



Introduction

This document is designed to answer some basic questions about training for and racing in a triathlon. Hopefully you will learn things that will help you in training as well as on race day. Furthermore, some information will be presented for individuals who may be looking to make a bigger investment in triathlon. In any case, the main thing is to have fun!

If you have any questions please e-mail: admin@triridgefield.com. All questions are good questions!

Race Day Gear

What do I need to bring to the triathlon?

The following is a list of the basic things you will need to race in a triathlon. Optional next to an item means just that . . . optional. Additionally, clothing is a topic in itself and is addressed below.

Swim Gear

- Swimsuit
- Goggles
- Swim cap (TriRidgefield will supply a swim cap)
- Towels (sit on in transition area, wipe feet)

Optional Swim Gear

- Water Bucket (wash sand off feet)
- Wetsuit (see caution below)

Bike Gear

- Helmet
- Bike shoes (or running shoes)
- Socks
- Bike Shorts
- Bike jersey/singlet
- Water Bottles (there will be no water supplied during the bike portion of the course)

Optional Bike Gear

- Gloves
- Sunglasses (keeps bugs/debris out of eyes)
- Spare tubes/Tool Kit/ Frame Pump
- Floor Pump

Run Gear

- Running Shoes
- Socks
- Shorts
- Singlet/top

Optional Run Gear

- Race belt
- Hat/Visor
- Sunglasses

Optional Miscellaneous Gear

- Watch
- Sunscreen
- Race Information
- Fluid replacement drink
- Energy Food
- Warmer Clothes, if needed

Race Day Pointers

What is a transition area?

A transition area is the area where you rack your bike and store your gear for the race. There will be racks for your bike, just pick a spot! You can rack your bike by the brakes or handlebars. Make sure your bike is secure.

Put your towel down next to your bike and lay out your items next to your towel: shoes, helmet, race number, etc. This is your "home". You will visit this spot after the swim to change into your bike gear for the bike portion of the race. You will then return after the ride, rack your bike, and change into your running gear. This is where you will grab your race number.

How big is a transition area?

The transition area is relatively small. You should plan on having enough room to hang your bike on the bike rack and place for a towel, shoes and helmet on the ground.

Where do I exit and enter the transition area during the Triathlon?

There is a single entrance and a single exit to the transition area. All traffic is one-way. You will be able to see the exit and entrance on the day of the race. Before the race starts, go over in your mind where you will exit and enter the transition area and where your bike is racked in relation to the entrance and exit. Try to count racks or look for trees or other obvious landmarks to gauge where your bike and gear are located. There will be markings A-E as landmarks along the bike rack. Don't use someone's bike or gear as a landmark - it might not be there when you arrive! For safety, please listen carefully to race volunteers as they direct you through the transition area.

Can I ride my bike in the transition area during the Triathlon?

No. There will be a "Mount" and "Dismount" line at the bike transition area exit and entrance, respectively. You will have to walk/jog/run (whichever you prefer) your bike from the bike rack to the bike exit and until you pass the bike mounting line. You can then jump on and ride. A similar line will exist when you are returning from your ride. This time you will have to come to a stop with your bike before the dismount line, walk/jog/run your bike back to your spot on the rack and change for the run. Make sure your helmet is on and your chin strap is buckled before you mount your bike, and keep your helmet on until after you dismount your bike.

How does a relay team use the transition area?

Relay team members meet at the tag area during the race to transfer the team timing chip from one team member to another. The team biker waits at the tag area with her/his bike for the swimmer to arrive and transfer the chip. The biker returns to the tag area after the bike ride and transfers the chip to the runner. Relay team members should locate the tag area before the race begins.

Is there any private area to change from swimming to biking to running clothing?

There are no changing areas in the transition area so you must be able to keep something, such as a swimsuit, on underneath!

Will people be guiding me along during the bike and run portions of the Triathlon?

Yes. But it is still your responsibility to know the course and the rules of the road. Roads will not be closed to traffic. Intersections will have police or volunteers stopping traffic, but it is the participants responsibility to ensure safe passage.

Swim FAQs

What are the basics needed for swim training?

1. Swim suit. Any swimsuit will do for beginning triathletes. If you choose to become more competitive in this sport, a quality suit may be in your future. The choices are many, so do some research and find out what is best for you.
2. Goggles and swim cap. You will be racing in a swim cap, so practicing in one may help you get used to it. Those with longer hair will want a cap to keep the hair out of their eyes while swimming.
3. Kick board, pull buoy, paddles (all optional). If you swim with a masters program or at your local pool, these items will probably be available. If they are not and you decide to stick with this sport, you may want to consider making the purchase.

