

101 Tips for Getting Back into the Swim (Bike and Run) of Things



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It's that time of year. Things are hotting up – and not just the weather. But just how do you reach peak performance in the summer season? Let Wayne Goldsmith count the ways.

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Triathletes all over Australia are getting up, gearing up and warming to the news that the new triathlon training and racing season is just around the corner.

Here's 101 Tips to get you back into things.

1. Set goals – clear goals about what you want to achieve in your training and racing over the season.

2. Check your bike! Double check your brakes. Triple check your helmet. Safety before success.

3. Start slowly. Don't start this season where you finished last season... take time to get back into the rhythm and routine of regular triathlon training.

4. Start eating like an athlete: don't put low-grade fuel in a high-performance engine.

5. Find a training partner – working hard is a lot more fun with someone to train with.

6. Buy some sunscreen and a hat: smart triathletes are sun-smart triathletes.

7. Make a commitment to improve your technique and skills in swim, bike and run – it's not all about killing the kilometres.

8. Find a good coach – someone who knows the sport and who will support, guide and encourage you as you strive to achieve your training and racing goals.

9. Buy a new water bottle – last year's is likely to be hosting more bacteria in it than the Yarra River.

10. Keep it clean... wash it out after every use.

11. Buy a pair of cycling knicks – once you try them, you will never go back.

12. Keep them clean – wash them out after every use.

13. Make this season the one where you learn to actually change a tyre.

14. Make it the back tyre.

15. Include some stretching before and after every training session. It does make a difference.

16. Check your swim gear: paddles, band, pull buoy, goggles, flippers and kickboard. Anything that's growing mould on it goes straight in the bin.

17. Learn to relax. Rest, regeneration and recovery are as important as training hard if you want to succeed in this sport.

18. Keep your training program balanced and simple. If you train hard in the morning, take it easy in the afternoon. If you train hard on Saturday, relax and do something less strenuous on Sunday.

19. Learn how to climb, corner, brake correctly, ride in a bunch, ride a pace-line, descend – bike skills are not just to enhance performance, they are about safety.

20. Weigh yourself regularly – not to check out how your curves are looking, but to ensure you are hydrating effectively.

21. Find a good gym and a good gym trainer and learn how to develop a strong, stable core – it helps with performance and injury minimisation.

22. Thank your family in advance for what they will endure during the triathlon season. You

need their support.

23. Have a training plan and increase your training and racing load progressively, intelligently and systematically.

24. Check your bike repair kit. You know, the one that's been stuck up under your bike seat for three years and never been opened – replace anything that's cracked or worn.

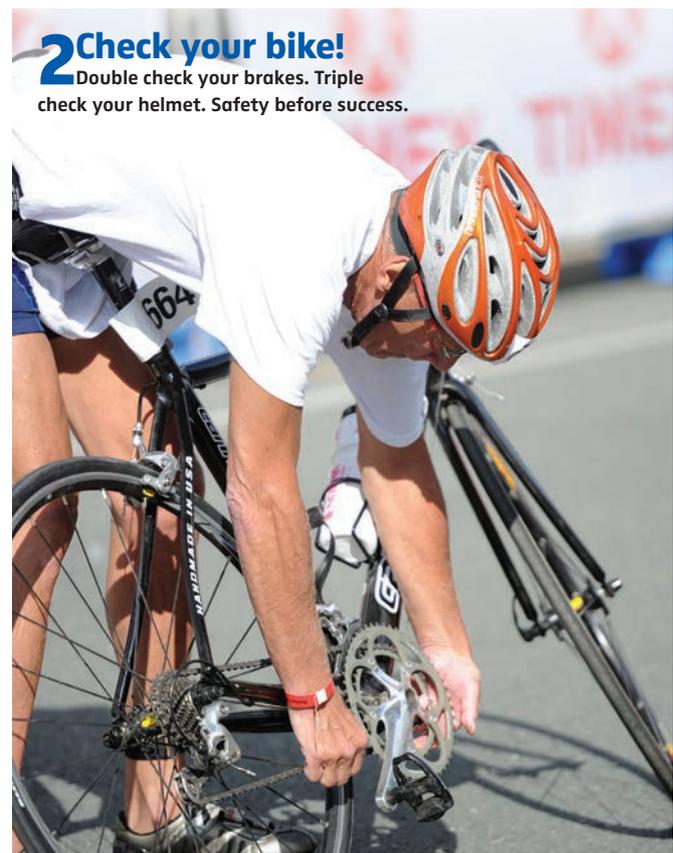
25. Find a good sports physiotherapist and get a

musculoskeletal screen, and a general body check for flexibility, mobility and stability before you start your training and racing program.

