

TIME-CRUNCHED IRONMAN PLAN

This kickstart plan will build a solid foundation to get you Ironman-ready without exceeding 18 training hours per week. **By Cliff English**

Sixteen weeks is ample time to prepare solidly for an Ironman. The first phase of this plan is geared towards creating consistency with your training and adapting to the structure and routine. I recommend that athletes starting this program have at least a few weeks of

training under their belt—they should be able to ride for 3 hours and run 75-90 minutes. I also strongly recommend that athletes train lightly the week prior to starting this program. Ideally you should start an Ironman block rested and healthy. Look at your year and figure out if

you are racing 70.3s or other distances prior to the IM block. You should finish your races a week or two prior to starting this plan, and preferably after a little break. I like to make sure all my athletes (pros included) take a break for 5-7 days prior to building up for an Ironman. I also recommend doing a tune-up race around weeks 9-12.

The first 4 weeks slowly ramps up in training volume. There is some sport-specific strength work through hill repeats in the bike and run. I also prescribe a very basic core strength program for the duration of the plan.

KEY:

' = minutes
" = seconds
(x") = recovery
RPM = revolutions per minute, or bike cadence
S = swim workout
B = bike workout
R = run workout
G = gym & strength
P = performance pointer

WEEK 1	
MON	Day off; Include 5-10' of foam rolling or a light stretch.
TUE	R 55', strength. 20' warm-up. 5x(1' hill repeat on 3-4% grade @ half marathon effort, 1' easy walk or jog recovery). 5' easy. 5x(1' pick ups on flat terrain up to half marathon effort with good cadence, 1' easy). 10' cool-down.
WED	S 50', 2500. 400 choice (15"). 6x50 as 25 drill choice/25 free (15"). 4x400 @ IM effort and can use pull buoy (15"). 200 cool-down. B 75', strength. 30' warm-up. 2x(5' climbs in Zone 3 or 70.3 effort/5' easy). If you do not have hills, you can do this as a big gear session and keep cadence at 75 RPM in a larger gear. 25' cool-down.
THU	R 50', fartlek. 20' warm-up. 8x60" (90"). All at 10K pace, controlled and with good form and cadence around 90 RPM. 10' cool-down.
FRI	S 55', 2500. 4x200 choice of stroke warm-up (15"). 4x50 as 25 drill choice/25 free (10"). Main set: 2x(5x100 @ IM effort (15"), 100 easy (15")). 300 cool-down w/ some kicking w/ board. G 15', basic core strength program. 1 type core, 2 sets of 20 reps. 1 type core on ball, 2 sets of 20 reps. Planks/body bridge holding good horizontal body position 2-4 x 30-45" and build up to 60". Rest is 20-30" between sets.
SAT	B 3.5 hours, long IM pacing. 45' warm-up, 3x30' @ IM effort, 15' easier recovery pace, 45' cool-down.
SUN	R 90', long IM pacing. 10-12 miles. 4 mile warm-up, 4-6 miles @ IM effort, 2 mile cool-down. B 60-90', light active recovery bike after run.

