

HILL SESSIONS

Nik presents four workouts, each designed to get the most out of an off-road incline

SESSION 1 TECHNIQUE/NEUROMUSCULAR FIRING

DURATION: 40mins

HILL REQUIRED: Off-road, as steep as possible and it only needs to take 10-20secs to run.

BENEFITS: This one will hard-wire good technique, the 100% intensity will enhance your brain-to-muscle link and you'll build strength and power. If you tend to shuffle when you run, this is the session for you.

WARM-UP: 10mins jogging to the bottom of the hill and then 10mins working through a dynamic stretching routine, including knee raises, heel flicks, walking lunges and strides.

MAIN SESSION: 10-20 x [Sprint at 100% effort up the hill for 10secs. Emphasise a powerful arm-drive, fast legs and keep your head up. Jog/walk back down as 2min full recovery.] As soon as the quality starts to drop, end the session.

COOL-DOWN: 10mins easy jog home.

SESSION 2 RAMPED-CRUISE INTERVALS

DURATION: 60-80mins

HILL REQUIRED: A moderate grade (5%) hill that takes at least 5mins to run up. A road climb is okay for this session.

BENEFITS: This session develops your ability to pace consistently at threshold and to deliver a finishing kick when already fatigued and near your limit. It'll raise your functional threshold, which is important for triathletes of all distances, builds strength and develops mental toughness.

WARM-UP: A 10min jog to the bottom of the hill. Build gradually through HR Zones 1-2 and include 3-5 x 25m strides in the second 5mins.

MAIN SESSION: 4-6 x 5mins with 5min jog-down recoveries. Build through the first 2mins of each effort and aim to be in mid-Zone 4 as you go into min-3. Hold that intensity through min-4, noting where you reached on the hill at the end of that



↑ Running uphill can boost technique, strength, power, mental toughness, your ability to pace well...

minute. Surge through min-5 and finish with an all-out sprint. If you pace well, you should reach the same point on the hill on every rep at the end of min-4, but your sprint will probably tail off.

COOL-DOWN: 10mins easy jog home.

SESSION 3 UP-AND-OVER BRICKS

DURATION: 90-110mins (depending on pacing)

HILL REQUIRED: A steep hill (15% grade+), on- or off-road, that takes 60secs to run and then flattens off for 500m.

BENEFITS: One for the long-distancers. If you want to simulate that 'jelly legs' feel, and practise getting up to race pace on fatigued legs but don't have the time or inclination to do a regular brick, let the hills do the work for you.

WARM-UP: 10min jog to the bottom of the hill. Build gradually through HR Zones 1-2 and include 3-5 x 25m strides in the second 5mins.

MAIN SESSION: 10 x 60secs into an out-and-back 1km, with 2min recoveries. Run the hill hard, so that your legs are really burning when you hit the crest. You then have to settle into your

middle- or long-distance race pace on screaming legs (based on a 1km split) for the flat out-and-back 500m run. Jog back down for 2min recovery.

COOL-DOWN: 10min jog home.

SESSION 4 STING-IN-THE-TAIL REPS

DURATION: 2:20hrs+/- (depending on pace)

HILL REQUIRED: Steep and takes 2-3mins to run.

BENEFITS: If you're going long on a hilly course, you've got to be able to keep running up. You also need the pure leg strength to keep running downhill strongly. This session ticks both boxes.

WARM-UP: 90mins IM race-pace on undulating terrain, ending at the bottom of the hill. Check average pace as you arrive.

MAIN SESSION: 10 x ascents and descents of the hill, ensuring that average pace of whole run doesn't drop. Pace the ups and run strongly on the downs, but relax enough to recover.

COOL-DOWN: 10min jog home.

■ **Short on time? Turn the page for a sub-1hr all-over-body hill workout**

ESSENTIAL RUN KIT

When going off-road make sure you're kitted out accordingly, so as to stay safe, warm and comfortable. Here are Nik Cook's can't-do-without run essentials...



TRAIL/FELL SHOES

You'll find steeper hills off road and the softer surface when descending is far kinder on your body. Aggressively lugged trail or fell shoes will make sure you don't slip and slide.



BUM-BAG

You can leave it at the bottom of the hill, but it's handy for stowing a jacket for warming up and cooling down, and so that you can sip on a bottle between reps.



PILE OF PEBBLES

No joke - with an oxygen-depleted brain, counting is tough. Find enough pebbles for the reps you're doing, carry one up on each rep and, when the pile's gone, you're done!