlon training plan, the focus shifts from building a broad aerobic base to developing specificity and introducing higher intensities. This phase is about making your body more efficient at the specific demands of Olympic distance triathlon and improving your ability to sustain faster paces. You'll start to incorporate interval training and race-pace efforts into your workouts.

The volume may remain similar or slightly increase, but the intensity of some sessions will rise significantly. This is where you learn to push your limits in a controlled manner, improving your lactate threshold and your body's ability to perform at or above race pace. This phase is crucial for translating your base fitness into race-winning performance.

Advanced Swim Drills and Open Water Practice

In Phase 2, your swim training will become more dynamic. While technique remains important, you'll incorporate drills that mimic race conditions and build speed. Open water swimming practice becomes increasingly valuable, helping you adapt to sighting, drafting, and the general chaos of a mass start.

Interval sets will become more common, pushing your speed and improving your ability to hold a faster pace for longer durations. Focus on consistently hitting target times during these intervals. If possible, practice swimming in a wetsuit if your race will feature one.

- **Frequency:** 3 swim sessions per week.

- **Intensity:** Mix of Zone 2, Zone 3 (tempo), and Zone 4 (threshold) efforts.
- **Intervals:** Shorter, faster intervals (e.g., 10 x 100m with short rest) and longer threshold efforts.
- **Open Water:** If possible, include at least one open water swim session every 1-2 weeks to practice navigation and race-specific skills.
- **Technique focus:** Continue to refine stroke, but with more emphasis on power and speed.

By pushing your pace in the pool and practicing open water skills, you'll become a more confident and faster swimmer.

Cycling Intervals and Hill Work

Your bike training in Phase 2 will introduce structured interval work to improve your power output and speed. This often includes sustained efforts at your threshold pace, hill repeats, and tempo intervals. These sessions are designed to make your legs stronger and more resilient for the demands of the 40km bike course.

Including hill work, even on a trainer with resistance, helps build strength and power. Focus on maintaining a strong, consistent pedal stroke throughout these demanding intervals. Long rides will continue, but may now include some tempo efforts within them.

- **Frequency:** 2-3 bike sessions per week.
- **Intensity:** Incorporate Zone 3 and Zone 4 intervals.
- **Interval examples:** 4 x 8 minutes at threshold pace with equal rest, hill repeats (e.g., 5 x 3 minutes uphill).
- **Long ride:** Continue with a longer ride, potentially including 30-60 minutes of tempo effort.
- **Cadence variations:** Practice lower cadence, higher force efforts on hills to build strength.

These focused cycling sessions will significantly boost your power and endurance, preparing you for the challenges of the Olympic distance bike leg.

Running Tempo and Speed Work

Running in Phase 2 of your 24 week olympic triathlon training plan becomes more goal-oriented with the introduction of tempo runs and interval sessions. Tempo runs are performed at a comfortably hard pace (Zone 3) that you can sustain for a prolonged period, improving your lactate threshold. Interval sessions, often on the track or a flat road, involve bursts of faster running with recovery periods.

These workouts push your cardiovascular system and improve your running economy. It's important to listen to your body and ensure adequate recovery between these higher-intensity sessions to avoid burnout or injury.

- **Frequency:** 3 run sessions per week.
- **Intensity:** Include tempo runs (20-40 minutes at comfortably hard pace) and interval sessions.
- **Interval examples:** 6 x 800m at 5k race pace with equal rest, 10 x 400m at faster than 5k pace.
- **Long run:** Continue building the long run duration, but keep the intensity mostly in Zone 2.
- **Brick runs:** Begin incorporating short, sharp runs off the bike to simulate race conditions.

By sharpening your running speed and building your capacity to run at a faster pace, you'll be better prepared for the final leg of the Olympic triathlon.

Mastering Brick Workouts

Brick workouts, which involve transitioning directly from cycling to running, are critical in Phase 2 of your 24 week olympic triathlon training plan. These sessions train your body to run efficiently off the bike, which can feel quite different from a standalone run. The key is to simulate race transitions as closely as possible.

Start with shorter brick runs after easier bike rides and gradually increase the duration and intensity of the run off the bike as you progress through this phase. This practice helps your legs adapt to the fatigue and changes in biomechanics. The goal is to make that initial transition feel smoother and more natural.

- **Frequency:** Integrate brick workouts every 1-2 weeks.

