

• Your First Triathlon - Tips for Beginners •

Introduction

Triathlon is great fun and you don't have to be 'super fit' to take part, in fact you don't even have to excel at any of the 3 sports individually and that's the beauty of it. It's also the perfect sport for developing all round health and fitness as training across the disciplines strengthens and tones your body, it also keeps the boredom at bay by the variety in the sessions.

Although many triathlons include open water swimming in lakes or the sea, most of the beginner events are swimming pool based. Many people will use mountain bikes at first so you needn't worry about purchasing a racing bike if you don't have one, you also don't need expensive equipment and kit; you can always upgrade at a later stage. Triathlon is also one of the friendliest sports you will come across with races having a wide range of age and ability but a central focus on participation and enjoyment.

The below information is a guide only and you must always consult your GP before embarking on any new fitness or training regime. It's also important that you thoroughly read the race pack which race organisers send out before the race as well as attending the race briefing on the day of your event.

If you're not sure what Triathlon involves we have broken it down for you:

Stage 1 - Swimming



The Triathlon race always starts with swimming - beginner races are always in a pool, later some people progress to 'open water' swimming in a lake or the sea. Most triathletes use a front crawl for speed, however you will see people in races doing breaststroke which is absolutely fine.

'Transition' from swim to bike - also called T1



Get out of the pool and head for your bike as quickly and safely as you can (you will have a designated spot/area where your bike is) Put your trainers, t-shirt, shorts & helmet on over your swim wear and head out of transition. You must have your helmet on before you can touch your bike (safety is always the first concern). You may find it useful to have a towel by your bike to dry your feet and to help mark your spot, you will be able to set up your transition area before you start the race, the marshals and race organisers will direct you accordingly. Please note that nudity is not permitted in transition.

Stage 2 - Bike



No helmet = No race. Don't worry if you only have a mountain bike, lots of people use them when they are starting out. In a race situation there will be marshals around the course to show you which way to go.

Transition from bike to run - also called T2

Head to the transition area, cycle to a dismount line (this is just before the transition entrance) and get off your bike before entering the transition area, you will then run or walk to your designated place and rack your bike. Your bike must be on the rack before you remove your helmet, leave everything at transition and being the run.

Stage 3 - Running



This is the last part of the Triathlon, if you feel tired take your time, the most important thing is to finish the race. You don't have to win your first event!

Transition

Transition is often known as the fourth discipline, this is the part where you change from the swim onto the bike and the bike into the run. You can do all sorts of fancy things to make this part quicker but when you are first starting out you will simply put your sports kit that you will bike and run in over your swimming costume, put your trainers on and then leave the transition area with your bike and helmet securely on. After cycling the course you will then put your bike back into the transition area and go off and do the run course before crossing the line having finished your first race. Some people wear a specially designed 'tri' suit which is a fitted, all in one outfit that you wear for the entire race. Tri suits start from around £40 and can be purchased from any triathlon specialist retailer, however normal swimwear is adequate for your first race.



What Kit do I need to get started?

- **A roadworthy bike** - Make sure that you have checked the brakes and pumped up the tyres. You can always get a bike shop to service your bike. A water bottle and a water bottle holder on the bike is also a good idea. The ends of the handle bars must have stoppers fitted.
- **A helmet** - You will not be allowed to race without one. A decent helmet can be picked up from any bike retailer.
- **Swim suit / trunks** - When you go into 'transition' you can slip on your t-shirt and shorts over the top. If you plan on doing more triathlons you can always upgrade to a tri suit. Your race number will need to be attached to the back of your t-shirt for the bike and the front for your run.
- **Goggles**
- **Swim hat** (Many race organisers will provide you with a swim hat which you must wear for identification).
- **Running shoes** - Your normal running shoes will suffice with or without socks. An inexpensive piece of kit to purchase is some 'elastic laces' these will enable you to get your trainers on and fastened quickly and are available from any good triathlon retailer. You may find that sprinkling talcum powder into your trainers makes getting them on easier.
- **Towel** - A towel in transition is very useful for drying your feet before putting your trainers on, pick a bright colour and it will also make your place easier to find.
- **Pins / Number Belt** - Your race number needs to be pinned to your t-shirt when you leave transition. Many race organisers have pins available but it is always advisable to bring your own. As you progress in triathlon you may want to upgrade to a number belt which is elastic and enables you to easily attach your number, it also means that you can spin it round to your back for the bike and to your front for the run.