WEEK 2	
MON	Day off; P Include 5-10' of foam rolling or a light stretch. G 15', basic core strength program. 1 type core, 2 sets of 20 reps. 1 type core on ball, 2 sets of 20 reps. Planks/body bridge holding good horizontal body position 2-4 x 30-45" and build up to 60". Rest is 20-30" rest between sets.
TUE	R 60', strength. 20' warm-up. 5x(2' hill repeat on 3-4% grade @ half marathon effort, 1' easy walk or jog recovery). 5' easy. 5x(1' pick ups on flat terrain up to half marathon effort with good cadence, 1' easy). 10' cool-down.
WED	S 50', 2500. 400 choice (15"). 6x50 as 25 drill choice/25 free (15"). 4x400 @ IM effort, pull buoy optional (15"). 200 cool-down. B 75', strength. 30' warm-up. 2x(5' climbs @ Zone 3 or 70.3 effort/5' easy). If you do not have hills you can do this as a BIG gear session and keep cadence at 75 RPM. 25' cool-down.
THU	R 60', fartlek. 20' warm-up. 2x(4/3/2/1' all w/ 1' easy recovery between each and 2' between sets). All @ 10K effort. Note your splits. 10' cool-down.
FRI	S 65', 3400. 600 choice. 4x50 as 25 drill choice/25 free (10"). 4x50 as build (15"). 200 easy choice swim (15"). Main set: 2x(400 @ IM effort (20"), 4x100 @ Olympic-distance effort (15"), 100 easy (15")). 400 cool-down w/ some kicking w/ board. G 15', basic core strength program. 1 type core, 2 sets of 20 reps. 1 type core on ball, 2 sets of 20 reps. Planks/body bridge holding good horizontal body position 2-4 x 30-45" and build up to 60". Rest is 20-30" between sets.
SAT	B 4 hours, long IM pacing. 60' warm-up. 3x35' @ IM effort, 15' easier recovery pace. 45' cool-down. P Nutrition/fueling. Time to start being aware of how many calories you are taking in per hour and in what form. Gels, liquid fuel, bars? Start nailing down the products you like and use them. You should be drinking at least 16-20 oz per hour and I always recommend a little salt as well—1-2 tabs per hour, even in training. R 15', 5' easy, 5' @ IM effort, 5' easy
SUN	R 1:45-2 hours, long IM pacing. 14 miles. 4 mile warm-up. 2x(4 miles @ IM effort w/ 1-2' walk or jog recovery). 2 mile cool-down. B 60-90', light active recovery bike after run.

WEEK 3	
MON	Day off; this will be an unload (recovery) week to allow for training adaptation.
TUE	S 30', 2000. 2x300 choice warm-up (15"). 4x100 w/ good stroke (15") moderate. 2x400 pull buoy moderate (15"). 200 cool-down.
WED	B 60-90', easy, active recovery.
THU	R 40-50', light run on trails or road. G 15', basic core strength program. 1 type core, 2 sets of 20 reps. 1 type core on ball, 2 sets of 20 reps. Planks/body bridge holding good horizontal body position 2-4 x 30-45" and build up to 60". Rest is 20-30" between sets.
FRI	S 65', 3000. 600 choice warm-up. 3x100 as 25 drill/75 swim (15"). 3x100 as 50 build/50 easy (15"). 4x300 @ IM effort (15"). 300 cool-down.
SAT	B 3 hours, 50 miles. 10-15 miles warm-up. Main set: 15 miles @ IM effort, 5 miles easier, 10 miles @ half IM effort. 5 miles cool-down. R 15', off the bike. 5' easy, 5' @ IM effort, 5' cool-down.
SUN	R 75', tempo. 25' warm-up. 2x15' (5' easy), 1 @ marathon effort, 1 @ half marathon effort. 10' cool-down.

