

HOW TO TRAIN FOR YOUR FIRST TRIATHLON

Triathlon is a sport growing rapidly in popularity across the nation due to its versatility and accessibility for all ages and fitness levels.

With distances ranging from 100m swim, 3km ride, 1km run for beginners up to 3800m swim, 180km ride, 42km run for long course and Ironman distances, there truly is an event for everybody.

Below is a guide on how to train for your first triathlon.

HOW DO I GET STARTED?

The most important aspect of participating in your first triathlon is choosing an event which is right for you.

Can't swim? Try a duathlon which is a combination of running and cycling.

Can't ride? Try an aquathlon which is a combination of swimming and running.

Have a look at the distances of the various events and choose one you feel comfortable with. For your first triathlon, explore the Enticer events on offer, then you can work your way up over time to sprint, standard, half Iron or Iron distances.

HOW DO I GET HELP?

One of the best ways to stay motivated and stick to a regime is to train with a friend or a club.

Contact admin@tas.triathlon.org.au for details on training options available through coaches etc.

TOP TRAINING TIPS

A common challenge faced by new triathletes is they may be strong in one leg whether it be bike, swim or run, and weaker in the others making it hard to decide which to focus on the most. It's important to alternate and train in each leg of the triathlon. While you should dedicate extra time to improving your weakest, you should also train on your strongest leg. Most people find this more enjoyable because it will be easier, and it will help motivate you to stick to your training plan. It's much easier to do something you are familiar with than something you're not good at.

It's important to remember you should be able to maintain a conversation with someone during training while you're running or cycling. If you can't, you should slow it down and pace yourself.

SWIM

Swimming is usually the leg of triathlon new triathletes have the most hesitation about, but it doesn't have to be. The important thing is to start your training off slowly. Get in the pool, swim a lap, then have a rest. You don't need to swim huge distances if you're just starting out, but work on gradually increasing your distances over time. If your event has an open water swim, make sure you practice in this element to get a feel for it. Swimming with

flippers is a great way for new triathletes to increase the amount of time you can swim for when you first start out. You won't be able to use them in most races, so over time start training without flippers to ensure you can swim well without them.

BIKE

First time triathletes often don't know what kind of bike training to do while preparing for their first triathlon. It's recommended you combine your training with both high intensity training to increase strength, and lower intensity over longer distances to increase stamina. Train at a speed you will feel comfortable sustaining the entire length of the cycling leg of your event. It's very important to maintain a consistent speed using the gears of the bike like you would a car while applying moderate pressure on the pedals. If you're using too much downward pressure on the pedals, you will wear out your legs quickly and if you're pedalling too fast with too little resistance you will cover less ground while exerting a lot of energy.

If you'd rather not train on the open road, start by training on a stationary bike. It's important to have some practice outdoors to get used to braking and cornering, so head to a local bike track away from the road to get practice in these areas.

RUN

You don't need to be a runner to compete in a triathlon. Anyone can run, it just takes practice and you should start off slowly. Alternate between walking for a minute, and running for a minute, and then build this up to two minutes, three minutes and so on. If you can already run and would like to build your stamina for longer distances, try interval training with short sharp bursts of exercise such as sprints, then rest and keep alternating. Remember to train in the shoes you plan on wearing on the day and break them in.

WHEN DO I START?

When training for your first triathlon, a general guide is:

No fitness- start six weeks out

Average fitness- start four weeks out

If you've got longer, that's obviously better. But you can get 'triathlon ready' in a short period of time if you stick to your training regime. Once you've completed an Enticer distance, you can keep building on your fitness by participating in progressively longer distance triathlons.

WHAT DO I NEED?

For Enticer triathlon events you don't need much equipment and most of it you will already have at home;

- Bike, any one will do, it doesn't need to be expensive you just need to be able to ride it
- Goggles
- Running shoes- don't wear brand new ones on the day or you'll end up covered in blisters
- Swimmers- you can also have some shorts or a top to wear after the swim if you feel more comfortable, anything will do from boardies to bike pants
- Helmet
- Sunglasses
- Water bottle for your bike

TOP TRIATHLON EVENT DAY TIPS

On the day of your first triathlon, don't go crazy with carb loading, energy gels and drinks. Start your day with a piece of toast with jam or honey and you should avoid alcohol the night before to keep hydrated. On the day there will be friendly technical officials to guide you, but it pays to read through the competition rules for your event to avoid disqualification. It's important to keep in mind, don't go too hard too fast. Pace yourself and don't get distracted with what people around you are doing just focus on finishing your race.

