



Marathon Swims

5 weeks to a 5km Marathon Swim



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.

5 week swim training plan

Congratulations on entering and attempting the Marathon Swim! This plan will help guide you to a successful finish. Consistency is key here – some of the sessions might not feel long enough to help with a big 5km event but over 5 weeks, aiming for over 10 sessions, it will build up.

The following is a 5-week plan comprising various styles of sessions (fitness, technical and some with a long-distance theme) to help you break through to some faster and technically improved swimming. The main focus is helping you complete your first 5km pool swim.

Swimming the two key sessions each week will see you complete your aim of a 5km Marathon Swim if coming from a reasonable level of swim fitness and technique. Adding the additional long distance session will help you to a faster finish. If you skip a swim – tired, unwell, do not fancy it – do not clog up the following week squeezing 4 to 5 into one week. This will leave you with not enough recovery time to absorb the workload. Just let it go!

In addition to the 2 to 3 recommended swims per week any Pilates or yoga is going to be of use to help you remain healthy and recover. Keeping the shoulders healthy is key as you undertake a lot of swimming though this plan and at the event. Improving your swim technique will also help keep the shoulders pain free.

Fitness work is key, but we cannot neglect technique. A greater swim speed comes from an improvement in technique with fitness combined. Swim lessons will help your technique and improve your swim ability tremendously.

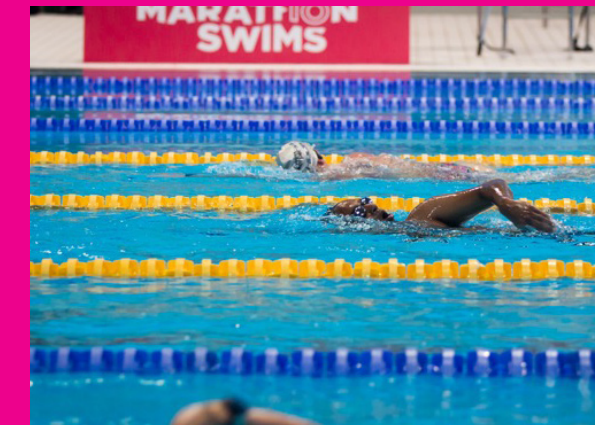
The sessions below do not include the traditional warmup, subset or cool down options so please follow this template to help build your session. Familiarise yourself with the standard warm-up and sub-set then insert the main set. By all means add the other strokes if and when you can. Not easy I appreciate in public sessions due to space but if you can swim them, your predominantly FC (front crawl) shoulders will appreciate some respite.

Most of us will train in 25m pools but you should try to visit a 50m to get familiar with the longer distance and fewer opportunities to stop and rest. Build into any 50m length, it is a long way and will take some getting familiar with. Your long-streamlined push-off counts for less here.

Print this off and keep up to date by adding any significant mile stones, stroke counts per 50m, totals swum, best times for best 100m or 400m options. Stare this in the face and be accountable for your swimming. Get the sessions done to the best of your ability. Always go to the pool with a plan.

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

SESSION STRUCTURE

WARM UP (300m)

- 100m FC, normal easy full stroke FC, avoid breaststroke & fly
- 100m FC, arms only with a pull buoy between the legs
Try at the ankles for a different effect
- 50m FC drill opening and closing the fists for 2-3 strokes at a time
- 50m choice



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

SUBSET (100m)

4 x 25m, rest 15 secs, fast arms with 4 strokes fists clenched into 4 strokes fast arms with normal hands, then easy for the rest of the length. Just looking to get the heart rate up ahead of the main set.

<insert the relevant main set from the following weeks selections here>

SFT SWIM DOWN (200m)

- 50m with fins, paddles and a snorkel if allowed
- 50m with fins and snorkel
- 50m with only the snorkel
- 50m no swim aids. The idea is that we bolster the stroke after the main set with the use of swim accessories. The paddles help anchor the hand, the fins drive the body past the anchored hand and we get a feel for the body moving forwards. The snorkel will eliminate the head turning for air, allowing better accuracy with the hand pathways under the body.

TOTAL to add to the MAINSET 600m

Assuming 25m pool. If you are in a 50m pool you can always carefully tread water at 25m before resuming to help convert the session.

