

OLYMPIC BEGINNER

12-week plan for a beginner, or athlete new to structured training, entering an Olympic-distance event with 6-8hrs per week training time available

Block 1 Building basic fitness

	WEEK 1	WEEK 2	WEEK 3	WEEK 4
MON	Easy swim, 30-40mins. Use warm-up to work on technique then go for longer reps – 400-600m – at an easy to steady pace. Don't be overly concerned about speed, just get metres in	Steady swim, 60mins. Similar session to the week previous with long reps but try to swim slightly faster per rep than before. Keep an easy to steady pace	Long run, 60-75mins. At a nice easy pace. Take some fluids with you or plan a stop somewhere you can get some. Stay consistent throughout the run and keep your pace steady. Try to run 1.2-1.5 x race distance	Day off. Recovery week, getting ready for the next block and allowing the body to adapt to the training you've done
TUE	Easy run, 30-40mins. Try to run on soft, even surface. Start out slowly for first 5mins then build to an easy pace. Focus on keeping a nice cadence and not over-striding	Long easy run, 50-60mins. Start off very easy and concentrate on holding form and a high cadence. 10-15mins of stretching post-run	Easy swim, 45mins. Include a mix of strokes and some kick with fins. Also, 20-30mins working mainly core but also upper back and shoulders to balance swimming muscles	Technique swim, 30-40mins. Get a coach to have a look at your technique and give feedback. Otherwise work on distance per stroke and balance in the water
WED	Day off. Massage or light stretching session for 20-30mins. If you don't feel 100% comfortable on your bike, look to get it fitted professionally	Steady bike, 40-60mins. On the turbo. 5mins warm up then 6mins pedalling single leg, alternating every 30secs. 4-6 x (6mins at a steady intensity with 2mins easy recovery between). 5mins easy warm down	Steady bike, 60-90mins. Building aerobic endurance, use undulating terrain	Day off. Massage or 30mins stretching. Take your bike to be serviced if it hasn't been done recently
THURS	Bike, 75-90mins. Easy bike on road or turbo. Focus on smooth pedalling and maintaining a good cadence – between 85 and 95rpm	Day off	Progressive swim, 45-60mins. Can be done with a swim squad if available. Main set should include mid-length reps (150-300m) building from easy to tempo pace	S+C or yoga, 30-45mins. Continue to work on lower abdominals and lower back
FRI	Swim, 40-50mins. Continuous swimming working on breathing pattern and rhythm. Conditioning session. 20-30mins working lower abdominals and lower back	Run build, 40-50mins. Start with 10-15mins of core strength exercises then 40-50mins of running. Build speed as you go from recovery pace up to high-end steady	Day off. Update your diary and exalt in your improving fitness	Steady run, 30-40mins. Start at an easy pace for 5mins then build up to a steady pace for 20-30mins, focus on consistency and finding a rhythm. 5mins easy finish
SAT	Bike to run brick, 60mins. Very easy bike followed by a 20min very easy run. Just getting legs used to transitioning between the two	Bike to run brick, 75mins. Bike at a steady intensity followed by a 30mins run, also steady. Work on keeping cadence up in first 5mins of your run after biking	Long bike, 90mins-2hrs. Easy to steady bike over flat to undulating terrain. Stay in seat over any hills and pedal smoothly, concentrating on keeping cadence high – 90-95. 10-20mins easy run immediately off bike. Remain light on your feet	Bike to run brick, 60-90mins. Easy to steady bike on undulating to hilly terrain. Stay seated on climbs and keep cadence up. Practice eating and drinking regularly. Easy to steady run off bike 20-30mins
SUN	Day off. Lie in and recovery from your first week. Some light stretching if you're tight	Swim, 45-60mins. With a swim squad if available. Easy to steady session getting the metres in	Open-water swim, 45mins. Very easy swim. Practise your sighting and swimming around others. Do laps if available and build up the distance you can swim without stopping	Easy spin on bike, 45-60mins. Flat ride or turbo. Use your gears and vary cadence but spin your legs easy