- **Structure:** Bike for a set duration/distance, then immediately transition into a run.
- **Run duration:** Start with 10-15 minute runs and build up to 20-30 minute runs.
- **Intensity:** The run can be at a steady pace or incorporate some faster intervals to simulate race conditions.
- **Focus:** Practice smooth transitions and getting your legs moving after cycling.

These workouts are invaluable for building the confidence and muscle memory needed to perform well on the run course after a challenging bike leg.

Phase 3: Peaking and Tapering (Weeks 17-24)

The final eight weeks of your 24 week olympic triathlon training plan are dedicated to peaking and tapering. This is a critical period where you fine-tune your fitness, allow your body to recover from the accumulated training stress, and arrive at the start line feeling fresh and ready to perform. The intensity of training may remain high in certain sessions, but the overall volume decreases significantly during the taper.

The goal is to hit your absolute best performance. This phase requires careful management of training, nutrition, and rest. It's a delicate balance of staying sharp without overtraining or losing fitness. The taper is not about losing fitness; it's about allowing your body to supercompensate and be at its peak.

Race-Pace Simulation

During the weeks leading up to the taper, it's important to include sessions that simulate race pace. This helps your body become accustomed to the specific demands of the Olympic distance triathlon at your target effort level. These workouts reinforce your pacing strategy and build confidence in your ability to execute it.

These sessions should be strategically placed and not overly taxing. The objective is to feel strong and in control at race pace, rather than pushing to exhaustion. They serve as a final rehearsal for race day.

- **Frequency:** Incorporate race-pace simulation once every 2-3 weeks in the weeks leading up to the

taper.

- **Swim:** Practice swimming segments at your target Olympic distance pace.
- **Bike:** Include intervals at your target Olympic distance bike power or heart rate.
- **Run:** Perform longer runs with segments at your target Olympic distance run pace.
- **Brick:** Combine race-pace simulation for bike and run in brick workouts.

These targeted efforts ensure you're dialled in for race day, knowing what your body should feel like at your goal pace.

Strategic Tapering for Optimal Performance

The taper is arguably the most important part of your 24 week olympic triathlon training plan. Beginning roughly 2-3 weeks before your race, a taper involves a significant reduction in training volume (typically 40-60%) while maintaining or slightly increasing intensity in short bursts. This allows your body to recover, repair, and store glycogen, leading to supercompensation and peak performance.

During the taper, focus on consistency in your training but with much shorter durations. Short, sharp efforts at or slightly above race pace can help keep your muscles firing and your body responsive. Prioritize sleep, nutrition, and hydration. Resist the urge to cram in extra training; trust the process.

- **Duration:** Typically 2-3 weeks.
- **Volume Reduction:** Reduce total training volume by 40-60%.
- **Intensity Maintenance:** Keep some short, sharp intervals at race pace.
- **Frequency:** Maintain training frequency but shorten durations.
- **Rest:** Prioritize sleep and recovery.

A well-executed taper is your ticket to feeling your absolute best on race day.

Nutrition and Hydration for Race Day

Proper nutrition and hydration are critical throughout your 24 week olympic triathlon training plan, but they become even more vital as you approach race day and during the taper. Consistent, balanced nutrition fuels your training, and intelligent fueling on race day is paramount for sustained energy.

During the taper, focus on consuming adequate carbohydrates to maximize glycogen stores. This is often referred to as "carb loading," but it should be done gradually in the days leading up to the race, not in a single day. Stay well-hydrated, but avoid over-hydration, which can dilute electrolytes. Practice your race-day nutrition and hydration strategy during your longer training sessions to ensure it works for you.

- **Carbohydrate Loading:** Gradually increase carbohydrate intake in the 2-3 days before the race.
- **Hydration:** Maintain consistent hydration with water and electrolyte drinks.
- **Pre-Race Meal:** Practice a familiar, easily digestible meal 2-3 hours before the race.
- **During Race:** Plan your nutrition and hydration strategy for the swim, bike, and run (gels, chews, drinks).
- **Post-Race:** Focus on recovery nutrition with a balance of carbohydrates and protein.

A well-fueled body is a fast body. Your nutrition and hydration strategy is as important as your training.

Mental Preparation for the Olympic Triathlon

Beyond the physical demands, mental preparation is a cornerstone of a successful 24 week olympic triathlon training plan. The Olympic distance is a significant mental challenge, and developing coping strategies, visualization techniques, and positive self-talk can make a huge difference.