How can I improve my swim?

Try a Masters program, a private lesson, or a weekend swim camp or clinic. Masters programs are great places to improve your swim. Make sure you call you local Masters program and find out what type of workouts they do and the level of the swimmers in the program so you can find a comfortable fit. If you don't know about any in your area, US Masters Swimming offers a searchable list of swim locations at: <http://www.usms.org/placswim/search.php>.

Do I need a wetsuit to swim in a triathlon?

No. But there are benefits to a wetsuit. A wetsuit will improve swimming technique as well as overall speed. This is most evident with swimmers who are not as efficient, as a wetsuit will raise their legs and body position in the water and reduce overall drag.

What strokes are permissible?

Any stroke is allowed in triathlons as long as you are not using an artificial means to propel yourself through the water. The most common and efficient stroke is freestyle. Breaststroke, however, is often performed by people who either have trouble with freestyle or are resting.

Swim Equipment

What kinds of triathlon wetsuits are available?

There are 3 main types of wetsuits, a shorty, long-john or sleeveless, and full suit. The shorty is mid-thigh length and is either sleeveless or has sleeves. This is not as beneficial as the other two types of wetsuits as it does not have the full length legs that give you added buoyancy. The long-john has full length legs or cut around the calf with no sleeves. The final suit is the full suit, which has full legs as well as long sleeves. The long-john and the full suit are the most common wetsuits used.

It is important to choose the suit that fits you the best. The most common problems are in the neck and shoulder regions. If possible, try the suit on before you buy. Most wetsuit companies have a range of sizes to fit you. Each company has its own differences in neck configuration, zipper or zipperless, and a few unique materials.

Most companies have an entry level and a more expensive wetsuit in their line, usually in both long john and sleeveless styles. The major difference between the entry-level wetsuit and upper-level wetsuit is the type of rubber that composes the wetsuit. They are all made of 2 mm to 5 mm of rubber, the thinner rubber being in places where motion is needed.

What brand of wetsuit should I buy?

Many companies make quality wetsuits in a range of prices and they include: Ironman Wetsuits, DeSoto, Quintana Roo, Piel, Orca, Xterra, Nineteen, and O'Neil. (This is a general list of resources available for triathlon participants. Team Ortho does not endorse the businesses or products listed.)

Can I rent a wetsuit?

Sure. It might make better sense for you to rent a suit if this is your first triathlon. We suggest you consider the suits on <http://www.wetsuitrental.com>.

Bike FAQs

What are the basics needed for bike training?

1. Bicycle. For beginning triathletes, any bike with gears will be fine. It is important, however, to have a bike that fits your body.
2. Bike Shoes. If you decide to stick with this sport, you will need a pair of bike shoes. However, you can cycle in running shoes. Make sure the bike pedals on your bicycle do not require specific cycling shoes. If they do, you will have to make a decision...either purchase different pedals or invest in some bike shoes.
3. Cycling apparel. Purchase a couple of pairs of good cycling shorts for your training. Your derriere will be glad you did. A good pair of shorts can make the ride much more enjoyable.
4. Cycling computer. A cycling computer can be helpful during training in determining your speeds and distances. But it is not a necessity. Many models are available. If you want one, find the most basic and least expensive.
5. Water bottles. You will need water bottles (and bottle cages) for your bicycle.
6. Repair equipment. Having spare equipment will do little good if you do not know how to change a tire - especially if you are training alone. Always take along a cell phone or money for a phone call in the event you are left stranded. If uncomfortable with your maintenance skills (or if you don't have much interest in learning), cycle close to home or with a partner.

What is drafting?

The ITU defines drafting as: The technique of riding in a pack during the cycling event. They define draft zone as: An imaginary area approximately three bicycle lengths long and six feet wide surrounding each competitor during the bike segment. Basically drafting is a method to increase your speed or decrease your effort by lowering your wind resistance. *Note: Drafting will not be permitted on TriRidgefield race day.*

What is blocking?

Blocking is basically riding in the wrong part of the bike course. Most commonly the right side of the bike course is for riding while the left side is for passing. Riders who camp out or overextend their stay in the passing lane are blocking. Blocking is a violation in most triathlons.

Is the bike ride dangerous? I always see bike racers crashing on TV.

TriRidgefield prohibits drafting - following another rider closely during the bike ride to reduce wind resistance. Thus, your bike ride will be a solo effort. All riders will keep a safe distance from one another, monitored at all times by USA Triathlon certified marshals aboard motorcycles. You will not be subject to the dangers of riding in a large pack, where one rider's false move can take everyone down. Before you race, we urge you to practice bike handling skills to be confident aboard your machine. In particular, you should be skilled at cornering and riding in the aerodynamic "drop" position.