EVENT DAY TIPS:

SWIM

For your swim leg it's a good idea stay to the back of the group and to the side, so you don't get stuck in the middle. Keep your own pace and save your legs for the bike by using your arms and upper body to propel yourself forward as much as possible.

BIKE

It's common in Enticer events for participants to waste time running around trying to find their bike during transition. To avoid this problem, throw a brightly coloured towel over your bike so it stands out from the rest. During the race try to sustain a consistent pace and don't be tempted to speed up to overtake people if you can't maintain that speed because you'll wear yourself out.

RUN

You don't need to be the fast to compete in triathlon. The key is getting into a steady pace and sticking to it. It's common practice in Enticer triathlons that if you can't run anymore you can walk for a while to catch your breath, so don't be embarrassed if you need to stop every now and then.

THE GOAL IS TO HAVE FUN!

The most important thing to remember when training for your first triathlon is to have fun. Triathlon has a great, supportive community where everyone is encouraged to give it a go. Being part of a local club provides you with an opportunity to be social in a healthy environment with like-minded people.

The goal of participating in your first triathlon is to cross the line, whether this means competing as a team or walking instead of running. Crossing the line should be your goal, no matter how long it takes to get there.

HOW TO MOTIVATE YOURSELF TO START TRAINING?

A great way to start is by finding a local triathlon club or training group – this way you can train with other people of the same ability as part of an organised group and with a coach. Not only will this be the safest way to start, but it will also provide social interaction and fun. If you don't join a club or a group, then try to encourage some friends to train with you. That way you can motivate each other and push each other along – plus it provides a bit of healthy competitiveness!

HOW TO STICK TO YOUR TRAINING PLAN?

It's important to set realistic, achievable goals so that you can see results and improvement

on a continual basis. This helps to stay feeling positive and motivated. Don't take on too much to begin with as it is likely that you won't be able to keep up the training load and may result in loss of motivation and even injury. Talk to a triathlon coach to find out how much training you should be doing in order to achieve your goal. And of course, stay focused on what it is that you want to achieve!

IMPORTANCE OF EATING HEALTHY

In order to get the best out of your body, you need to put the best into it. This means a healthy, balanced diet full of fresh food and water. That doesn't mean you can treat yourself – that is one of the benefits of doing exercise! However, the basic rules of everything in moderation and common sense must prevail.

FOUR WEEK TRAINING PLAN

Written by Triathlon Australia coach Keiran Barry

> WEEK 1	> WEEK 2
Monday Swim 6 x 50m lengths, with a 40-second rest between each	Monday Swim 6 x 50m lengths, with a 30-second rest between each
Tuesday Cycle for 15 minutes at an easy pace (80-95 reps per minute)	Tuesday Cycle for 20 minutes at an easy pace (80-95 reps per minute)
Wednesday 1-minute run, 1-minute walk x 10	Wednesday 2-minute run, 1-minute walk x 8
Thursday REST	Thursday REST
Friday Swim for 20 minutes as continuously as possible	Friday Swim for 20 minutes as continuously as possible
Saturday Cycle for 10 minutes at an easy pace, then hard for 1 minute, easy for 1 minute x 4; plus 1-minute run, 1-minute walk x 10	Saturday Cycle for 10 minutes at an easy pace, then hard for 1 minute, easy for 1 minute x 5; plus 2-minute run, 1-minute walk x 4
Sunday REST	Sunday REST
> WEEK 3	> WEEK 4
Monday Swim 6 x 50m lengths, with a 20-second rest between each	Monday Swim 6 x 50m lengths, with a 10-second rest between each
Tuesday Cycle outdoors for 25 minutes at an easy pace	Tuesday Cycle outdoors for 15 minutes at an easy pace
Wednesday 3-minute run, 1-minute walk x 6	Wednesday 2-minute run, 1-minute walk x 5
Thursday REST	Thursday REST
Friday Swim for 20 minutes as continuously as possible	Friday Swim for 20 minutes as continuously as possible
Saturday Cycle for 10 minutes at an easy pace, then hard for 1 minute, easy for 1 minute x 6; plus 3-minute run, 1-minute walk x 4	Saturday REST
Sunday REST	Sunday RACE DAY - GOOD LUCK!