
THE ORGANIZED TRIATHLETE

Your training and fitness are 100% affected by how you manage your life. Here are six tips to help you save time for your training.

Tip #1 — First you need to merge your calendars.

Many of you have committed to a training program and now you are struggling with how to juggle everything. You have your schedule and you know what to do, but simply knowing what to do isn't the same as getting them done. The first step is to merge your training schedule with your business and family calendars.

I recommend sitting down every Sunday night, pulling out your training plan and lining it up next to your calendar and scheduling your workouts into your calendar as if they were meetings or appointments. This act will not only reinforce the fact that you're going to do these workouts, it will also help you set expectations around which days might require a car pool or very early workout.

Weekly planning also lets you stay on top of other schedules. Sometimes the coached workouts happen at a specific time. Enter those workouts into your calendar first. You don't want to the mistake of showing up to the pool, or the gym, at the wrong time. You should also schedule the workouts that are dependent on a class. Let's say you have an 8-mile run on a Friday. Figure out how long it will take you to run, shower and change and block that time off on your calendar. The more specific the better. It should be something like "6 am-7:45 am run Cohasset course". This helps you get very realistic about your time so you don't cram too much into your day (this is a BIG ONE for me!)

Don't mess up your training, but double up if you can. That means you can try combine workouts for maximum impact. If you have 2 workouts in one day, you might need to split them based on how much time you have before and after work. But if you can lift right after you swim (for instance), you only take ONE shower, which can be a huge time saver. Likewise, think about lifting before your ride. You probably won't have to shower after you lift, so do that first.

Check the forecast. I have used some online apps to notify me if there is going to be rain or snow the next day. I have set those up to send to my phone at 8 PM, this way I have plenty of time to adjust my workouts and prepare accordingly. When you are getting your workout gear ready for the next day, it's critical to plan for the weather.

Tip # Two – Prepare Monthly

You also do need a larger sense of planning to ensure that the daily stuff goes well. Try to set aside one day a month where you check your supplies of training fuel, order new running shoes, clean out the workout bags, etc. This might not take much time, and once a month might seem too often if you also do things as they occur. But scheduling half an hour the first Sunday of every month will remind you to stay on top of things.

You could also schedule one day a month where you read all the articles that your coach has sent, or you double check your training log to see if you've missed anything. Keep a list of future scheduling conflicts that require your attention and schedule time to resolve them.

Tip #3 – Pre-Workout Rituals

Another easy way to save time is to make sure that your pre-and post workout actions are totally scripted. Preparing your workout bag, loading your pre- and post- workout fuel, even scheduling your shower helps you from rushing around or getting slammed for time. If you block off a set amount of time, it might be easier to see that you need to leave the house 15 minutes earlier.

Keep track of how long the prep takes. At first it will take a while and you get faster at the prep as you do it over and over. But if you think it takes you 10 minutes to get ready for your ride and it actually takes you 20 you can plan accordingly. I'm a strong advocate for getting everything ready the night before. Most people are a LOT slower in the morning, and if you rush, you might forget something important. All of this is critical to make sure that you have your personal fitness "train" running on time.

It's very important for athletes to plan their meals. You will get very hungry when you amp up the training and if you don't plan, you'll end up grabbing junk. Pack your breakfast, lunch, and mid-afternoon snack. It gives you something to look forward to and ensures that you are eating well.

For simplicity sake, I like to do the same warm-up routine before similar workouts. Warming up before your workout improves the workout and reduces the chance of injury. If you the same one every time it's one less thing to think about and you're less likely to skip it.

Tip # 4 – Charge!

If your workouts are facilitated by a heart rate monitor, bike computer, electronic shifting, FitBit, headphones, etc. you will waste time if your equipment isn't charged when you are ready to go. Have a dedicated charging station for all your electronics with all the USB ports and cables you need. Your family will probably appreciate if you keep all that in an organized drawer, and you will be happy if that drawer also contains extra batteries!

Tip #5 — Be Proactive

Most people get between 300 and 500 miles out of their running shoes. You can be high tech and let Training Peaks keep track of the mileage on your shoes for you, or you can write date that you first started running in your new shoes on the side with a permanent marker. Whichever you choose, know what the limit is for your mileage on shoes and make a point of trading them out before your shins start hurting.

When it comes to your bike, some things need to be handled right away: wiping off your bike after each ride, tightening any screws you know are loose, changing out a tire that loses air in a week before it becomes a tire that goes flat in the middle of your ride.

Other things need maintenance every X number of miles. Don't wait until the teeth on your chain ring show signs of wear before you replace your chain.

Tip #6 — Have Extra Gear / Spare Stuff

There's nothing like missing a workout because you don't have the gear you need. If you are someone who shops online, you have to factor in delivery time – which will be down time – if you wear out or run out of something you need.

Have a swim bag with 2 sets of goggles and 2 swim caps so you don't show up at the pool without the equipment you need. Make sure you have enough workout clothes to see you through a day or two after you normally do laundry (just in case you can't get in done on your regular day). Throw away anything that is worn out or has gone funky. Once performance clothing goes bad, it's done. If it stretches out, it will end up chafing you, and if it stinks 5 minutes into your workout – even though it was fresh from the laundry – it's only going to get worse! Ditch it as soon as the workout is done.

For the bike, make sure that you have extra tubes, tires, and CO2 on hand. We talked about extra batteries, but you won't regret having zip ties, extra Allen wrenches and Velcro in your bike tool box.

If you find a pair of running shoes that you love, buy 3 pair! Trust me on this.