

# Building With Bricks

Swim, bike and run make up the building blocks of a good performance, but it's important not to forget the mortar that holds it all together. In this article, Wayne Goldsmith provides 10 killer brick sessions that will help you move efficiently from one leg to the next.

Words: Wayne Goldsmith | Images: Delly Carr

**E**veryone loves brick training. It's fun, there's plenty of variety, and it helps to develop the all-important specific transition skills essential for optimal triathlon racing performance. However, brick training requires a little thinking and a lot of prior planning if it's going to work well.

## You will need:

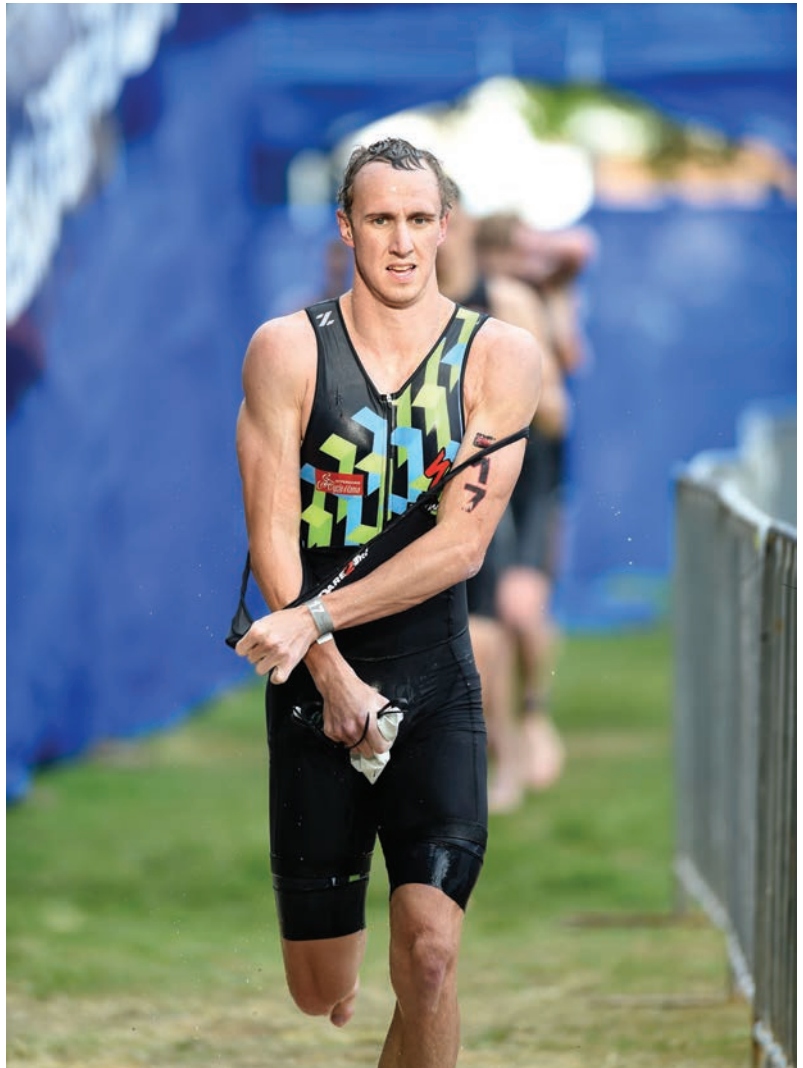
- One bike
- One helmet
- One pair of bike shoes (or runners if you don't use clip-ins)
- One wind trainer/home trainer/indoor trainer/power trainer/magnetic trainer, etc – but not rollers. While rollers are a wonderful way to improve cycling skills and have a much better 'road feel' than the other stationary bike trainers, trying to use them while dripping water is not the smartest or safest move you can make
- One understanding pool operator / facility manager who's happy to allow you to have your bike trainer on pool deck
- One understanding swimming coach who'll support you splitting up your swimming session with bike and run efforts
- One big heart filled with a ton of commitment and determination

**Brick training requires a little thinking and a lot of prior planning if it's going to work well.**

## The set-up:

Here are a few tricks of the trade to make sure your bricks are brilliant:

- Get to the pool early. If your brick session is scheduled to start at 7.00pm, try to arrive at least 30 minutes before training to set up your bike
- Know how to operate and set up your bike trainer yourself. The last thing your coach or other triathletes want to do is to spend 20 minutes figuring out how to set up your training tool



- Take it seriously! All standard T1 transition rules apply regarding helmets, transition area set-up etc. This is specific race practice, so train the way you want to race. Attention to detail is critical

## The bricks:

Here are 10 swim-to-bike (T1) brick sessions that will help you build the specific skills, speed and stamina you need to make your next triathlon your best yet.



