

Training Document: **Swimming Instructions** by Gale Bernhardt

Swimming instructions in the training plans vary, depending on the plan. Some of the training plans have specific swim workouts for beginner swimmers, while others do not. (See Q and A below.) Most all of the training plans have swimming intensity instructions (review the Intensity Instructions document), to guide you during a masters swimming session. Included in this section are a few tips to help guide you through the swim workouts.

In general:

In all workouts where an optional main set is included, warm-up with your choice of mixed swimming, drills and kicks. For beginning swimmers this may total 200 to 400 yards. For experienced swimmers, more warm-up may be required.

After the main set, cool down with a few hundred yards of easy swimming.

E1 – Swim at an easy Zone 1 pace. If you are feeling tired, cut this workout down or eliminate it altogether and take the day off. Focus on drills and good form.

E2 – Swim anywhere in Zone 1 or 2. The goal is not to maximize Zone 2 time. If you feel great, more Zone 2 is fine.

E3 – Swim anywhere between Zone 1 and 3. Most often, the main set is intended to be done at Zone 3 intensity.

For the Half-ironman and Ironman-distance plans:

Although “yards” may be used in the descriptions, if your pool is meters, just substitute “meters” in the text. Some swims are labeled E3 and include an optional main set. The main set of the numbered swims is intended to be Zone 3 pace, which is T-Pace to T-Pace plus 5 seconds per 100 yards. To determine your T-Pace (Threshold, Time Trial or Test Pace) conduct the test when you’re rested and prior to beginning the plan. The test:

T-Pace – After a good warm-up lasting 10 to 20 minutes, swim 3 x 300s with 30 seconds rest between each 300. The goal of the set is to swim at the highest average speed possible. An accurate test is when all three 300s are within 15 seconds of each other. In other words, do not swim a fast, first 300 and have the third 300 be 20, or more, seconds slower. Watch the clock and get your time on each 300. Average the time for all three 300s and divide the average by three to establish a T-Pace, for a 100 yard distance. For example, if you swam a 4:05, 4:00 and 4:08 for each of the 300s, the average time 4:04. Divide that result by three to obtain a T-Pace of 1:21 for 100 yards. Divide by two to get the 50-yard T-Pace of 40 seconds.

In all workouts where an optional main set is included, warm-up with your choice of mixed swimming, drills and kicks totaling 800 to 1500 yards. After the main set, cool down with a few hundred yards of easy swimming. The symbol (RI) means rest interval, so (0:20RI) means a 20-second rest interval.

The numbered workouts are break through sessions (BT) and the major goal each workout is to swim even splits for each segment. For example, in Swim #1 of the “13 Weeks to a sub-13-Hour ironman distance Plan” reads:

5-7 x 200 (0:30RI) @ T-Pace, 1:00 RI, 5-7 x 100 (0:20RI) @ T-Pace

200 repeat times are within about 10 seconds of each other, followed by 100 repeats that are all within 5 seconds of each other. You’re striving for a high average speed.

Q & A

Q – I see “Workouts in a Binder” mentioned on the swimming instructions preview, do I need to purchase that product to successfully complete the program?

A – Swimming is a bugger for several reasons. One is that some people prefer swimming with a masters group and do not want specific workouts for the swim portion of the plan. They want guidelines for what kind of intensity to hold during the masters workout. Others prefer suggested workouts, but they want to modify any suggestion to meet personal needs. (Because people with a swimming background can complete significantly more yards during a particular one-hour swim workout than a beginning swimmer can.)

You can also look at the US Masters website for more workout ideas at <http://www.usms.org/training/workouts.html>