KICK START YOUR FITNESS WITH THIS FOUR-WEEK PLAN FOR FIRST-TIME TRIATHLETES

EVERYONE HAS to start somewhere, even world champions like Alistair Brownlee. So if you’re completely new to triathlon this is the best place to be. This four-week training plan is designed to get you into the swing of regular swim, bike and run training so you can soon start calling yourself a fully-fledged triathlete.

It will help you build a solid fitness foundation so that by the end of it, you’ll be in an ideal position to try any one of the race-specific training plans we publish every month in Triathlon Plus and our articles on Triradar.com. In fact, in next month’s issue we’ll even be giving away a free beginners supplement and a training plan that would be ideal for you after completing this one, to take you to your first tri race.

Anyone who’s reasonably fit and healthy can try this plan, but it’s always a good idea to get a check up from a doctor if you’re not 100% sure. And if you find the training too hard, please don’t give up straight away. Try halving or even quartering the distances for four weeks, and then increase them gradually from there until you can manage the full amount. These sessions shouldn’t kill you, so just reduce them if they’re too hard. It’s not a contest to see how much you can punish yourself. If you come from an individual swimming, cycling or running background, it’s not a bad idea to use this training plan to gradually build up your experience of the other two disciplines. For example, if you’re a runner, use these swimming and cycling workouts and stick with your existing run training.

Swim
The quickest way to improve your swimming is to invest in one-to-one lessons, so you don’t waste hours reinforcing bad technique later on. Get yourself some swim toys too. Start off with a pull-buoy, which goes between your thighs to help your legs float, and a float that you hold out in front of you to practise your kicking. You’ll also need a good pair of goggles that don’t steam up or leak, and a swimming costume that doesn’t flap about or restrict your stroke. Start your swim training in a local pool where they have separate lanes for serious swimmers (that’s you!) preferably when it’s quiet.

Bike
You don’t need a posh racing bike at this stage – any safe and functional bike will do as long as it fits you properly. You’ll need a helmet, mitts and padded cycling shorts too. There’s a lot to get your head around when you first start cycling, like maintenance, punctures, changeable weather and finding quiet routes. Even the hard saddle will take a few weeks to get used to. All these things get easier in time, so be patient.

Run
The key thing when you start running is moderation. Too much too soon, and you’ll get injured within a matter of weeks. Two or three runs a week is plenty. You don’t have to be breathing hard or feeling totally knackered for it to be effective training. Chill out, walk a bit, and you’ll gradually improve over the weeks and months, without succumbing to injury.
**WEEK 01**

- **Run**: 15 mins as run 1 minute, walk 1 minute
  - Notes: Make sure you start out with proper running shoes. Most running shops will recommend the best shoes for you, based on an analysis of your gait.

- **Swim**: 25m as alternating 25m FC, 25m KICK, 25m BREAST, 25m PULL, 25m SPRINT + 10 second rests
  - Notes: I’ll be varying the swim sets, so check out the KEY at the bottom of the page.

**Rest day**

- **Bike**: Ride 30 mins at a steady pace
  - Notes: On the flats, you should be going easy enough that you can breathe easily just through your nose if you choose.

**Weekend**

- **Sun**: Ride 60 mins at a steady pace, straight into run 60 mins alternating 1 minute run, 1 minute walk
  - Notes: Get your saddle height right. A general thumb is the saddle should be level with your hip when you are sitting. This can be adjusted for hillier terrain, and saddle can be tilted to change the angle. Some additional links at the end of this page.

**WEEK 02**

- **Run**: 30 mins as run 1 minute, walk 1 minute
  - Notes: You should have a hard run and try and run at a slightly faster pace. If that’s impossible shorter the runs and increase the walks.

- **Swim**: WU 6 x 50m as alternating FC, KICK, 25m REST, 25m PULL, 25m BREAST + 10 second rests
  - Notes: Work on an easy pace, but work hard on the hills.

**Rest day**

- **Bike**: Ride 45 mins at a steady pace
  - Notes: Some of your bike rides can be off-road if you prefer.

**Weekend**

- **Sun**: Ride 60 mins at a steady pace, straight into run 60 mins alternating 1 minute run, 1 minute walk
  - Notes: Keep your tyres up at the pressure recommended on their sidewall. An upright track pump is best.

**KEY**

- **WU**: Warm up
- **WD**: Warm down
- **MAIN**: Main set
- **FC**: Front crawl
- **BREAST**: Breaststroke
- **KICK**: Kicking with a kick float held at arms length
- **PULL**: Front crawl with a pull buoy between your legs.