

BEGINNER SWIM PROGRAM FOR THE NOVICE IRONMAN TRIATHLETE

I have compiled a very basic four-week program for the novice who is eyeing the 3.8km distance which comprises the swim leg of an Ironman. It must be said that one would have to possess a very basic form of swimming fitness coming into this program.

The complete 12-week program would comprise a lot more distance and require at least 4 swims per week, but that will come later. For now, we will concentrate on getting through this month long slog, which no doubt, will make you a stronger swimmer and at the least, you would be in great shape to tackle any half ironman swim course that is out there.

Follow the programs religiously and try and stagger the swim sessions over the course of a 7 day week. (Preferably Mon, Wed, Fri). I have also included a basic sample of a gym/weight program that you could add in as an extra (time permitting) that certainly goes a long way towards enhancing your swim fitness.

Swim Sessions (3 per week)

Swim Session 1:

- Warm-up 200m Swim - easy
- 10 x 50m swim - go moderate pace and rest 20 seconds after each 50m
- Easy 200m pulling recovery
- 2 x 400m swim (First one moderate, then rest 2 minutes, the 2nd one is hard)
- Easy cool down swim of 100m

Total mileage 1800m

Swim Session 2:

- Warm-up with a 200m swim, 100m kick, 200m pull
- Do a time trial of 1km, building up to 2km after the 4th week. This must be done at maximum effort.
- Concentrate on going hard for the first 200m. After that settle into a good pace for the rest of the swim
- 4 x 25m sprints max on 30 seconds
- Easy 100m swim to recover

Total mileage 1700m

Swim Session 3:

This is a hard session that works on your speed.

- Warm-up 400m easy
- Do 4 sets of 4 x 50m very hard, rest 20 seconds between each 50m. After each set rest a full minute
- Do an easy 200m after this set
- Do 2 sets of 4 x 100m very hard, rest 30 seconds after each. Rest 2 minute between the two sets
- Easy cool down of 200m
- 4 x 25m all out sprints, rest 1 minute between each

You will then do a 20 – 30 minute gym session as per the below guidelines:

GYM WORKOUT SAMPLE:

Abs:

4 sets of 20 repeats on the crunch flat bench
4 sets of 20 leg raises

Upper body for swim strength:

Lat machine pull downs
4 x 20 reps (weight med to heavy)

Triceps pushdowns
4 x 20 repeats (wide grip and narrow grip using the same bar you can do 2 exercises instead of just one just by altering the grip slightly)

Then

4 x 20 arm curl reps follow immediately before resting with another
4 x 20 reps of up right barbell shoulder rows and then again with
4 x 20 standing shoulder press

Repeat the above set 4 times

WEEK 2

Swim Session 1:

This is a basic brick swim session

- Do a 200m swim, then kick 100m, then use the pull buoys and swim another 200m. Do these sets 3 times in succession with no rest in between
- 8 x 25m (every 2nd one do butterfly, rest 30 seconds after each, swim hard on the freestyle lengths)
- Easy 100m cool down

Total mileage 1800m

Swim Session 2:

- Easy 200m warm-up swim
- 16 x 100m on 2 minutes or 2:30 (dependent on fitness level)
- This must be at 80% effort.
- Recover swim after the set of 200m

Total mileage 2km

Swim session 3:

- Warm-up 800m easy swimming
- 4 x 50m hard swimming on 60 seconds (leave the wall every minute)
- 100m easy swimming after set
- 4 x 50m hard swimming on 55 seconds (if possible, or even 45 seconds)
- 100m easy swimming
- 8 x 25m maximum sprints, rest well after each sprint, at least 30 seconds

Recover and get out!!

Total mileage 1600m

Follow the swim session with a gym session after each swim workout (as per sample shown)

WEEK 3

Swim Session 1:

- Warm-up 200m swimming
- 1 x 500m maximum effort (record time)
- Easy 200 recovery swim
- 1 x 250m maximum effort (record time and try go faster than previous one)
- Easy 100m
- 3 x 100m moderate race pace effort (rest 1 minute between each 100m)
- Recovery swim of 100m easy

Total mileage 1650m

Swim Session 2:

- 6 x 50m swimming moderate on 60 seconds
- 6 x 50m kicking, rest 30 seconds after each, go hard
- 6 x 50m swimming hard on 60 seconds
- 3 x 100m swimming, moderate on 2 minutes
- 3 x 100m kicking, rest 20 seconds
- 3 x 100m hard swimming on 2 minutes or slightly quicker on 1:50 when fit

Easy 100m-recovery swim

Total mileage 1900m

Swim Session 3:

- 10 x 25m moderate sprints, rest 20 seconds
- 10 x 25m hard sprints, rest 30 seconds between each
- Easy 100m
- 10 x 25m moderate sprints, rest 10 seconds
- 10 x 25m hard sprints, rest 20 seconds between each
- Easy 100m
- 2 x 200m pulling easy, rest 2 minutes after each 200m
- 4 x 50m max sprints, rest 1 minute after each 50m
- 100m easy swimming

Total mileage 1900m

Once again, follow each session with gym workout as per guidelines. Opt to increase the weights in week 3 and increase the number of reps per set to 25 reps per set instead of normal 20.

WEEK 4

Swim Session 1:

- Warm-up 200 swim, 200m kick, 200m swim
- 5 x 200m at race pace effort, rest a full 1 minute between each set. (Swim this at your predicted ironman race pace)
- 200m easy recovery swim
- 2 x 25m max sprints on 25 seconds
- 50m easy to cool down

Total mileage 1900m

Swim Session 2:

- Warm-up 1km easy swimming (can do some pulling as well)
- Go hard for 500m then rest 1 minute, after that go hard again for 500m
- 4 x 25m sprints on 30 seconds
- Easy swim to cool down

Total mileage 2100m

Swim Session 3:

- Swim 100m, kick 50m, pull 100m (repeat 5 times no rest)
- 16 x 25m sprints, odd ones you do butterfly (rest 10 seconds after each one and 1 minute after set of 4)
- 200m easy cool down

Total Mileage 185

Do some gym sessions with extra cardio work on either the rowing machine or the treadmill runner. +- 20 minutes of this together with 30 minute weight session.