Do I need to be super fit?

The great thing about triathlon is that you don't need to excel at any of the 3 sports individually, you don't need to be 'super' fit but a reasonable level of fitness is a good start and it's a good idea to start training a few months in advance. You must consult a GP before embarking on any new fitness regime.

What do I wear?

If it is your first triathlon all you will need is swimming kit and clothes suitable for running and biking. You will swim first, exit the pool and enter transition where you will put your t-shirt, shorts, trainers and helmet on grab your bike and exit transition.

A swimming costume is adequate for your first event but if you're more ambitious you can invest in a specific 'tri' suit which is a tight fitting all in one suit which includes a padded short and for women an internal bra. A tri suit is designed to be worn throughout the whole race so you swim bike and run in it, they are designed to be quick drying and will save you valuable time in transition as you don't need to wear any additional clothes. Prices start at around £40 so really only worth the investment if you are planning to do a few triathlons. Tri suits can be bought from any triathlon retailer or most clubs have their own kit to purchase. Whatever you choose to do never wear brand new gear for your triathlon, make sure that you are wearing clothes and trainers that you have worn before and if you're wearing a tri suit it's a good idea to practice / train in it before hand, especially for the swim.



What training should I be doing?

This depends on what your fitness is like and whether or not you already train in any of the 3 sports. As a rule you should start off by training once or twice a week in each discipline and don't worry about speed or distance to begin with, it's important to build up slowly and never increase your distance by more than 10% each week. You should be looking to build up to your race distance, going slightly further if you can in preparation for the race, it is also worth considering joining a club where you will benefit from sharing tips and structured training. For your first race concentrate on building your endurance up rather than focussing on speed. About 3 - 4 weeks before the race it's a good idea to do some 'brick' sessions, this means getting used to running off the bike as it can be a strange experience as your legs can feel like jelly. This is very simple to do - just go for a bike ride get off your bike and go for a run. This also allows you to practise the transitions. If you're using books or magazines as a guide be aware that they do not take into account your own level of fitness or ability or you availability to train.

What do I need to eat?

As with all your other training preparations, don't try and change or add to your diet before the race, continue to eat normally. Having a carbohydrate rich dinner the night before (such as pasta) and a good breakfast including porridge will give you energy to fuel your race, but don't overeat. Make sure you drink plenty of water the day before and immediately prior to the race but be careful not to over hydrate as this equally can make you ill. It's a good idea to have a bottle of water or energy drink on your bike, if you are considering using energy 'gels' make sure you have used them before as if you are not used to them they can make you physically sick. If you feel thirsty that is your body telling you that you are already becoming dehydrated.

Do I need to join a club?

Many people start off training on their own or with a friend but joining a club has many advantages including meeting like minded people, getting some structure in to your training and keeping you motivated. Most clubs are beginner friendly and will help you prepare for your first race often doing transition practice and giving you guidance to take part in your first race. There are over 350 triathlon clubs across the UK.

Fusion Triathlon Club Juniors

Winners of the Scottish Club Aquathlon Series 2013, 2012, 2011 and 2010.

Our junior section is the most successful in Scotland. The importance of juniors to the sport in Scotland is unquestionable and we currently offer one of the best junior set ups in the country. Plus it's also fun, friendly and fast, Fusion's Junior sessions will introduce kids to triathlon and develop comprehensive skills and athletic ability.

Training

Training takes place at Bellahouston Leisure Centre and Park in Glasgow every Sunday. Sessions run from 8am to 11am. They include an hour in the pool followed by 1hour 45 of mixed biking and running. All biking and running takes place around the park paths and velodrome to ensure the safety of the athletes.



Racing

There are a number of races organised for Juniors in Scotland. Fusion will be hosting an aquathlon, and we have also been awarded the 2014 National Tristar and Scottish Youth Championships. See the races section on the website for the target races for the year and the calendar for more details.

Cost

Juniors can join the club for only £10 and each session costs £6 for members and £8 for non-members. For 3 hours coached and supervised training- bargain!!

For further information contact: juniors@fusiontriathlonclub.co.uk

www.fusiontriathlonclub.co.uk