1 WEEK 1: SESSION 1 - STEADY INTRODUCTORY WEEK

MAINSET

- 50m FC rest 10 secs,
- 100m rest 15 secs,
- 150m rest 15 secs, with fins
- 200m rest 25 secs,
- 250m rest 25 secs, with pull buoy
- 300m rest 35 secs,
- 350m rest 35 secs, with paddles
- 400m rest 45 secs, record time taken

TOTAL (1800m)

But please add the 600m of warmup, subset and swim down each time.



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

WEEK 1: SESSION 2 - FASTER EFFORTS

To build speed with endurance

MAINSET

- 4 x 100m best average, rest 10 sec in between each 100m
Record average time
- A strong effort but not exhaustive, as lots more to come!
- 4 x 100m best average, rest 15 sec in between each 100m
A little quicker than the previous round
- 4 x 100m best average, rest 20 sec in between each 100m
Aim to be quicker than the previous
- 4 x 100m best average, rest 30 sec in between each 100m
Aim for your fastest round.

TOTAL (1600m)

WEEKLY TOTAL 4600m

2 WEEK 2: SESSION 1 - BREATHING PATTERNS (BP)

Swim slow enough to allow the harder patterns to happen. Work on your rotation with the Torpedo Drill if you struggle breathing to both sides.

MAINSET

- 500m FC, BP 5 (taking a breath every 5th stroke) rest 20-30 secs throughout.
- 400m FC, BP 4 (with a pull buoy), alternate lengths switch breathing sides
- 300m FC, BP 3 with fins.
- 200m with a snorkel, as much air as you like!
- 100m FC with a BP of ‘3.2’, i.e. breathing every 3rd then take a second breath to the same side, should provide a little more air compared to every 3rd only.

TOTAL (1500m)

WEEK 2: SESSION 2 - STEADY ENDURANCE

Build your swim fitness

MAINSET

- 100m with 15 secs rest
- 200m with 25 secs rest
- 300m with 35 secs rest
- 400m with 45 secs rest, record time
- 300m rest 30 secs
- 200m rest 30 secs
- 100m rest 30 secs

Alternate even swims FC, odd swims with a pull buoy and paddles if your shoulders are healthy and pain free.

TOTAL (1600m)

WEEK 2: SESSION 3 - LONG DISTANCE

Optional

- 5 x 300m resting 30 secs between each, build 1-5 so no 5 is your quickest
- Exiting the pool and taking your rest on pool deck will help simulate the event

TOTAL (1500m)

WEEKLY TOTAL 6400m

3 WEEK 3: SESSION 1 - PACING

Getting an idea of what your current pace might deliver during the event.

MAINSET

4 x 500m FC swum as:

- 50m aim race target pace rest 10 secs
- 100m aim race target pace rest 20 secs
- 150m aim race target pace rest 30 secs
- 200m recovery with a pull buoy. Breathing every 3rd stroke

A 30min 1500m is 1/2/3min pacing for the 50m/100m/150m and we can extrapolate that to 1hr 40min for 5000m. Just swim the set and work towards even pacing if you are happy just to complete the event on the day and not worry about a time. Rest 45 secs between each 500m.

TOTAL (2000m)

WEEK 3: SESSION 2 - BREATHING

Breaking habits.

MAINSET

- 21 x 100m rest 30 secs swum steady but only breathing every 5th on the last length. Idea is to break autopilot and lower drag to use less energy and improve technique when usually it is at its worst by restricting air. Too much? Just do your best to finish with great technique.

TOTAL 2100m)

WEEKLY TOTAL 5300m

4 WEEK 4: SESSION 1 - MIXED PACE

Use the easier swims for a technique review. Check length of stroke by counting strokes – try to maintain an even count as the pace increases.

MAINSET

- 6 x 300m swum as follows with 40secs between each
- 300m FC swim the second half faster than the first
- 300m FC swum as 50m with a pull buoy, 50m without
- 300m FC increase effort in blocks of 100m, steady/medium and fast
- 300m FC swum as 50m with a pull buoy, 50m FC with paddles
- 300m FC increase effort in blocks of 100m, steady/medium and fast
- 300m strong effort

TOTAL (1800m)

WEEK 4: SESSION 2 - SPEED ENDURANCE

MAINSET

- 400m FC, relaxed 75m into every 4th 25m fast, with fins, rest 30 secs throughout.
- 300m FC, every 3rd 25m fast, pull and paddles
- 200m FC, every 2nd 25m fast
- 100m FC all fast, record time
- 100m recovery.
- 10x100m, rest 30 secs. Aim to be within 5 secs of previous fast 100 for all 10

TOTAL (2100m)

WEEK 4: SESSION 3 - LONG DISTANCE

- 7 x 400m resting 30 secs between each, build 1-4, 5-7 so no 4 and 7 are your quickest.
- Pull buoy on odd swims, fins on even swims to build strength
- Exiting the pool and taking your rest on pool deck will help simulate the event.

