



**Body matters**

# DEADLY SIMPLE TRAINING

DE-CLUTTER YOUR WORKOUTS AND DITCH THE GADGETS TO BE YOUR FASTEST YET

**Meet the expert**

**Garth Fox**



Fox is a triathlete and cyclist, with a masters degree in sports science

AS A SPORTS scientist I love heart-rate monitors, power meters and GPS watches. I love the data they spew out, and I love analysing it. But one day recently all of my training gadgets either ran out of batteries or stopped working, and I had no choice but to 'go commando'. It was a revelation. Just focusing on feel rather than power and heart rate was liberating.

I'm not the only person who's thought along those lines. Fabian Cancellara, the World Cycle Time Trial Champion, surprised a lot of people recently when he said that he trains by 'feel', and doesn't often use heart rate or power measurement. From time to time his physiologists record his performance and study the data, but largely his training is as basic as possible.

Recently I rode with Tour of Italy stage winner Juan Ripoll of the Katusha pro cycling team and his approach to training was similar: "I only use two training zones – easy and hard. My week consists of riding easy each day until my legs feel ready for real work. If that happens, I ride hard."

So if it works for the pros, maybe it can work for us too?

**ZONING IN**

The reason we use training zones to set the intensity we train at is to bring on specific adaptations, which, in turn, improve our performance. Determining exactly how many zones we should use is up for debate because the number is arbitrary. Our physiological responses to exercise really just blend into one another as we move from one intensity to the next. That is why, particularly if you are new to endurance training, using any more than three zones is unrealistic and unnecessary. Once you can differentiate between the

sensations your body gives you during an 'easy' and a 'hard' session and how they differ from a 'moderate' session, you are as well-equipped as you need to be to get very fit. An effective distribution of training intensity would be where 75% of your sessions fell into the 'easy' zone, 10% in the 'moderate' zone and 15% in the 'hard' zone.

It's a deadly simple approach compared to some training regimes I see. For example, many use five, six or seven different heart-rate training zones to help train at exact intensities. That's far too many. There is no scientific basis for more than three different intensities: easy, moderate and hard. When you have too many zones, the tendency is to end up somewhere in the middle. But with only three to choose from, it becomes very obvious when you are doing too many 'moderate' sessions – the most common error for triathletes.

There's a psychological benefit to training in a simple three-zone framework too. When it's time to train hard you'll know you can really hit it, without worrying about heart rate, or what zone you're in. You need only concern yourself with the effort itself. Apply this simplified training approach, and you may even train beyond your previously determined limits. You'll have no more bleeping gadgets telling you you're about to blow up. You may just discover that when the going gets tough, you can still carry on. The saying goes 'where the mind goes first, the body will follow'. Technology can be a powerful tool, but every now and then try losing the hardware.

**YOUR DEADLY SIMPLE TRAINING ZONES**

Try breaking your training into these three simplified zones to tune into your gut feeling, and tune out of gadgets

Zones	Domain	Description	Sensation	Rating of Perceived Exertion (RPE)
1	Easy	Long, slow duration (ie 3hr endurance ride)	Comfortable, but effort still required	1-4
2	Moderate	Sub-threshold/threshold (ie sustainable for about 1hr only)	Uncomfortable, and you'll need to focus to maintain the intensity	5-7
3	Hard	High-intensity intervals (ie 3-8min maximum efforts)	Mentally and physically extremely taxing	8-10

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