Visualize yourself completing each discipline successfully, overcoming challenges, and crossing the finish line. Practice mindfulness to stay present during training and on race day. Develop strategies for dealing with discomfort or moments of doubt. A strong mental game can be the difference between reaching your goals and falling short.

- **Visualization:** Mentally rehearse the race from start to finish.

- **Positive Self-Talk:** Develop encouraging affirmations to use during tough moments.
- **Goal Setting:** Set realistic process-oriented goals for training and race day.
- **Course Reconnaissance:** If possible, familiarize yourself with the race course.
- **Mindfulness:** Practice being present and focused during workouts.

A prepared mind is as crucial as a prepared body for tackling the Olympic triathlon.

Essential Gear and Equipment

Having the right gear can significantly enhance your training and race day experience. As you progress through your 24 week olympic triathlon training plan, ensure you have reliable equipment for all three disciplines.

This includes a well-fitting wetsuit (if applicable), a road-worthy bicycle with appropriate gearing, cycling shoes, a helmet, running shoes suited for your gait, and comfortable sportswear. Don't forget essential accessories like sunglasses, a sports watch, and a triathlon suit or comfortable cycling/running gear.

- **Swim:** Goggles, cap, wetsuit (if allowed/needed).
- **Bike:** Bicycle, helmet, cycling shoes, cycling shorts/jersey, water bottles.
- **Run:** Running shoes, running shorts/tights, running top.
- **General:** Tri-suit, sports watch, sunglasses, sunscreen.
- **Maintenance:** Ensure your bike is in good working order and consider a bike fit for optimal comfort and efficiency.

Investing in quality gear and maintaining it properly will prevent issues on race day and contribute to a smoother training experience.

Common Pitfalls to Avoid

As you embark on your 24 week olympic triathlon training plan, be aware of common pitfalls that can derail your progress. Many athletes fall into similar traps that can lead to injury, burnout, or underperformance on race day. Recognizing these and proactively avoiding them is key.

Overtraining is perhaps the most common mistake, often stemming from pushing too hard too soon or not allowing adequate rest. Inconsistent training, poor nutrition, neglecting strength work, and improper pacing are also frequent issues. Staying disciplined and adhering to the plan, while also listening to your body, will help you navigate these challenges.

- **Overtraining:** Pushing too hard, too often, without enough recovery.
- **Inconsistent Training:** Skipping workouts or having long layoffs.
- **Poor Pacing:** Going out too hard on the bike or run.
- **Neglecting Nutrition/Hydration:** Not fueling properly during training or on race day.
- **Ignoring Pain:** Pushing through sharp or persistent pain.
- **Lack of Rest:** Not prioritizing sleep and recovery days.

Being mindful of these potential issues allows you to train smarter and more effectively.

Adapting Your 24 Week Olympic Triathlon Training Plan

While this 24 week olympic triathlon training plan provides a solid framework, it's essential to understand that life happens, and flexibility is key. Your plan may need to be adapted based on your individual response to training, recovery levels, work schedule, and unexpected life events.

If you feel excessively fatigued or experience persistent soreness, don't be afraid to adjust a workout or take an extra rest day. Similarly, if you miss a session, don't try to make up for it by doubling up the next day. Simply pick up where you left off or adjust the subsequent week slightly. The goal is long-term consistency and healthy progress.

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the key phases of a 24-week Olympic triathlon training plan?

A typical 24-week Olympic triathlon training plan includes an early base building phase focusing on aerobic conditioning, a strength and technique phase, a race-specific intensity phase, and finally, a taper phase leading up to race day.

How should the training volume and intensity progress over 24 weeks?

Volume generally increases steadily in the first half, with intensity gradually introduced and peaking in the middle-to-late stages. The final weeks involve a significant reduction in volume and intensity (taper) to allow for recovery and peak performance.

What is the recommended weekly structure for swim, bike, and run training?

The structure often involves 2-3 swim sessions, 2-3 bike sessions (including at least one longer ride), and 3-4 run sessions. The balance and focus of each discipline will shift throughout the 24 weeks.

How important is strength training within an Olympic triathlon plan?

Strength training is crucial for injury prevention, improving power, and enhancing efficiency across all three disciplines. It's typically incorporated 1-2 times per week, focusing on compound movements relevant to swimming, cycling, and running.

What role does recovery play in a 24-week training plan?