Bike Equipment

What's the difference between Triathlon bikes and regular road bikes?

Triathlon bikes are designed with a different geometry than road bikes. Triathlon bikes are more forward in their seat tubes (between 75-78 degrees) and are set up lower in the front end to provide a time trial position. A steeper seat tube angle emphasizes the quad muscles more to save the use of your run muscles so that you have more get up and go when you start the run portion of a triathlon.

Regular road bikes have a more slack seat tube angle, from 72-74 degrees, and are set up for all-purpose riding. They are designed to corner, climb, and sprint well. The road bike position is more upright and less aerodynamic than a time trial position. A road bike position uses all of the leg muscles to provide as much power to the bike as possible. A road bike can be converted to a triathlon bike with the addition of a forward seat post and aero bars.

Triathlon bikes also come in 650c or 700c wheel sizes. 650c wheels accelerate better and are lighter, having less surface area exposed to the wind than 700c wheels. They are more proportional to riders under 5'10". 700c wheels have long been the standard in the bike industry. Although slightly larger, 700c wheels offer more comfort and less rolling resistance than 650c wheels and are more proportional to riders over 5'10".

Do I need to have a "racing" bike to ride in a triathlon?

Absolutely not. Anything will do as long as it is in safe working order. If you want to use a mountain bike and it has knobby tires, you may want to purchase some "slick" tires to make it easier on yourself. Remember, it's not the bike that makes the rider, it's the engine.

How do I find the right position on my bike?

The correct position in biking can mean the difference between a comfortable, enjoyable, fast ride and a painfully uncomfortable slow ride. When choosing a bike, you want to find a balance between fit, aerodynamics, and comfort.

Have someone - this could be a knowledgeable biker friend - take a look at your fit. To be well fitted on a road or tri-bike, it's best to go to a bike shop near you that specializes in fitting.

Run Training

What are the basics needed for run training?

1. A good pair of running shoes. This is very important. Try to purchase your first pair from a knowledgeable source, someone who can look at your feet and determine what you may need. Good shoes are important. Consider using your local running store to help you find the right shoe and fit. Even if the shoes are expensive, once you find a pair you love you can order them online and really save.

2. Comfortable apparel. This means comfortable clothing that is appropriate for the weather. Polyester based materials don't hold the same water weight as cotton and other materials and make for more comfortable running.

3. Hat. If the sun is hot, a good cap is a plus to shade your face. Find one made with mesh. This will allow heat from your head to pass through.

How can I prevent blisters on the run?

You can practice running without socks like you should in the race. Socks work great on your typical jog, but wet socks and wet feet spell blisters during a triathlon. Lubricating your toes and heels with Vaseline is also helpful.

Triathlon Clothing

What's the difference between tri shorts and run/bike shorts?

Tri shorts look like normal, tight-fitting bike shorts, but the pad in the tri shorts is not as thick as in bike shorts and is usually made out of quick drying fleece. The quick drying fleece allows you to wear the tri shorts throughout the swim, bike, and run.

However, wearing a swimsuit and then changing into biking shorts and running shorts is adequate as well. You can slip biking shorts over your swim suit (especially women), take the bike shorts off after the bike ride, then slip your running shorts on.

In general, there are some benefits to triathlon clothing, but it is an added expense and is not necessary. Wear what makes you feel comfortable!

For those interested in triathlon clothing, a number of companies make triathlon race and training clothing. A few of these are DeSoto, Sugoi, Zoot, Orca, Speedo, TYR, Rip-n-Hammer, etc. (the next section lists a number of websites for you to browse).

Triathlon Basics

What are the distances for triathlons?

There are no set distances for triathlons. Many triathlons use various distances that conform to the land/water available to them. There are, however, a few "common" distances:

Name	Swim	Bike	Run
Sprint	.75 km	20 km	5 km
Olympic /International	1.5 km	40 km	10 km
Long Course	2.4 m	112 m	26.2 m

The terms "short course" and "long course" generally refer to distances less than and greater than Olympic distance respectively.

What are the governing bodies for triathlon?

The international governing body for triathlon is the International Triathlon Union:

<http://www.triathlon.org/>

The U.S. governing body for triathlon is USA Triathlon:

<http://www.usatriathlon.org>

What are the rules of triathlons?

Triathlon rules vary by race and governing bodies. For USAT races, the rules can be found at:

<http://www.usatriathlon.org/Events/Rules.aspx>

Where can I find more information on triathlons?

Try the following links:

TriNewbies.com: <http://www.trinewbies.com>

HulaMan: <http://www.hulaman.com>