

## **3 Ways You're Wasting Your Workouts (And What To Do About It)**

I've been training for a triathlon for several weeks. My mantra has been "faster, longer, harder" (*that's what she said*) - I've kept pushing to cover more distance, ride/swim/run for a longer amount of time, and work to get more power out of myself to incrementally improve. And it's worked pretty well so far, I think. I've increased my net speed in each activity, have more endurance, am losing weight at a good pace, and vitals test in the healthy range whenever I have them taken.

But I couldn't help but wonder if I could do a little better. And you know what? I think I can. And I bet you can too. Here's how you and I may be wasting our workouts and how we can turn that around and do much better.

### **(1) "I just want to exercise, I don't want to race"**

I've fallen into this a lot. You think that you are just exercising to be healthier - and that's definitely a positive thing - but you do it without a goal or plan. But think about that - if you want to be healthy, you probably have some measurements in mind that will let you know if you're achieving or maintaining what you believe to be "healthy". Whether it's weight, waist, biceps, cholesterol, or

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something subjective but meaningful, somehow you will know or have a sense that you've met your goals.

But if you don't set a goal, you might just plod along, languish and give up. Why continue if you don't really have any destination or milestone?

So, set a goal and keep yourself focused; create a track that you can stay on. You don't have to qualify for the Olympics, but why not plan to run (or walk) a 5K? Or if you don't want to register and participate in a 5K, just do a 5K program (Runner's World has an excellent 8-week 5K program). If you swim, try the [zero-to-1650 workout plan](#) and swim a straight swimmer's mile. You could even do some good by entering a charity 5K or bike ride and have a goal and some extra supporters...

But why not consider something to make your exercise program a little more motivating and measurable than "just for the sake of exercise"?

### **(2) Start. Finish. Repeat.**

In the beginning triathlon app that I'm using ([First Time Triathlete](#)), they build in drills to most workouts. The one I finally did the other day was for cycling. "Hill repeats." You find a hill along your path that takes 1-2 minutes to climb, climb it 10 times, spinning easily on the way back down.

I avoided injecting this into my workouts, but the other day I just made up my mind and did it.

Wow. By the end of the repeats, I was climbing the hill at or above my flat road cadence and speed, and I was able to maintain my target cadence range (88-95) at a speed of 18.5-19.5 MPH for the remainder of my ride (I previously was spinning in that range, but only getting about 16-17MPH from the gear I was in).As I mentioned above, I had done my workouts mostly just straight through. Get on the bike, ride, get off the bike. Run, finish. Swim lap after lap. It worked well, but I was skipping something very important. Drills.

So, don't neglect the little drills. I know that I won't be. And bonus: not only is it valuable for your training, it's kind of fun to have more than a "finish the workout" challenge ahead of you. Give it a try! Make the miles count!

### **(3) Don't stop.**

Rest is vital to maintaining and improving performance. Whether it's taking a day off from working out or taking a short break (possibly even as short as 10 seconds) while exercising, the incremental improvements can be tremendous. Yesterday was a swim workout. In addition to a warm-up and cool-down and a few drills, I had an 800-yard (32-lap) segment to swim. Well, actually this was the prep for Sunday's 800-yard segment. It was laid out as 4x200 yard segments with 10 seconds in between each. Each tiny break helps me to keep my form up, and stringing them together so closely lets me get the feel of doing the whole 800-yard segment (and knowing I can handle it just

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fine).

Rest also helps you navigate change. After donating blood, I stupidly did some exercise the next morning - a 40-minute run. After about 20-25 minutes, I couldn't keep jogging. I listened to my body, took plenty of walk breaks and finished the walk/run in decent time. Knowing that my recovery would take a little longer, I moved my usual Friday rest day to the day after the run, and now I'm back on pace.

So if you've been getting bored with your workouts or not seeing/feeling much improvement from one to the next, Give these things a try.

- **Sign up for an event** to work toward a measurable goal (if you're in Northeast Florida, check out [1st Place Sports](#) for dozens of running events, or find events anywhere in the U.S. at [Active.com](#)),
- **do some drills** (sprints, repeats, etc. - find them at [Runner's World](#), [RTK's Swim Workouts](#) (one of the BEST sites for swimming workouts including the [0-to-1650 plan](#) I mentioned above), and [Active.com](#) has a bunch of drills, too), and
- **rest** (pre-emptively and in response to your body's signals).

Do you have anything to add? What do you do when your workouts get stale? Or how do you mix it up to keep getting results?

Look forward to hearing your suggestions and comments! Thanks for listening!