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Block 2 Improving speed and endurance

	WEEK 5	WEEK 6	WEEK 7	WEEK 8
MON	Steady swim, 75mins. Similar session to week 2 with longer reps (200-400m) but increase speed slightly. Take 20-40secs recovery between reps. Increase session distance by 10-15%	Day off. Massage or light stretching session – focus on the big muscles: glutes, quads and hamstrings	Easy swim, 60mins. Working on base endurance. Long reps over race distance at an easy pace. Try to be as relaxed in the water as possible.	Day off. Recovery week to allow body to absorb the previous three weeks and prepare for the final push. Good day for a massage
TUE	Progressive run, 40-50mins. 10mins of light core exercises before you start. Begin at an easy pace then increase speed every 10-12mins until you reach tempo intensity. 5mins easy to finish	Tempo swim, 75mins. Work on technique during warm-up. Main set of 3 x (4 x 100m at race pace with 20secs recovery between) 2mins recovery between sets	Fartlek run, 30-40mins. Start at an easy pace focusing on technique for 10mins then alternate between tempo and steady pace every 60secs for 15-20mins. 5mins easy jog to finish	Technique swim, 45mins. Mainly drilling and easy swimming, be relaxed in the water and aim for maximum distance per stroke
WED	Option session. Work on your weakest discipline. 30-60mins mainly technique focus	Technique run, 40-50mins. 10-15mins of core before running at an easy pace, concentrating on standing tall and being light on your feet. Throw in a few 10-30sec accelerations if feeling good	Hilly bike, 75-90mins. Steady bike in the hills	S+C or yoga, 30-40mins
THURS	Progressive bike, 85-95mins. 10-20mins easy to steady followed by 20mins steady with a low cadence, 10mins easy, 15mins tempo normal cadence, 10mins easy, 10mins hard high cadence. 10mins easy to finish	Bike hill reps, 75-90mins. Find a hill 6-8mins long. Ride up 4-6 times at a hard intensity. Stay in seat and spin 85-90 cadence. Recover on the way down	Day off	Easy run, 30-40mins. Relax shoulders, keep cadence high and be light on your feet
FRI	Day off. How old are your shoes? Injuries can come from tired shoes so get some new ones if you've been running a lot	Steady swim, 60mins. Long reps (300-600m) working on breathing pattern. Take 40-60secs recovery between each rep	Squad swim session, 60mins. Use the others around you to push yourself in this session. S+C, 20-30mins. Light session working core and swim muscles	Easy bike, 60mins. Include some short, sharp sprints over 10secs, keeping cadence high
SAT	Long bike, 2-2.5hrs. Ride with your club or a group. Keep cadence high and eyes up, looking down the road for hazards. Stay relaxed through your shoulders and keep heels down. Try to ride 1.5-2 x your race distance	Bike to run brick, 90mins-2hrs. Steady bike with 30mins of tempo riding to finish. Run off bike 30-40mins with 10-15mins tempo running straight away. Finish at an easy to steady pace	Bike and run race distance session. At a very easy pace, perform a 40km bike followed by a 10km run. Don't worry about speed, just give yourself the confidence you can make the distance	Long run, 60-75mins. Nice easy pace. Take some fluids with you or plan a stop somewhere. Keep a consistent pace during the run. Try to run 1.2-1.5 x race distance
SUN	Easy run, 40-50mins. Stand tall, keep cadence high but keep shoulders relaxed	Optional. Either a day off if you're feeling tired or sore. Otherwise an easy technique session in your weakest discipline	Optional session, 30-60mins. Work on your weakest discipline with a technique focus	Day off

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Block 3 Getting ready to race

