



▶ TRAINING PLAN

Brain training for swimmers

Boost your swim fitness and technique, while maintaining bike and run speed. By **Phil Mosley**

There is a saying in swimming: “It’s not about how many metres you do, but what you do with those metres”. With this in mind, we designed this six-week plan to make you a faster swimmer. However, it’ll require a different approach to most of the other training plans we publish. You can’t afford to follow the sessions blindly and expect to improve. You’ll need to engage your brain during every swim and you’ll need to do some homework too.

Running and cycling are

cardiovascular activities, with some crossover training benefits. It’s not quite the same with swimming though. There are studies that compare age-group triathletes with masters swimmers, indicating that triathletes generally have significantly higher oxygen uptakes (or VO_2 max scores) but are significantly slower in the water. There’s more to swimming than fitness. You could swim all day long, but you’d improve a lot quicker by swimming regularly AND investing in your skill level and knowledge.

Invest in a few swim toys such as

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IS THIS PLAN FOR YOU?

Goal
Build swimming fitness

Timescale
6 weeks

Start point
Swim 400m (non-stop),
Cycle 1hr
30mins,
Run 40mins,

Level
Beginner to intermediate

fins, front-facing snorkel, swim metronome, hand paddles, ankle strap – there are plenty to choose from and they all develop specific areas of your stroke. You should continually research and learn about any drills we mention in this training plan (starting with TriRadar.com), so that you get them right. Drills are pointless otherwise.

For the next six weeks, spend 20 minutes each day watching online swim videos and reading about technique. Watch Olympic swim races on YouTube, read articles on the **SwimSmooth.com** website, look for “How To” guides on all four strokes and swot up on tumble turns. You might think it sounds crazy, but it really works.

This training plan should take care of the fitness side of things. There are also two short strength sessions, designed to work the muscles used in front-crawl swimming. Intensity descriptions are given in the Training Zones section (left). Swim warm-ups and warm-downs should be in Zones 1 or 2. All weights should be done at your 25-rep max (i.e. the highest weight you could do for 25 reps). Gradually increase the weight as you get stronger.

6 WEEK PLAN TRAINING ZONES GUIDE

DESCRIPTION	HEART RATE (%MAX)	RPE 1-10	ACCUMULATED	INTENSITY
Z1 Recovery	55-70	<2	1-6hrs	Easy
Z2 Endurance	70-75	2-3	1-3hrs	Steady
Z3 Tempo	75-80	3-4	50-90mins	Comfortable
Z4 Threshold	80-88	4-6	10-60mins	Uncomfortable
Z5 VO_2 max	89-100	>7	12-30mins	Hard to very hard

KEY

WU Warm-up, **MAIN** Main set, **WD** Warm-down, **FC** Front crawl, **PULL FC** with a pullbuoy, **KICK** Kick with a float held out in front, **BACK** Backstroke, **BREAST** Breaststroke, **FISTS FC** with clenched fists, **SINGLE** Single arm FC drill, **BUILD** Each rep faster than the previous, **TOYS** Swim toys (such as hand paddles), **CATCH** Catch-up drill, **DOG** Doggy paddle drill



