



## Off-season Training

In many ways, the off-season is the most important part of the year. It is time to focus on all the areas that are holding us back. During this period of time we will cut back on volume, duration and intensity of exercise, but that does not mean that this is a “blow off” time of the year. This is a time to focus on: 1) technique; 2) strength and flexibility; 3) limiters; and 4) body weight and nutrition. I will discuss each area below.

### Training Volume

During the off-season we will generally reduce training volume by about 30% as compared to your biggest volume weeks during the year. Cutting back during this time helps prevent both physical and mental burnout. It is a good time to cross train and perform other types of exercise. Much of your swimming, biking and running will be performed at lower intensity (lower heart rate) levels.

### Technique

Without question, focusing on technique during this period is of paramount importance. Working on technique can be quite challenging on its own without worrying about an upcoming race. Now is the time to make changes to your swimming biking and running. Instead of logging big miles, you will spend time performing drills.

### Strength and Flexibility

I suggest that during the off-season everyone does strength work such as lifting weights, Pilates for core strength and yoga for flexibility. Each one of these helps in a different way. We lift weights to build body strength and develop force. This helps keep us from breaking down late in the season and also helps us increase speed and decrease the chance of injuries. This is particularly important for athletes over 40 years of age. I recommend lifting 2-3 times per week during this period if possible.

I suggest Pilates once a week for developing a strong core. The strong core is essential to holding proper form and technique in all three disciplines. For example, a strong core allows you to hold a proper aero position longer on the bike.

Yoga is not only good for flexibility, but the breathing work is fabulous for learning focus and relaxation which are critical to racing and good performance. Yoga is ideal at least once per week and stretching daily if possible. Again this is crucial for injury prevention but it will also increase your speed, especially on the bike. Quite simply, the more flexible you are the better aero position you can achieve and hold on your bike, the faster you will go.

### Limiters

“Limiters” are tri-speak for areas that need improvement. We all have them. During the off season focus on your limiters. For example, if running is your worst event and needs the most improvement, at TriSmart we do a training cycle focused on running. We will increase your percentage of time running and the number of times per week. We may increase the intensity as well. We will still bike and swim during this cycle, but swimming and cycling will be reduced for a bit. At the end of the run cycle we will assess the improvement and decide whether to do another run cycle or move on to another limiter.

### Weight and Nutrition

If you feel that you need to lose weight, now is the time to do it. It is also a good time to assess what you are eating and if you can improve your nutrition. Better nutrition equals better fuel. Better fuel means you go faster.

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