

What is a Periodised Training Program

Periodisation is creating periods of training that are easier than the others to promote rest and to let the body grow stronger. It involves many variables including frequency (how often you train), duration (how long you train in one session), volume (how much you train in a given week or cycle) and intensity (how hard you train at any given time). From these variables a recipe is created that will hopefully help you reach your peak for the key races you are targeting.

There are four to five phases in a given annual training plan, with the variables changing within each phase.

<u>Phase</u>	<u>How long?</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Duration</u>	<u>Intensity</u>	<u>Volume</u>
Prep	4-8 wks	High	Short-medium	Very little	Low
Base	12-24 wks	High	Medium – high	Moderate	Moderate – high
Build	4-8 wks	Moderate-high	High	Heavy	Moderate
Peak/race	3-5 wks	Moderate	Short	Heavy	Low

In the preparation phase, perform aerobic activities at a low heart rate. This helps your body adjust to the rigors of training again. This is also the time to work on your drills for your sport. Workouts in this phase are usually short in duration, low in intensity and may be frequent. The volume is low.

The Base phase runs in three to four week blocks and can have up to six blocks. The number of blocks is dependant on your training experience. If you are in your first few years of training, the more blocks you do in the base phase, the better off you will be in the long run. This phase continues to focus on increasing your aerobic capacity while improving your efficiency with drills and skill workouts. The intensity in this cycle remains low or non-existent, while the frequency may drop, and the duration of your longer workouts keeps extending itself. The volume in this cycle starts out low, but will eventually be your greatest of the year as you get closer toward the end of your base phase.

The Build phase drops in volume, increases in intensity and may keep the same or drop off in duration. The key to this phase is to become more efficient (faster) at a certain distance or go further in a certain time period. This is done by adding interval training to your workouts. The volume is consistent, the intensity high and your duration for your long workouts should be at an all year high. This phase lasts about 4 – 8 weeks and come right before the big race!

The peaking phase is a very tricky thing to do. Basically, you are trying to bring together your whole season for one or two important races. You want to perform at your best! In order to peak for your race you need to taper down the training. Cutting back lets your body rest and restores itself. Volume is low, intensity is high and the duration is short. You can keep the frequency quite high to keep the feel / rhythm or not. This is a personal choice and after you've raced – (hopefully successfully) you can move into the final phase – transitional phase.

The last phase is a time to just kick back and do something other than your sport. It can mean a time to do nothing for a few weeks or it could mean the time of the year that you try out some new sports. Remember, just as the body adapts to more stress by becoming fitter, it also adapts to less stress by becoming unfit. This reversibility of fitness happens quickly. **It only takes 3-4 weeks for a trained athlete to become unfit. The quickest reverse takes place in aerobic fitness. Muscles quickly lose their ability to use oxygen efficiently. Strength losses occur much more slowly so anaerobic activities are not so badly affected by breaks in training.** Toward the end of this phase you want to start organising your plans for the upcoming season. To start it all over again.

How to boost your competitive performance – Drop those out-of-date exercise routines!

Only a small percentage of athletes actually reach their highest attainable level! If you want to improve your performance – be more specific. It's not using a muscle but how you use them! Training a particular muscle to be more powerful won't make that muscle more powerful in competition, unless the precise movement patters used in training are very close to those used in competition.

Exploding the myth of 'Hard Training'. Unfortunately, identifying the right balance of hard work and recovery is the most difficult part of serious training. If your programme has too much recovery, you won't be able to carry out enough quality work to reach your peak. If your schedule has too little recovery, muscles won't be able to repair themselves properly after workouts. Performances actually worsen instead of getting better. Recovery time should be so well understood and actively enhanced that it becomes a determinant component in training. More than simply resting the muscles, it must actually move fitness upward. Know how to increase your speed of recovery. *More on that later.*

Always incorporate static stretches after your workouts as part of the cool-down. These exercises will help bring your body back toward a state of rest and recovery and allow you to relax and lengthen the muscles that you have put under stress.

There is not a single set of strengthening exercises that is best for your particular activity, but it is paramount that you coordinate your strength programme with your training routine! Because you have a unique set of strengths and weaknesses, there are a handful of exercises that will make you stronger. It is very important that you identify your weaknesses and strengthen them.

If you're recurrently injured in one part of your body, that area is unnecessarily weak and needs to be bolstered. If you find that you're always breaking down with a variety of different injuries, then you may need to develop basic overall strength and flexibility. On the other hand, if you're seldom injured and have good endurance but need to improve performance, your need is for a resistance program which will 'teach' those strong muscles to function more quickly.

There are four strength training routines:

1. General strength and conditioning exercises, including conventional weight training and various 'core' activities for the muscles of the abdominals and lower back. These conventional exercises provide general strength to protect your muscles and connective tissues from repetitive stresses and impacts.
2. Specific Strength Training includes exercises that more closely imitate the biomechanics and motor patterns required for your activity.
3. Reactive or Speed Strength Training teaches your muscles to generate more force and generate the force more quickly. Reactive training fosters a high degree of strength in the muscles, tendons, ligaments and bones, since the impact forces are usually higher than they are during regular workouts. Reactive training also stretches muscles, tendons and ligaments vigorously, promoting greater elasticity and efficiency of movement.
4. Preventive Gymnastics Exercises strengthen, rehabilitative or restorative certain parts of the body in order to minimise the risk of injury.

A year long strength program has four phases: Symmetry and Hypertrophy (fix asymmetry and build muscle), maximum strength, power and power endurance. Each phase builds on the physical abilities developed in the previous phase, so be sure to do them in order.

Symmetry strength training during the first part of the year corrects muscle imbalances that developed as a result of training and racing. Scullers are susceptible to strength differences between the quadriceps and hamstrings, which can lead to chronic back pain and acute lower back injuries. Also to a lesser degree imbalances occur between the muscles that pull (upper back, biceps and forearm) and the pushing muscles of the triceps and chest.

