

## **Wattbikes Eddie Fletcher on testing yourself and setting up zones for better training**



In my last TriRadar blog, I explained why training using power is so effective for triathletes at all levels, but where do you start? What is the first step of putting these words into action?

It seems obvious but many triathletes skip the most important part of structuring a training plan and that's determining what your specific goal is. If you don't know where you want to get to or where you are starting from then it doesn't matter what you do – you won't know whether you have got there anyway.

Establishing a set of baseline figures on which to base your training is a key element of any training plan. These numbers ensure you are training at the right intensity for the correct duration to allow you to make the most of your physiology and investment in training time.

Naturally, we at Wattbike are big advocates of training using a combination of power, heart rate and cadence, but first you'll need to establish your power and heart rate training zones. Whilst you can always go to a sport science laboratory for testing this is not always possible or affordable and may in some instances be unnecessary.

The casual use of the word 'accuracy' is a bugbear of mine when it comes to training with power, but it is profoundly important to ensure you are training at the correct intensity. If you are training on a Wattbike then you can be supremely confident in the scientifically accurate data recorded during your test. This accuracy becomes very important when using training zones as you are making very specific demands on the body based on your current physiology.

I recommend the three-minute test to determine your maximum heart-rate and maximum minute power at home. The key to getting a good result is to select a resistance and cadence that allows you to pedal evenly throughout the three minutes whilst taking you to maximum.

Once you have your maximum heart rate and maximum minute power figures you can simply use an online training zones calculator to determine your individual zones which will form the basis of your training programme. We have worked closely with British Cycling on development of the Wattbike and it is their power and heart rate training zone system that we use and recommend.

My second grumble, and it's the athletes I feel really sorry for here, are those who have gone to the effort of establishing their personalised zones but have not completed a progress check after a block of training. If you are following a good training plan then you'll be making some great progress which will see you making physiological improvements.

I cannot stress enough the importance of repeating the three minute test at regular intervals to both track progress and re-base your training zones to avoid a plateau in performance gains.

Many triathletes also use a percentage of functional threshold power (FTP) to calculate training zones so I have included a FTP column in the table. FTP is generally agreed as the normalized maximal power output you can sustain for the duration of one hour and in our chart 100% FTP is at 75% of a maximum minute power result.

FTP can be established by using 75% of maximum minute power or riding a 20' sustained power workout on a Wattbike where FTP is equivalent to 105% of the result or by riding a full 60 minutes sustained power workout on a Wattbike to give you 100% of FTP.

Accurately establishing your personal training zones is the important first step to making those big performance gains.

The British Cycling heart rate and power training zones

Training Zone	Purpose	%MHR	%MMP	%FTP
Recovery	Regeneration and recovery	Less than 60	Less than 35	Less than 45
1. Basic	Establish base endurance	60 – 65	35 – 45	45 – 60
2. Basic	Improve efficiency	65 – 75	45 – 55	60 – 75
3. Intensive	Improve sustainable power	75 – 85	55 – 65	75 – 85
4. Intensive	Push threshold up	85 – 89	65 – 75	85 – 100
5. Maximal	Sustain a high % of maximal aerobic power	89 – 94	75 – 80	100 – 105
6. Maximal	Increase maximum power output	Greater than 94	80 -100	105 – 130
Supra-maximal	Increase sprint power output	Not applicable	Greater than 100	Greater than 130