

# Building Pre-Season Strength in 20 Minutes or Less

**By Trish Massart**

As a personal trainer, I often get asked the question “what is the best exercise to lose weight”. The answer is easy: the one you’ll do. There is no point in prescribing an exercise program for someone if it is considered a chore, too time consuming, or not particularly fun and challenging.

Triathletes are no different. We all *know* we should be adding strength training into our regime. A strong core in particular, can stave off injuries and can be the difference between just completing an event versus hammering out a personal best. But who has the time or who really wants to go to the gym and throw weights around when we could be outside on our bikes?

This article is meant to give you some ideas on how you can incorporate strength training into your weekly program. A focused, yet simple 15 to 20 minute strength training session, two to three times a week can add considerable gains to your overall performance.

The key to a 15-20 minute strength training session is quality. When you train, train with purpose and focus. Make each exercise count. Force your body and mind to work just beyond its comfort zone. You should find these exercises a challenge and yes, you will sweat. Choose to perform this routine immediately after a short to medium swim bike or run. You do not need a gym, you do not need equipment. You could even do this in your living room. One final note before we begin: to ensure a quality work out, avoid strength training before a high intensity workout like speed intervals or hill repeats.

Each exercise below works several muscle groups – called compound movements. Your entire body will be worked with 6 simple exercises, with a focus on strengthening your core.

Perform these exercises in succession, with a 1 minute break after the last exercise. Complete the whole circuit 2 times for developing athletes (aka, beginners), 3 times for more advanced triathletes or for those with at least 1 year of strength training under their belts.

For the timed exercises work to your maximum and then each week add 5 more seconds. For the exercises with repetitions work to your maximum and then each week add 2 more reps.

Photos and exercise tips follow.

- **Exercise 1:** Standard push-up (or modified on knees). 8 reps (developing) or 15 reps (advanced).
- **Exercise 2:** Side plank (or modified on knee) **right** side. Hold for 15 seconds (developing) or 30 seconds (advanced).
- **Exercise 3:** Standard push-up (or modified on knees) 8 reps (developing) or 15 reps (advanced).
- **Exercise 4:** Side plank (or modified on knee) **left** side. Hold for 15 seconds (developing) or 30 seconds (advanced).
- **Exercise 5:** Straight arm plank. Hold for 15 seconds (developing) or 30 seconds (advanced).
- **Exercise 6:** Close-grip hover. Hold for 15 seconds (developing) or 30 seconds (advanced).
- **Exercise 7:** Straight arm plank. Hold for 15 seconds (developing) or 30 seconds (advanced).
- **Exercise 8:** Mountain climbers. 8 reps each leg (developing) or 15 reps (advanced).
- **Exercise 9:** Pointer dog. Hold for 30 seconds each side. (Repeat for advanced athletes)
- **Exercise 10:** 3-point toe touch/leg lifts. 8 reps each leg (developing) or 15 reps (advanced).
- Rest 1 minute.
- Repeat circuit. Each circuit should take less than 6 minutes to complete.
- Don't forget to stretch.

## Exercise tips

### Exercise 1 – Push-up (standard)



Notes:  
Ensure back is flat (no butt in the air) and chin just touches floor.



### Exercise 1 – Push-up (modified)



Notes:  
Ensure tops of feet are flat to floor (not toes) and chin just touches the floor.



### Exercise 2 – Side plank (standard)



Notes:  
Ensure a straight line from toes to top of head. Do not let middle sag.

Stack shoulders one on top of another.

### Exercise 2 – Side plank (modified)



Notes: Body position is same as standard, but drop inside knee to floor for support.

### Exercise 5 – Straight-arm plank



Notes: body position is same as push up start. Keep back flat i.e. straight line from toes to

top of head.

**Exercise 6 – Close-grip hover**



Notes:  
Similar to push up position, but inside of the arms are “glued” to sides of

body. Hover 3” from floor.

**Exercise 8 – Mountain climbers (standard )**



Notes:  
body position is same as push up start. Pull knee to chin while

maintaining good body alignment.

**Exercise 8 – Mountain climbers (modified)**



Notes:  
essentially the same as standard, but from elbows plank position.

Do not twist body. Knee goes to elbow.

**Exercise 9 – Pointer Dog**



Notes:  
keep body in alignment with straight line from back of foot to tip of finger.

Balancing leg has top of foot flat to floor.

Exercise 10 – 3-point toe touch



Notes: Do not twist body. Start at 180 degrees, drop toe to floor, then lift. With leg parallel to the floor, move to a 90 degree position, touch toe to floor,

then lift. With leg parallel to the floor, move to a 45 degree position, touch toe to floor, then lift and move leg back to start position. Repeat same side.

Next month we will focus on leg strength and balance.

**Trish Massart** is a veteran personal trainer and triathlon enthusiast. She has studied under Ironman greats such as Dave Scott and Mark Allen to perfect her sport-specific strength training expertise for triathlon. Trish is principal trainer for **Fit over 50**, an at-home fitness consultancy for adults over 50.