

Swim for Tri : SFT SWIM PLANS

Introduction to Fitness Training



Please note photographs throughout are from lessons and not always instructional.

Introduction to fitness training

Head swim coach at SFT, Dan has been coaching since 1990 and holds ASCA, BTF and ASA swim qualifications. He is a talented swimmer, former Triathlete and an Open Water swimmer who has helped thousands get fit and faster, from their first novice triathlon to swimming The Channel. Dan has been the National Masters Open Water Champion repeatedly since 2008.

He was the British Age Group Record Holder for 800m front crawl, European Masters medalist and has completed several Ironman competitions.

In 2004 Dan was awarded The 220 Triathlon Magazine Coach of the Year and was runner up in 2016. Numerous Kona qualifiers have come from the SFT fitness sessions. Duathletes have been converted to champion Triathletes and several AG Triathletes to Professionals.

This two-week plan is to help introduce you to fitness swimming and makes an ideal pathway to our longer training plans or our fitness group sessions (see www.swimfortri.com). All aspects of swimming need good technique, so you will find a mix of drills and skills to develop your FC stroke while building fitness.

This plan is designed to help you gently back to some swim fitness via some structured sessions. You do not have to swim hard or fast, just try to complete all the sessions. Space the sessions out so you can recover between them. The drills, techniques and swim terminology will build nicely to our longer plans and leave you ready to start preparing for our fitness sessions or swim technique sessions. Make use of swim accessories where appropriate and add fins to make drills more accurate. Please email dan@swimfortri.com for more info on swim accessories and how best to use fins / paddles / pull buoy or snorkel. Novice and Intermediate options are guides for current ability, you might be a faster swimmer but unfit or not have enough time to do the Intermediate distance so it is not set in stone. It would be better to perform 3 shorter sessions rather than to do 1 big session and get overly fatigued and ruin sessions 2 and 3 or leave the others and only swim once per week allowing 6 days of swim unlearning which will harm progress. Swim continuity is key here.

Post swim is the time to stretch tired shoulders if you are looking to supplement your training further with Yoga or Pilates movements. Avoid static stretching ahead of the swimming. Mobile shoulders and ankles will help you create streamlined positions in the water. The Pilates Swimmer movement will help to correct kicking from the knee, which sinks the legs, by creating a straighter leg position in the water.



Dan Bullock
Swim for Tri

SIMPLE WARM UP

A simple warm up to include ahead of any main set:

- 50m FC <2Lengths in a 25m pool>, easy swimming full stroke, stretch out and start to think about your swimming. 50 with a pull buoy – between the thighs to encourage arms only pulling.
- 50m FC – keep the head still unless turning to breathe, keep the kick small and streamlined.
- 50m with a pull buoy between the legs, but this time open and close the hands, 4 strokes at a time as an introduction to a swimming drill.

For intermediate ability, perform this set twice through.

Try to conclude each fitness main set with 50m easy to relax and recover.

POST PLAN

POST PLAN – at a convenient time after the completion of the plan. Perform the usual warmup and add some preferred drills before continuing with a continuous swim. Aim to swim continuously for 10 minutes, or 20 minutes if you started with 10 minutes on week 1. Did you match or beat double your distance from the first test swim?

If you do not record a further distance you might need to focus more on some pure technical aspects to your stroke to find if something mechanical is holding back your speed. During an easy 'swim down' at the end of a session run a FC diagnostic to check your technique:

- Do your palms send water back towards your feet or to the bottom of the pool?
- Are the arm pathways pulling with symmetrical movements?
- Do toes point backwards with a streamlined kick or down to the bottom of the pool?
- Is kicking from the knee with a two way pivot to send water up to the surface and sink the legs keeping you swimming uphill?

If you can swim significantly faster with a pull buoy or your stroke count is over 25 (single arms) in a 25m pool then you could definitely improve with some technical guidance.



1 WEEK 1: SESSION 1

Teaching point: taking something away encourages the body to compensate. We clench the fist to utilise more of the forearm as the hand slips through the water. When the hand reopens, the sensation of holding the water and feeling a connection with it is heightened: a great way to make it feel a little more solid and less 'slippery.'



Fist drill: simply clench one or both fists for a set number of strokes

MAINSET

25m FC drill - 2 strokes both fists clenched, 8 strokes normal hand shape. Repeat this drill sequence for the length before continuing with 75m FC at 60% effort.

Rest 30s

25m FC drill - 2 strokes both fists clenched, 4 strokes normal FC. Continue into 75m FC at 60% effort. Rest 30s

25m FC drill - half a length with one fist clenched, the other hand normal, into half length the opposite fist clenched, the other hand normal. Continue into 75m FC at 60% effort. Rest 30s

Add your pull buoy then swim half a length with one fist clenched, the other hand normal, into half a length the opposite fist clenched, the other hand normal. Continue into 75m FC at 60% effort.

Rest 30s

Novice – 1 set **400m**
Intermediate – 2 sets **800m**

2 WEEK 1: SESSION 2

Teaching point: slowing the stroke down allows a greater accuracy of hand pathways under the body. Alternating single arms i.e. 'catch up' is a great drill for this. Fins will make the drill easier.