WEEK 4 Start of a two-week build phase	
MON	S 70', 3700. 6x200 (20") warm-up: 2 as choice, 2 as drill of choice, 2 as choice. 12x50 (10"): 1 w/good stroke, 1 as build, 1 as fast, 1 easy, repeat 4x. 5x300 (20"): odds: IM effort, evens: 70.3 effort. 400 cool-down. G 15', basic core strength program. 1 type core crunches 2 sets of 20reps, 1 type core on ball 2 sets of 20 reps, planks/body bridge holding good horizontal body position 2-4 x 30-45sec and build up to. Rest is 20-30sec rest between sets. P After swim and include a little stretch.
TUE	R 50-65', strength. Moderate effort or rolling terrain.
WED	B 2 hours. 45' warm-up: 3x(10' climbs getting up to Olympic-distance effort, 5' easy). 30' cool-down. (You can adjust duration of climb based on hill length available). P This can be a trainer ride to save time. If so, do 30' warm-up and 5x(6' BIG gear work at 60-75 RPM, 3' easy spin recovery) Alternate 70.3 effort and Olympic-distance effort. 15' cool-down. 90' total. S 40', active recovery. 600 warm-up (15"). 5x200 good stroke and moderate effort (15") . 400 choice cool-down.
THU	R 65', fartlek. 25' warm-up. 6x(3' as 1-3 from 70.3 effort to 10K effort, 2' easy jog recovery). 10' cool-down.
FRI	S 70', 3500. 800 choice (15"): 4x100 as 25 drill choice /75 swim (15"), 4x(4x100, 100 easy). Rounds 1 and 3 @ Olympic-distance effort. Rounds 2 and 4 @ IM effort. 300 cool-down. G 15', basic core strength program. 1 type core, 2 sets of 20 reps. 1 type core on ball, 2 sets of 20 reps. Planks/body bridge holding good horizontal body position 2-4 x 30-45" and build up to 60". Rest is 20-30" between sets.
SAT	B 4.5 hours, long IM pacing. 85-90 miles. 15-20 mile warm-up. Main set: 3x5 miles @ IM effort, 5 miles easy. 10 mile cool-down. P Record your fluid intake and the amount of calories per hour. R 30', off the bike. 5' easy, 10' @ IM effort. 15' cool-down.
SUN	R 1:50, IM pace. 25' warm-up. Take a couple minutes to do some dynamic stretches to get ready for this run. 3x(20' @ IM effort, 5' easy—can be walk-run and be sure to hydrate). 10' cool-down. B 60', Light active recovery.

WEEK 5	
MON	S 70', 3500. 4x300 (20") warm-up: 2 as choice, 1 as drill of choice, 1 as choice. 400 as 50 build/ 50 easy. 500, 400, 300, 200, 100 all w/ (20"). Starting @ IM effort for 500 and 400 and build to Olympic-distance effort by 200 and 100. 400 cool-down. G 15', basic core strength program. 1 type core, 2 sets of 20 reps. 1 type core on ball, 2 sets of 20 reps. Planks/body bridge holding good horizontal body position 2-4 x 30-45" and build up to 60". Rest is 20-30" between sets.
TUE	R 65', strength. 25' warm-up. 6x(3' hill repeats @ 70.3 effort on 3-4% grade, 2' easy jog recovery). Use good form! 10' cool-down.
WED	B 2 hours. 45' warm-up. 6x(5' climbs getting up to Olympic-distance effort, 5' easy). 15' cool-down. (You can adjust duration of climb based on hill length available). P This can be a trainer ride for time efficiency. If so, do 30' warm-up and 5x(6' BIG gear work at 60-75 RPM, 2' easy spin recovery). Alternate 70.3 effort and Olympic-distance effort. 15' cool-down. 90' total. S 45', active recovery. 600 warm-up (15"). 1000 good stroke (15") moderate effort. 400 choice cool-down.
THU	R 75', tempo. 25' warm-up. 4-5 x (1 mile @ 70.3 effort, 2' easy jog recovery). 10' cool-down.
FRI	S 75', 4000. 2x400 choice (15") warm-up. 400 as 25 drill choice/75 swim (15"). 4x(600 @ IM effort 30"). 400 cool-down. G 15', basic core strength program. 1 type core, 2 sets of 20 reps. 1 type core on ball, 2 sets of 20 reps. Planks/body bridge holding good horizontal body position 2-4 x 30-45" and build up to 60". Rest is 20-30" between sets.
SAT	B 5.5 hours, long IM pacing. 100 miles: 20 mile warm-up. Main set: 3x20 miles @ IM effort, 5 miles easy. 10 mile cool-down. R 30', off the bike. 5' easy. 15' @ IM effort. 10' cool-down.
SUN	R 2:05, long IM pacing. 25' warm-up. Take a couple minutes to do some dynamic stretches to get ready for this run! 3x(25' @ IM effort, 5' easy and can be walk-run and be sure to hydrate). 10' cool-down. B 60', light active recovery.

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