	WEEK 9	WEEK 10	WEEK 11	WEEK 12
MON	Swim with tri club or Masters squad, 75-90mins. Easy to steady paced swim working on longer reps if possible	Squad swim session, 60mins. Use the others around you to push yourself in this session. S+C, 20-30mins. Light session working core and swim muscles	Fartlek run, 30-40mins. Start at an easy pace focusing on technique then alternate between tempo and steady pace every 60secs for 12-20mins. 5mins easy jog to finish	Swim on your own, 30mins. Mainly easy but include 4-5 x 100m at race tempo with 20secs recovery between. Swim in your wetsuit for the warm-up if using it in the race
TUE	Progressive run, 50-60mins. 10mins of light core exercises before you start. Begin at an easy pace then increase speed every 12-15mins until you reach tempo intensity. 5mins easy to finish	Easy run, 30-40mins. Concentrate on technique. Try some barefoot running if you have a safe place to do so but only for 5-10mins	Easy swim, 45mins. Working on base endurance. Long reps over race distance at an easy pace. Try to be as relaxed in the water as possible. Use your wetsuit if you can	Day off. Light massage or stretching session
WED	Bike hill reps, 75-90mins. Find a hill 4-6mins long. Ride up 4-6 times at a hard intensity. Stay in seat and spin 85-90 cadence. Recover on the way down	Day off. Massage or 30mins stretching. Book bike to be serviced early. Start making sure all your race equipment is ready to be used	Day off. If you haven't already, now is a good time to start doing some pre-race visualisation. Go through the race day in your mind and see yourself performing well and dealing calmly with any circumstance you may encounter	Bike, 30-40mins. Concentrate on cadence and smooth pedalling. Mainly easy but include 3 x 2mins at race pace and 3 x 15secs at a hard intensity with lots of recovery between. Check gears and brakes
THURS	Day off. On the home stretch now and the bulk of the work is done. Try to get plenty of sleep and stay on top of your nutrition	Optional session, 60-90mins. Do a long easy session in the discipline you feel least confident about. Go out and enjoy yourself with no pressure	Steady bike, 60mins. Include some technique work to begin with then 20-30mins steady-paced riding concentrating on smooth pedalling and keeping cadence high	Day off! Light massage or stretching session. Get all race kit ready and put it in one place ready to be packed. Double check race official race info
FRI	Steady swim, 60mins. 300-400m warm up including some kicking and drilling. Main set of 500m – 400m – 300m – 200m – 100m all at steady pace with 50 – 40 – 30 – 20secs recovery between	Interval run, 50-60mins. 10mins building from easy to steady pace. 3-4 x 60-80m accelerations to hard pace. 3-5 x 1,200m at a hard pace – 10% above race pace – with 60-90secs recovery between each. 10mins easy warm down then 10mins stretching	Tempo and sprint swim session, 60mins. A mix of 400-500m of tempo 100m reps and 100-200m of max 25m reps with 50% recovery to exercise ratio	Easy run, 10-15mins. Preferably on soft surface with 3 x 30secs at target race pace. 10-15mins of light stretching to follow. Pack race bag and use checklist to cross reference
SAT	Progressive bike, 2hrs. 75mins steady with 30mins of low cadence riding – 75-80 cadence – to fatigue legs. Follow this with 45mins at a tempo or race pace riding normal cadence – 85-95. 10-15mins run off bike easy to steady concentrating on form	Steady bike in the hills, 90mins-2hrs. If you struggle to find hills around you, then on the turbo vary the resistance to simulate climbing	Bike to run brick session, 90mins. Steady bike with last 20mins at tempo pace. 20mins run off bike – begin first 10mins at target race pace then finish last 5mins at easy pace	Easy swim. 400-500m with 200-300m at race intensity. Easy spin. 15-20mins on the bike – check everything is working. Include 3-5mins at race pace
SUN	Long run, 60-75mins. Easy pace. Make sure you start conservatively and try to gently build pace through the run. Finish feeling good. 10mins stretching to finish	Open-water swim, 45-60mins. Easy swim just enjoying swimming in the open	Day off! Chill out and enjoy a lie in	Race! Get there in plenty of time so you can have a recce and be relaxed. Remember, the goal is to enjoy yourself so work on staying calm

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