



Some introductory beginner tips

Step 1 - Equipment required for a triathlon

The sport of triathlon can be quite daunting. Fortunately starting with an aquathlon makes things a little simpler, but once you have completed the GC event, you will be hooked!! With a triathlon, there are the 3 disciplines you need to conquer, the equipment you need to buy and the fitness you need to achieve!!

Let's have a look at these things individually and break them down into manageable items.

To complete a triathlon for the first time, you really only need 5 things – all of which you probably already have...these are –

- Swimmers
- Goggles – preferably a one piece, and with a split strap
- Bike
- Helmet
- Running Shoes

For your first race, spend your energy and focus on preparing yourself for the event through training and preparation, rather than through expensive equipment expenditure. If you decide to do another triathlon at a later date, upgrade your gear as you get better and better. You will actually appreciate the better gear as you also improve your fitness and understanding of the sport of triathlon.

What are the steps you can take in each discipline to get you to the start line of your first triathlon?

The Swim

The swim leg of triathlon is both the shortest and most often the most feared part of the race. The key to the swim is to stay relaxed and calm, and to avoid panic in the open water. Swim improvement will predominantly come through technique improvement and just getting into the water and swimming 2-3 times a week.

Your approach to the swim if you are a beginner is to try to break your swim training sessions down into manageable distances. For example, rather than attempt to swim 1km, do a set twice through of 10x50m repeats with 10-15 seconds rest between each. By breaking your session down, you will be more likely to hold your correct technique.

The Bike

What is probably more important than spending large amounts on a new bike is making sure your bike is set up properly to fit your body.



A professional bike fit is often an expensive exercise, so there are some small steps you can take at home to get you through your first triathlon.

- Stand over the bike. There should be about a 2cm (or 1inch) clearance between your crotch and the top bar.
- Extend your leg all the way to the bottom of a pedal stroke and keep your heel from dropping. Your leg should be 80-90% extended. If you are extended too much, you will lose your power at the bottom of each pedal stroke.
- Adjust your seat so that your knee is above your fore foot. When your leg is extended, you should be able to drop a plumb line from your knee to the ball of your foot.
- When leaning forward, your back should have an arch and your arms slightly bent in order to absorb the vibrations from the road.

No matter what bike you are on, if you have poor cycling form, it can be uncomfortable. Make sure you do not end up sitting on your bike in a way that leads to injuries.

Follow these simple tips regarding your optimal position on the bike:

- Your back should be arched and your head should be focused on the road in front of you.
- Your elbows should be slightly bent, but not locked. This lets your arms serve as sort of “shock absorbers” for the bumps in the road that you’ll be riding over.
- Your shoulders should be forward so that your chest can help carry your upper body weight.

Use smooth strokes while pedaling and be sure to not only push downward on each pedal stroke, but pull upward. This will help you pedal more efficiently, not to mention make you go faster.

The Run

Running is such a fundamental sporting skill, but can so easily lead to overuse injuries. Here are some simple things you can do to get yourself ready-

- Run using a mid-foot strike to minimize time on the ground.
- Keep your shoulders back, and your head up.
- Look ahead. Focus on the ground about 1-2 metres in front of you.
- Let your arms swing naturally at your side. Let your arms swing forward and back (not side-to-side). Keep your arms bent at the elbow about 90° your hands unclenched, and shoulders relaxed.

As you run more and improve your running efficiency, you will develop an increasing ability to run for longer distances.