WEEK	BRICK	TECH-TIPS	VARIATIONS
1	4 x (200 freestyle at * TRP [TARGET RACE PACE] 4 minutes bike at 90 RPM). 3 minutes rest between each brick	Keep your hands soft and relaxed during the ride  Keep your shoulders down and relaxed during the ride	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Negative split the final 200 freestyle</li> <li>Run 2 km off bike at TRP after final brick</li> <li>Increase RPM on bike to 100 over the final minute of each ride</li> <li>Do every second ride on your 'drops'</li> </ul>
2	6 x (300 freestyle at TRP/3 minutes bike at 90 RPM). 3 minutes rest between each brick	Remember to think 'circle and spin' – keep your pedal action smooth and continuous	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explode the first 50 metres of each 300 freestyle</li> <li>Run 2 km off bike after third and sixth brick</li> <li>Increase RPM on bike to 100 over the final minute of each ride</li> </ul>
3	6 x (400 freestyle at TRP/6 minutes bike at 90 RPM)	'Listen' to your pedalling action! Listen for a smooth, continuous 'whirring' sound	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Even-pace the 400 freestyles</li> <li>Run 2 km off bike after second, fourth and sixth brick</li> <li>Increase RPM on bike to 110 over the final minute of each ride</li> </ul>
4	8 x (200 freestyle at TRP/3 minutes bike at 100 RPM)	Look out for signs of tension and tightness in your fingers, hands and wrists. This tension will cause fatigue to most of your upper body during the run. Stay relaxed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make the second, fourth and sixth 200 freestyle a 'pull' 200, i.e. use your pull buoy</li> <li>Run 2 km off bike after fourth and eighth brick</li> <li>Increase RPM on bike to 110 over the final two minutes of each ride</li> <li>Do every second ride on your drops</li> </ul>
5	5 x (500 freestyle at TRP/5 minutes bike at 100 RPM)	Be aware of your breathing. Try breathing in for six to 10 'revs' and then out for six to 10 'revs'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Run 3 km off bike after second and fourth brick</li> <li>Increase RPM on bike to 110 over the final two minutes of each ride</li> </ul>
6	Mini-tri session: 4 x (300 freestyle at TRP/8 minutes bike at 100 RPM)	Keep your head, neck and upper body still but relaxed. Keep your eyes focused on something about five metres in front of your trainer to keep your head still	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sprint the first 50 metres and the final 25 metres of each 300 freestyle</li> <li>Run 1 km off bike after each brick Stand up in the pedals and grind a big gear for one minute during each ride</li> </ul>
7	4 x (600 freestyle at TRP/6 minutes bike at 100 RPM)	Think about your legs  Try to keep your thighs, knees and feet in the one line when you pedal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do each of the 600 freestyle from a 'deep-water' position, i.e. in water more than 1.8 metres deep</li> <li>Run 2km off bike after first and fourth brick</li> <li>Increase RPM on bike to 110 over the final three minutes of each ride</li> </ul>
8	6 x (400 freestyle at TRP/8 minutes bike at 100 RPM)	When using your tri-bars, keep your hands loose and relaxed, i.e. avoid grabbing the tri-bars and forcefully pulling your body down towards them. This can seriously fatigue and injure your lower back and hamstrings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Start each 400 freestyle in a 'pack start' with two other triathletes in your lane</li> <li>Run 1 km off bike after second, fourth and sixth brick</li> <li>Increase RPM on bike to 110 over the final three minutes of each ride</li> <li>Do every second ride on your drops</li> </ul>
9	Mini-tri session: 3 x (400 freestyle at TRP/10 minutes bike at 100 RPM)	Just like you would in any triathlon, make sure your helmet is on and is adjusted correctly before jumping on your trainer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make the second 400 freestyle a time trial – i.e. maximum pace swim</li> <li>Run 3 km off bike after each brick</li> <li>Stand up in the pedals and 'grind' in a big gear for one minute during each ride</li> <li>Do a practice tyre change during the second brick</li> </ul>
10	Mini-tri session: 2 x (800 freestyle at TRP/10 minutes bike at 100 RPM)	Vary your gear selection. Vary your chain-ring selection  Change your RPMs: vary them between 100 and 110 or even 120 if you can  Change things – challenge yourself – don't just sit and spin!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Run 5 km off bike after final brick</li> <li>Stand up in the pedals and 'grind' in a big gear for one minute during each ride</li> <li>Increase RPM on bike to 110 over the final two minutes of each ride</li> </ul>





## Target Race Pace

An important concept in training for triathlon is Target Race Pace – TRP.

In swim, bike and run, the fundamental aim of training is to prepare your body (and mind) to race well when you need to. This means learning to perform at a specific or 'target' speed by including some race-pace training in your swim, bike, run and brick training sessions.


### How to calculate TRP – Target Race Pace:

It's pretty simple when you think about it.

If you are aiming to swim 500 metres at your next triathlon in 10 minutes (i.e. 600 seconds), that's an average speed per 100 metres every two minutes (i.e. 120 seconds per 100 metres).

In the pool when you are designing training sets, use this time as the base for your race-pace intervals, e.g. 50-metre pace would be 60 seconds, 200-metre pace would be four minutes, 400-metre pace eight minutes and so on.

## Summary

1. Bricks really can be the 'building blocks' of your triathlon success story
2. There are literally thousands of variations of bricks – the key is to start simply and to build progressively towards your competition performance goal
3. Swimmers do swimming training. Cyclists cycle. Runners run. But what defines triathletes is their capacity to do all three and make a smooth transition between them...and that's what makes brick training so important. It is training that is specific to the unique demands of the sport of triathlon and it should be a fundamental part of your triathlon-training program all year round. 



Wayne Goldsmith is a triathlon coach who has worked with both Triathlon Australia and Swimming Australia

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almost effortless...”*

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