	DAY		ESSENTIAL WORKOUT		OPTIONAL WORKOUT
WEEK 1	Mon	Swim	WU 3x(100m FC, 50m SINGLE, 100m PULL, 50m FISTS) MAIN 2x(4x100m FC) as: 100m Z2 +20secs rest, 100m Z3 +25secs rest, 100m Z4 +30secs rest, 100m Z5 (+100m FC recovery at 4/10)	Gym weights	2x15 assisted pull-ups, 2x15 tricep assisted dips, 15 press-ups + 60-secs rests
	Tue	Run	WU 10mins in Z2. 5mins as (15secs Z4, 45secs Z2) MAIN 9x60secs in Z4 +60secs recoveries in Z1/Z2 WD 5-10mins in Z2		RECOVERY
	Wed	Swim	WU 100m each FC, SINGLE, PULL MAIN 5x100m FC Z2 +10secs, 5x100m FC Z3 +10secs, 4x100m FC Z4 +10secs, 1x100m FC Z5. Subtract 2mins 20secs from total for est. 1500m time WD 100m BACK, KICK, BREAST	Bike	WU 10mins in Z2. 5mins as (15secs Z4, 45secs Z2) MAIN 3x9mins in upper Z3 to low Z4 +60secs recoveries in Z1 WD 5mins in Z2
	Thur		RECOVERY		RECOVERY
	Fri	Swim	WU 3x100m TOYS OR PULL +15secs rests, 100m FC MAIN 4x(200m PULL Z3 +15secs rest, 4x50m FC Z5 +30secs rest) WD 200m FC/BACK, 100m KICK as (25m Z5, 25m Z2)	Gym weights	2x15 assisted pull-ups, 2x15 tricep assisted dips, 17 press-ups + 60-secs rests
	Sat	Run	WU 10mins Z2, 5mins as (25secs Z3, 35secs Z2) MAIN 4x5mins in upper Z3 +60secs recoveries WD 5mins Z2		RECOVERY
	Sun	Bike	WU 20mins in Z2. 5mins as (15secs Z4, 45secs Z2) MAIN 5x5mins in upper Z3 to low Z4 +30secs recoveries in Z1 WD 20mins in Z2		RECOVERY
WEEK 2	Mon	Swim	WU 2x(50m FC, 50m BACK, 50m BREAST, 50m PULL, 100m KICK) +15secs rest MAIN 8x50m FC Z4 +15secs rest, 3x100m FC Z4 +30secs rest, 200m FC Z4 WD 200m KICK, 100m BACK, 100m BREAST	Gym weights	2x15 assisted pull-ups, 2x15 tricep assisted dips, 19 press-ups + 60-secs rests
	Tue	Run	WU 10mins in Z2. 5mins as (15secs Z4, 45secs Z2) MAIN 7x90secs in Z4 +60secs recoveries in Z1/Z2 WD 5-10mins in Z2		RECOVERY
	Wed	Swim	WU 2x(200m TOYS OR PULL, 100m FC) MAIN 4x50m FC Z4 +15secs, 2x100m FC Z4 +20secs, 200m FC Z4 +30secs, 2x100m FC Z4 +20secs, 4x50m FC Z4 +15secs WD 50m: FC, SINGLE, PULL, SINGLE, FC	Bike	WU 10mins in Z2. 5mins as (15secs Z4, 45secs Z2) MAIN 2x15mins in upper Z3 to low Z4 +90secs recovery in Z1 WD 5mins in Z2
	Thur		RECOVERY		RECOVERY
	Fri	Swim	WU 4x100 as (50m: KICK, FC, PULL, KICK) +20secs rests MAIN 8x50m FC Z4 +15secs rests, 200m Z2 as (100m FISTS, 100m FC), 4x100m FC Z4 +15secs rests, 200m Z2 as (100m FISTS, 100m FC) WD 100m BREAST, KICK, BACK, FC	Gym weights	2x15 assisted pull-ups, 2x15 tricep assisted dips, 21 press-ups + 60-secs rests
	Sat	Run	WU 10mins Z2, 5mins as (25secs Z3, 35secs Z2) MAIN 2x10mins in upper Z3 +60secs recovery WD 5mins Z2		RECOVERY
	Sun	Bikes	WU 20mins in Z2. 5mins as (15secs Z4, 45secs Z2) MAIN 5x6mins in upper Z3 to low Z4 +30secs recoveries in Z1 WD 20mins in Z2		RECOVERY
WEEK 3	Mon	Swim	WU 300m as (25m KICK/50m FC), 300m TOYS or PULL, 100m FC MAIN 4x200m FC as (50m each Z2, Z3, Z4, Z5) +30secs rests, 2x100m PULL Z3 +15secs rests WD 200m easy BACK/BREAST, 200m TOYS or PULL, 100m FC	Gym weights	2x15 assisted pull-ups, 2x15 tricep assisted dips, 23 press-ups + 60-secs rests
	Tue	Run	Easy Z2 run, soft ground		RECOVERY
	Wed	Swim	WU 2x200m as (50m FC, BACK, FC, KICK) +15secs, 200m alt (25m CATCH/25m FC) MAIN 4x200m Z4 as (100m FC/100m PULL) +45secs, 100m KICK Z2, 4x100m FC as (50 Z5, 50 Z1) +15secs rests WD 200m as (50m KICK, PULL)	Bike	WU 10mins in Z2. 5mins as (15secs Z4, 45secs Z2) MAIN 3x5mins in upper Z3 to low Z4 +60secs recoveries in Z1 WD 10mins in Z2
	Thur		RECOVERY		RECOVERY
	Fri	Swim	WU 200m FC, 100m BACK, 100m BREAST, 200m FC MAIN 400m FC Z3 +45secs, 300m PULL Z4 +30secs, 200m FC Z5 +60secs. 400 Z2 alt (100m TOYS OR PULL, 100m FC) WD 50m BACK, 50m BREAST, 50m FC, 50m PULL	Gym weights	2x15 assisted pull-ups, 2x15 tricep assisted dips, 25 press-ups + 60-secs rests
	Sat	Bike	Ride in Z2 (Z3 on the hills)		RECOVERY
	Sun	Run	Easy Z2 run, soft ground		RECOVERY



