

WORLD TRIATHLON PARA and PARALYMPIC PATHWAY

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. Who can compete in World Triathlon Para and the Paralympic Games?

- Most of the eligible impairments for most Paralympic sports can be classified to compete in World Triathlon Para.
- Common impairments in World Triathlon Para are upper and lower limb amputations, dysmelia, or other impairments eg brachial plexy; vision impaired; wheelchair users; cerebral palsy or acquired brain injury.
- Triathlon is a challenging physical and mental sport. The most impaired ambulant athletes' race in PTS2 and typically in that class are single above knee impairments/amputees and athletes with significant cerebral palsy who can ride a normal bike as well as run 5km.
- As a guide only, the minimum impairment is the loss of one hand or one foot. These athletes' race in PTS5.
- There are only two classes in the PTWC (Wheelchair) class and currently high-level spinal cord injured athletes (cervical) do not have a Paralympic pathway.
- [More information on the World Triathlon Para categories can be found on their website.](#)

2. Where/how do I get classified?

- Classification is not required to compete in local triathlons. It is only required for the National Championships and all international World Triathlon Para events.
- There are usually 2 opportunities per year for classification, in conjunction with the National Sprint Championships and another National or International Paratriathlon race.
 - Contact the Triathlon Australia (TA) Head of Classification for details.
- To be classified you must have a doctor/opthalmologist complete either the Physical Impairments or Visual Impairment Medical Diagnosis Form and return to the Head of Classification for TA. [Refer to classification tab for relevant forms for physical classes.](#)
- All PTVI Classifications are done via Paralympics Australia. [Relevant forms can be found on their website.](#)

3. What events are in World Triathlon Para and the Paralympic Games?

- The Paralympic event is the Sprint Distance Triathlon: **750m swim, 20km bike, 5km run.**
 - Para triathlon is a non-drafting event
- The Sprint Distance is also the distance for the World Triathlon Para Series, World Triathlon Para Cups, and the World Triathlon Para Championships (WTPC). The WTPC are the World Championships for elite para triathlon.

- World Triathlon also conduct competition for para triathlon at the World Championships in Aquathlon (Swim, Bike), Duathlon (Run, Bike, Run), Long Course (approx. 1.9km swim, 80km bike, 20km run) and Cross Triathlon (done on trails with a mountain bike).

4. What about 70.3 and Ironman racing?

- Ironman is a company that runs 70.3 and Ironman racing around the world. They do include wheelchair and visually impaired athletes in their Physically Challenged wave. They do not use the World Triathlon classification system nor fully follow World Triathlon rules regarding equipment etc.
- Ironman is not a Paralympic event.
- An Ironman race is usually a 3.8km swim, 180km bike, 42km run. The 70.3 event is approx. half the Ironman distance.

5. What equipment must I have?

- If you are a wheelchair athlete, you need a recumbent handcycle and a racing wheelchair. Your everyday wheelchair is also used in competition.
 - Kneeling handcycles are not permitted.
- Vision Impaired athletes ride a tandem bike with their guide. The one guide completes all of the race tethered to/with the athlete and must be of the same gender.
 - B1 athletes wear blackout swim goggles and glasses.
- All other athletes use a standard competition bike, usually a Time Trial bike, although some impairments and on some courses, athletes choose to ride a Road racing bike.
 - Trikes are not permitted.
- All athletes can swim in a wetsuit, within World Triathlon regulations and most do due to the benefits this provides.
- Elite leg amputees will have a different run and cycle prosthetic.
- For more detailed rules on equipment refer to the World Triathlon Competition Rules.
- To get started there are a number of different options for borrowing or buying second hand equipment. Your local triathlon club, State Triathlon Association, TA Para Lead can all help to get you started.
- It is not a cheap sport to compete in at the highest level.

6. I want to give it a go, how quickly can I progress and what do I do?

- If you want to be a competitive elite para triathlete and potentially compete at the Paralympic Games:
 - Do not hesitate if the Paralympics are your goal. Even if you are not particularly good at the beginning, everyone starts somewhere. Once you can complete the required distance, you will then need to compete in key races such as the Oceania Championships and National Championships.
 - At least five female Australian athletes have transferred from another sport and reached podium level at World Triathlon Para Championships in 18 months or less.

- Male athletes can be very competitive in 1-2 years. However, to reach podium level it may take longer, depending on your background.
- To be fast tracked you need to be in the right training environment. There are a number of options around Australia that we can place you into.
- You must be 16 years of age or older to compete in international triathlon.
- Contact the TA Para Lead to discuss your individual options.
- If you want to follow a pathway outside the Paralympic pathway i.e Ironman, Cross Tri, just for fun etc please contact your State and Territory Triathlon Association for suggestions on training groups, races etc.
- Athletes under 16 years of age will usually join a local squad of similarly aged able-bodied triathletes and train and race with them.
 - From about 13-14 years old talented juniors with the potential to be Paralympic paratriathletes can be included in State and National Development Squads. Please contact the TA Para Lead to discuss options.

7. What does a very good para triathlete look like?

- To transfer quickly to be a successful World Triathlon/Paralympic athlete you would probably be at least some of the following:
 - A strong swimmer, who enjoys open water swimming.
 - Someone who enjoys running longer distances, eg you did cross country at school.
 - Likes the physical, mental and technical challenge of training for and racing in 3 different disciplines.
 - Can work hard, the event is between 1 hour to 1:30 long depending on the class and gender.
 - Note that the cycling leg is the easiest of the legs to train a beginner for. Some podium paratriathletes had not even ridden a bike before starting the sport.

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