NOVICE MAINSET

4 × 125m swum as:

Odd swims comprise 100m at 60% pace into 25m of 10-kick catch-up. Take 10 kicks between each arm cycle; arms remain outstretched in front during kick. Optional fins on the drill section.



Catch up drill: alternate single arms

Even swims comprise 25m of 10-kick catch up into 100m of FC at 75% effort.

Rest 30s between each 125m

500m

INTERMEDIATE MAINSET

4 × 200m swum as:

Odd swims comprise 150m at 60% pace into 50m of 10-kick catch-up – add fins? Take 10 kicks between each arm cycle

Even swims: 50m of 10-kick catch up into 150m of FC at 75% effort.

Rest 30 between 200m

800m

3 WEEK 1: SESSION 3

After the usual warmup, aim to swim continuously for 5 minutes, or 10 minutes if starting from a reasonable level of fitness (intermediate level). Record the distance travelled: we will make use of this at the end of the plan to check progress.

- Swim down 100m with fins, paddles and a snorkel (or slightly reduced breathing pattern so you can watch the hands pulling under the body for longer before the breathing interruption)
- Swim easy 100m with fins and paddles
- Swim easy 100m with fins, by using all the equipment to bolster the swim technique 'artificially' after the stress of this tough mainset.

4 WEEK 2: SESSION 1

Teaching point: Maintain an even stroke count on this set, concentrate on an unhurried stroke. Fingertips point downwards when pushing the water backwards, palms to face towards the wall you are swimming away from; try not to rush the arm pull, else the hands will slip under the body with no reward of the body moving forwards.



Pull buoy can sit between the thighs, or ankles for a harder technical effort

INTERMEDIATE START HERE

250m FC with a slightly more challenging breathing pattern ("BP") than normal. Try to maintain a similar stroke count throughout. Every 3rd if 2nd is usual? Every 4th if 3rd is usual perhaps.

NOVICE START HERE

- 200m pull with paddles & snorkel. Keep the head still unless turning to breathe
- 150m no accessories but try to maintain a similar stroke count throughout
- 100m pull with paddles & snorkel. Keep the head still
- 50m no accessories but try to reduce stroke count by 1 per length to refocus on good technique

NOVICE start at the 200m swim and work down 500m

INTERMEDIATE start at the 250m and work down 750m

5 WEEK 2: SESSION 2

Teaching point: The extension position is a wonderfully versatile body position drill that helps many aspects of your FC: breathing to both sides, streamline, discovering a leg kick that will help the body rotate but not be massively propulsive (which would be fatiguing). Keep the head still facing down unless turning to breathe to the side as low as you can.

NOVICE 8 × 75m FC, rest 20s

between each swim, swum as **Odd swims:** first length should be swum as **Extension Drill** (half a length left arm outstretched, half a length right arm outstretched). Add fins to make the drill more accurate then continue into 50m FC

Even swims: full stroke FC, steady but technically as good as you can, taking from the previous drill where the body would have worked harder to achieve streamline and balance **600m**

INTERMEDIATE 8 × 125m FC, rest 20s between each swim

Odd swims: first 50m of each 125m should be swum as **Extension Drill** (1 length left arm outstretched into 1 length right arm outstretched)

Even swims: full stroke FC, steady but technically as good as possible, taking from the previous drill where the body would have worked harder to use a small leg kick to assist balance and rotation. Keep the chin pointing down during the drill. Breathe low to the side, try to keep the lower goggle submerged **1000m**

6 WEEK 2: SESSION 3

Teaching point: Maintain good technique throughout, take more rest if you feel that your technique is falling apart. Count strokes per length and if the number goes up dramatically then rest more. Fatigued swimming with poor technique is not going to help you swim faster.

NOVICE

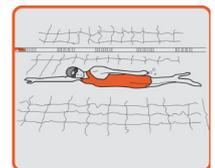
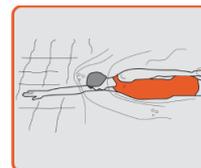
300m FC (swum alternating 50m with a pull buoy, 50m without)

Rest 45s then swim:

200m FC increase effort in blocks of 50m, at 50%, 60%, 70%, 80% **500m**

INTERMEDIATE 2x the following 300m FC (swum as 50m with a pull buoy, 100m without, repeat, add paddles and snorkel for 50% of the swim) rest 30s

200m FC increasing effort in blocks of 50m, at 50%, 60%, 70%, 80% **1000m**



The extension position: stretch out, arms don't move, use fins to assist



Swim for Tri, based in London but now coaching across the UK, is a swim technique and coaching concept brought to you by the brother and sister team of Dan and Keeley Bullock. The team share over 30 years experience of competitive swimming, coaching, teaching swim lessons and direct involvement with the sport of Triathlon and Openwater racing as competitors and Coaches.

In the last 13 plus years, the dedicated team at Swim For Tri and their teaching methods have helped thousands to faster and easier swim sections of their races.

Swim for Tri are proud to be:

- Selected swim training partner to CLUB LA SANTA
- Speedo openwater coaching advisors
- 220 Magazine award winner and columnist
- TRIATHLETE EUROPE and H2Openwater Magazines columnist
- Featured Swim Coach on the Joe Beer and Steve Trew training camps

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