	DAY		ESSENTIAL WORKOUT		OPTIONAL WORKOUT
WEEK 4	Mon	Swim	WU 4x(50m FC, BACK, FC) +5secs MAIN 2x50m FC Z2 +10secs, 2x50m FC Z3 +15secs, 2x50m FC Z4 +20secs, 2x50m FC Z5 +25secs, 200m FC as (50 Z2, 50 Z3, 50 Z4, 50 Z5) WD 200m FC, 100m KICK, 200m PULL, 100m BACK	Gym weights	2x15 assisted pull-ups, 2x15 tricep assisted dips, 27 press-ups + 60-secs rests
	Tue	Run	WU 10mins in Z2. 5mins as (15secs Z4, 45secs Z2) MAIN 5x2mins in Z4 +60secs recoveries in Z1/Z2 WD 5-10mins in Z2		RECOVERY
	Wed	Swim	WU 2x(50m FC, 50m BACK, 50m FC, 50m BREAST) +15secs MAIN 2x(200m PULL Z2 +15secs, 100m FC Z4 +15secs), 2x200m FC as (100m Z3, 100m Z4) +45secs WD 200m as (50m KICK/50m FC) easy, 200m TOYS or PULL	Bike	WU 10mins in Z2. 5mins as (15secs Z4, 45secs Z2) MAIN 15, 10, 8 mins all in upper Z3 to low Z4 +90secs recovery in Z1 WD 5mins in Z2
	Thur		RECOVERY		RECOVERY
	Fri	Swim	WU 6x50 easy as (SINGLE/FC/CATCH/FC/FISTS/FC) +5secs MAIN 8x50m FC as (25 Z2, 25 Z5) +15secs, 4x50KICK at 9/10 +15secs, 4x100m FC at 8/10 +30secs WD 100m FC, 100m BACK, 200m TOYS or PULL, 100m FC	Gym weights	2x15 assisted pull-ups, 2x15 tricep assisted dips, 29 press-ups + 60-secs rests
	Sat	Run	WU 10mins Z2, 5mins as (25secs Z3, 35secs Z2) MAIN 5x5mins in upper Z3 +60secs recoveries WD 5mins Z2		RECOVERY
	Sun	Bike	WU 20mins in Z2. 5mins as (15secs Z4, 45secs Z2) MAIN 7x5mins in upper Z3 to low Z4 +30secs recoveries in Z1 WD 20mins in Z2		RECOVERY
WEEK 5	Mon	Swim	WU 2x100m (FC, BACK, BREAST, FC) +15secs. 2x100m KICK as (50m Z2, 50m Z5) +30secs MAIN 8x100m FC alt (100m Z2, 100m Z4) +15secs, 100m FC Z1, 4x100m PULL (25 Z2, 50 Z4, 25 Z2) +15secs WD 3x100 (50m DOG/50m FC)	Gym weights	2x15 assisted pull-ups, 2x15 tricep assisted dips, 31 press-ups + 60-secs rests
	Tue	Run	WU 10mins in Z2. 5mins as (15secs Z4, 45secs Z2) MAIN 4x3mins in Z4 +60secs recoveries in Z1/Z2 WD 5-10mins in Z2		RECOVERY