Preferably in a 50m pool

TOTAL (2800m)

WEEKLY TOTAL 8500m

5 WEEK 5: SESSION 1 - EVENT PREPARATION

MAINSET

- 1600m FC, safely climb out and exit the pool every 200m. Carefully returning to the water after you stand up.

Focus on reducing the HEARTRATE after the exit and getting back into your swim with great technique. The HR will elevate as the blood shifts from the shoulders and arms to the legs possibly leaving you a little disorientated.

TOTAL (1600m)

WEEK 5: SESSION 2 - RACE WEEK - REST

- Stretch, Massage, relax
- Ideally swim an easy 1000m mid-week to keep a connection to the water
- Mix some drills but keep the heart rate low
- Don't worry about the warmup and subset

TOTAL (1000m)

6 WEEK 6: RACE DAY

RACE DAY (5000m)

- Food and nutrition should be prepared and planned for.
- Great streamlines off each wall. With 50 opportunities to push off wall for 5m each time you could save yourself 200m of swimming!
- Spare goggles?
- Swim suit good? Bring a spare. Cream if you know your shoulders/armpits chaffed during the practice long distance sets.
- Be considerate of all in the water as you pass people.
- Practice exiting and returning to the water in your training at frequent opportunities as this can leave you light headed if new to you.
- Start steady, 5km is a long way.
- Count strokes at frequent intervals to amuse and engage the brain, aim for 1m with each arm pull i.e. 50 strokes or less.
- Run a technique diagnostic at the start of each 1km, think about small kick, fingertips pointing down and so palms pushing water towards the feet, head still unless turning to breathe, push and exit the hands past the hips.

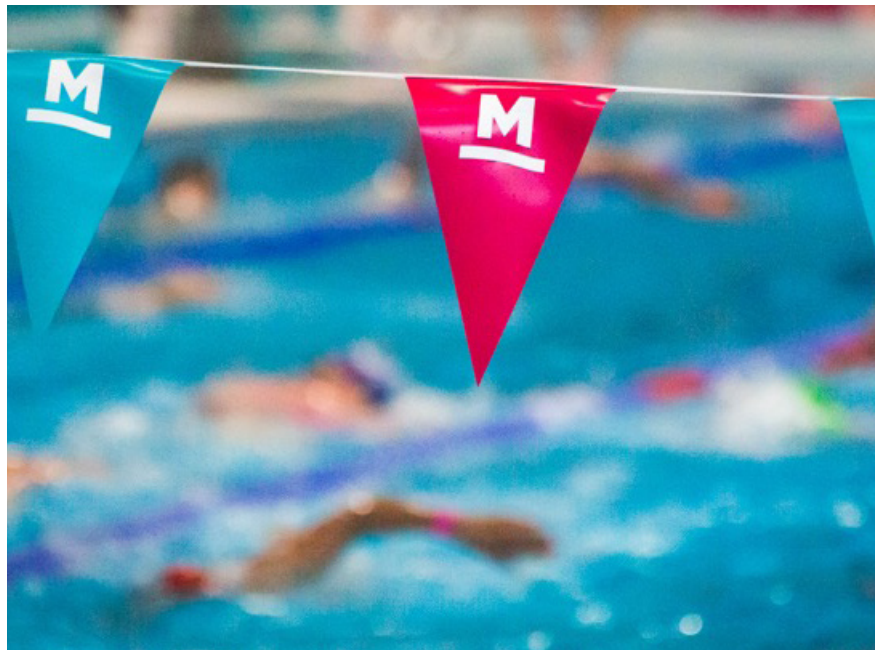
WEEKLY TOTAL 8200m

PLAN TOTAL MAX 33000m



MY RECORDS

	Resting HR?
	Stroke count 25m?
	100m best average?
	Total swum?
	Weekly total?



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