Recovery is as vital as training itself. It includes adequate sleep, nutrition, rest days, active recovery sessions, and potentially massage or foam rolling to allow the body to adapt and rebuild, preventing overtraining and injury.

How should nutrition and hydration be managed throughout the 24 weeks?

Nutrition and hydration strategies should evolve. Early phases focus on balanced intake, while later phases emphasize fueling for longer/more intense workouts and practicing race-day nutrition and hydration during training sessions.

Are there specific types of workouts recommended for each discipline?

Yes, swim workouts might include technique drills and interval sets, cycling could involve tempo rides and hill repeats, and running sessions might include tempo runs, intervals, and long, slow runs to build endurance.

How do I adjust my plan if I miss a training session?

Generally, it's best not to try and 'make up' missed sessions by doubling up. Focus on getting back on track with the next scheduled workout. For longer absences, you might need to adjust the overall progression of the plan.

What is a typical taper period, and how does it work?

The taper is usually the last 1-3 weeks of training. It involves significantly reducing training volume while maintaining some intensity. This allows the body to fully recover and store energy, leading to peak performance on race day.

How can I stay motivated throughout a 24-week training cycle?

Staying motivated can be achieved by setting intermediate goals, tracking progress, varying workouts, training with a buddy or group, visualizing success, and remembering your 'why' for undertaking the challenge.

Additional Resources

Here are 9 book titles related to a 24-week Olympic triathlon training plan, each beginning with :

1. *The Triathlete's Training Bible*

This comprehensive guide is a go-to resource for triathletes of all levels. It breaks down the science and art of training, offering detailed explanations of periodization, nutrition, and injury prevention. You'll find practical advice on swim, bike, and run techniques, as well as guidance on race strategy. It's an indispensable companion for anyone serious about completing and excelling in their triathlon goals.

2. *Your Best Triathlon*

Focused on maximizing performance, this book delves into optimizing every aspect of your training and racing. It covers goal setting, creating a personalized plan, and understanding the nuances of each discipline. The author emphasizes mental preparation and race-day execution, providing actionable strategies to help you achieve your peak.

3. *The Complete Triathlon Guide*

This book serves as a thorough introduction and ongoing reference for triathletes. It covers everything

from choosing the right gear to understanding the progression of training over a season. The guide offers structured plans and advice on how to adapt them to your individual needs and schedule. It aims to demystify the sport and empower you to train effectively.

4. Going Long: Training for the Ironman Triathlon

While geared towards Ironman, the principles of building endurance and strength outlined in this book are highly applicable to a 24-week Olympic triathlon plan. It emphasizes consistent effort, smart progression, and recovery. You'll learn how to systematically build the aerobic base and muscular resilience required for longer distances, which translates well to mastering the Olympic distance.

5. Triathlon Strength Training: Build a Powerful Body for Swim, Bike, and Run

This specialized guide focuses on the crucial but often overlooked strength training component of triathlon preparation. It provides targeted exercises for swimmers, cyclists, and runners, aiming to improve power, prevent injuries, and enhance efficiency. Understanding how to build a strong core and supportive musculature will directly benefit your performance in all three disciplines.

6. The Art of Triathlon: How to Swim Faster, Bike Stronger, Run Longer

This book explores the technical aspects of each triathlon discipline in depth. It offers detailed breakdowns of proper form for swimming, efficient pedaling techniques for cycling, and optimal running mechanics. By focusing on skill development and refinement, you can significantly improve your efficiency and speed over the 24-week period.

7. Nutrition for Triathletes: Fueling Your Training and Racing

Proper nutrition is paramount for successful triathlon training. This book provides essential guidance on what to eat, when to eat, and how to fuel for sustained energy, muscle recovery, and overall performance. It covers pre-training meals, during-workout nutrition, and post-workout recovery strategies, all crucial for a 24-week plan.

8. Peak Performance: The Ultimate Guide to Triathlon Success

This book is designed to help triathletes unlock their full potential through smart training and strategic planning. It covers creating personalized training blocks, incorporating rest and recovery, and developing race-day mental fortitude. The focus is on a holistic approach to training that builds consistency and resilience.

9. The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Triathletes

This book applies principles of effectiveness and habit formation to triathlon training. It guides you in building consistent habits for training, recovery, and nutrition, which are vital for a long-term plan. By focusing on habits that support progress and prevent burnout, you can make the most of your 24-week journey.

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