	Wed	Swim	WU 2x(50m FC, 50m BACK, 50m BREAST, 50m PULL, 100KICK) +15secs rest MAIN 8x50m FC BUILD +15secs rests, 2x200m PULL Z4 +60secs rests, 4x100m FC Z4 +30secs rests WD 300m TOYS or PULL, 200m FC	Bike	WU 10mins in Z2. 5mins as (15secs Z4, 45secs Z2) MAIN 20mins, 15mins both in upper Z3 to low Z4 +90secs recovery in Z1 WD 5mins in Z2
	Thur		RECOVERY		RECOVERY
	Fri	Swim	WU 200m TOYS OR PULL, 100m FC, 200m TOYS OR PULL, 100m FC MAIN 10x100m FC alternating (100 in Z5/100 in Z2) +15secs rests WD 100m BACK, 100m FC, 100m BREAST, 100m FC	Gym weights	2x15 assisted pull-ups, 2x15 tricep assisted dips, 33 press-ups + 60-secs rests
	Sat	Run	WU 10mins Z2, 5mins as (25secs Z3, 35secs Z2) MAIN 15mins and 10mins, both in upper Z3 +90secs recovery WD 5mins Z2		RECOVERY
	Sun	Bike	WU 20mins in Z2. 5mins as (15secs Z4, 45secs Z2) MAIN 5x7mins in upper Z3 to low Z4 +30secs recoveries in Z1 WD 20mins in Z2		RECOVERY
WEEK 6	Mon	Swim	WU 50m SINGLE, 50m FC, CATCH, FC, DOG, FC, FISTS, FC MAIN 8x50 as (25FC Z5, 25FC Z1) +15secs rests, 200m PULL Z3, 4x50 as (25FC Z5, 25FC Z1) +15secs rests WD 50m KICK, FC, KICK, BACK, KICK, BREAST, FC	Gym weights	2x15 assisted pull-ups, 2x15 tricep assisted dips, 35 press-ups + 60-secs rests
	Tue	Run	Easy Z2 run, soft ground		RECOVERY
	Wed	Swim	WU 300 as (25m KICK/50m FC), 300m TOYS/PULL, 100m FC MAIN 4x100m FC BUILD +15secs, 200m PULL Z4 +45secs, 200m FC Z2 +30secs, 2x100m PULL Z4 +30secs WD 50m BACK, 50m BREAST, 50m KICK, 50m FC	Bike	WU 10mins in Z2. 5mins as (15secs Z4, 45secs Z2) MAIN 15mins in upper Z3 to low Z4 +60secs recoveries in Z1 WD 10mins in Z2
	Thur		RECOVERY		RECOVERY
	Fri	Swim	WU 100m FC, 50m SINGLE, 100m PULL, 50m FIST MAIN 4x(200m PULL Z2 +15secs rest, 4x50m FC Z5 +30secs rest) WD 200 TOYS or PULL	Gym weights	2x15 assisted pull-ups, 2x15 tricep assisted dips, 37 press-ups + 60-secs rests
	Sat	Bike	Ride in Z2 (Z3 on the hills)		RECOVERY
	Sun	Run	Easy Z2 run, soft ground		RECOVERY