



There's plenty to weigh up before setting your sights on completing an Ironman

I've done several Olympic-distance tris, but I'm keen to have a go at Ironman. I'm 43, married with two children and my job is 9-5. Can I step up without it affecting my lifestyle too much?

ROSS HOUSTON, EMAIL

TRAINING PLAN

SIMON WARD

is a multiple-times winner of 220's Coach of the Year award



A This is a question many would-be Ironmen and women should be asking before pressing the 'enter' button: how many hours can you consistently train, and recover adequately from, each week? That's different to the hours needed to put in one huge 'hero' week every now and then, and from the number of hours you personally have available to train.

It is possible to finish an iron-distance event by consistently completing 8-10 hours per week. If you followed this pattern for 35 weeks (Nov '15 to June/July '16) you would amass almost 350 hours of training. That would be 2hrs swim, 5hrs bike, 2hrs run, 1hr strength and conditioning each week.

By playing around with these numbers, you could inject weeks where you spend more time on one sport and maintaining fitness in the others. For example, you might want to add in a longer ride or run,

which would ordinarily take up the whole of that week's volume.

It would be a big mistake to ignore strength and conditioning in a bid to squeeze in more of the swim, bike, run training, so set aside an hour per week. A good method of training is 'reverse periodisation', where you do shorter sessions at high intensity in winter to build speed, and then lengthen your sessions closer to your event to build Ironman-specific endurance. Here's an example of a typical week's training that won't cause too much disruption to your lifestyle:

- **MONDAY** Rest
- **TUESDAY** Swim: technique + endurance swim
- **WEDNESDAY** Bike: VO2 max or threshold intervals
- **THURSDAY** Run: hills or long run; S+C: 30mins circuits
- **FRIDAY** Swim: critical swim speed sets; Bike: intervals, sub-threshold pace
- **SATURDAY** Bike: long endurance ride
- **SUNDAY** Run: tempo; S+C: 30mins circuits.

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LIFESTYLE

AMANDA McCracken

has been coaching triathletes for 15 years



A While it's never going to be ideal, balancing family life with iron-distance training is a good test of our ability to deal with whatever life throws at us. I have a number of friends and athletes I've coached who have completed Ironmans with a family and full-time job. The answer to your question all depends on what you're willing to sacrifice:

- Purpose and goal. Is your goal to finish, place in your age-group or qualify for Kona? Be realistic when setting this goal based on your level of fitness and time available to train. Are you looking for a feeling of supreme accomplishment while at the same time procrastinating with other projects? It's funny how completing 140.6 miles is easier for some than mending a neglected relationship or cleaning the garage, so be mindful of why you're doing it!

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- Relationship stability. Is your spouse supportive? Does she have the flexibility, patience and willingness to pick up where you usually would but can't because you're exhausted from training? Clear and consistent communication in your marriage is vital.

- Social life. Don't erase your social calendar for five months, but be prepared to start viewing workouts as your 'going out' time. Try to make them social, e.g. a 4hr ride with friends.

- Get creative. Use the time you have wisely. So, for example, pack errands into your long ride. I always find that with limited time I waste very little. Plan for a race that requires you to train during the warmer months, so you aren't taking extra time out of the day to hit the gym because it's cold outside.

- Finally, whether it's your family's happiness, your long-term health or bi-monthly beers with your buddies, make a list of things you won't sacrifice and stick to it!