26. Drink more fluids, more often.

27. Plan out your menu and diet plan well in advance. Triathletes training twice a day may eat up to seven small meals each day and that takes a lot of prior planning.

28. Improve your kick.



29. Improve your sighting and navigation skills.

30. Improve your stroke technique.

31. Take at least one full day off each week. Even the pros have a day off. Rest is critical.

32. Eat more fresh fruit and vegetables.

33. Eat more lean meat, chicken and fish.

34. Match your training to your racing. For example, if you are going to be racing on a hilly course, include some hills in your training. If you are heading to a race that includes an ocean swim, include an ocean swim or two in training in the month leading into your race.

35. Monitor your training intensity (how hard you are working) constantly.

36. And the word is carbo – not garbo. Training hard does not mean you can eat whatever you want and as much as you want because you will “burn it off” tomorrow.

37. Keep a training diary.

38. Write in it. Start with the training you planned to do, the training you actually did and record the difference.

39. Have a regular massage.

40. Buy some good quality sunglasses – they help minimise eye strain and are an important piece of safety equipment.

41. If you start swimming in a swim team, learn their rules, e.g. push-off distances, lane direction – saves a lot of head clashes (not to mention embarrassment).

42. Treat any sore spots, hot spots and injuries immediately.

43. Check your running shoes. If they are worn, split, cracked or incredibly stinky, time to buy a new pair.

44. Buy two pairs, if you can afford it, and wear them on alternate days.

45. Check out your bike shoes and cleats and make sure they still work the way they are supposed to.

46. Encourage someone in your group every day. It feels great (for you and for them).

47. Include a T1 practice session every week.

48. Include a T2 practice session every week. There are four legs to a triathlon: swim, bike,

run and transition.

49. If you are planning to do some long rides, do it with a group. It's safer. It's fun. And it gives you lots of people to talk to at the coffee shop afterwards.

50. Don't be afraid to include a little speed work in your swim, bike and run training each week. It might be an endurance sport, but triathletes of all ages and racing all distances need some speed.

51. Learn about your heart rate: how to measure it, what makes it increase, what makes it decrease, how it works. It is an important training monitoring tool.

52. Get a blood test done before you start regular training. It will give you 'baseline' information which will help you and your doctor identify any problems if they occur during the season.

53. Practise riding and learning to be comfortable in several positions, e.g. on your aero-bars, the 'hoods' and the 'drops'.

54. Find something else to talk about at parties, BBQs and other social activities – not everyone wants to hear about your new chain-ring or how many 100s you can do on 1.50. *Balance.*

55. Learn how to improve the quality of your sleep. Try some breathing and relaxation exercises when you go to bed. Listen to some relaxing music. Sleep is the best recovery tool for all triathletes.

56. Take some probiotics regularly. There's some pretty good research suggesting they can help you to maintain a strong immune system during hard training.

57. Keep a big bag of frozen peas in the freezer. They come in very handy for icing injuries or for just putting on your head after a tough run or ride in hot conditions.

58. Buy a big jar of Vaseline and put the stuff anywhere you chafe or are likely to chafe.

59. Include lots of variety in your training. Vary distance, duration, speed, terrain, and environment, keep it interesting and stimulating.

60. Do a training program that's right for you. The 50-year-old in the club who's done 36 Ironman races has a program that works for him – but often it doesn't work for anyone else. Follow your own path.



61. Cut down on your consumption of saturated fats, over-processed sugars and salt.

62. Eat breakfast!

63. Find fun ways of fitting in the training you want – and need – to do. Go for a walk at lunchtime. Buy an indoor trainer, bike ergo or set of rollers and ride while you watch TV. Take the kids to the pool and do a few laps with them. It doesn't all have to be hard work.

64. Include some general body strengthening exercises in your training program: push-ups, dips, chins, abdominal work, sit-ups, planks, and step-ups. They add variety and being stronger doesn't hurt.

65. Buy and read this magazine regularly.

66. If you plan to ride in the dark – morning or evening – get some good bike lights, make sure they work and use them appropriately.

67. Buy a set of Skins or similar compression pants and wear them to help with your recovery program.

68. Supplements and vitamins may be of use to some triathletes in some situations but they don't replace a healthy, balanced diet.

69. If you train with a cycling group, before the first ride, learn their rules about passing, pace-lines, avoiding obstacles, hand signals, etc. It saves a lot of hassle and helps to avoid accidents and incidents on the road.

70. Clean out and dry out your swim bag regularly.

71. Clean and service your bike regularly.

72. Learn to relax when you swim. Pulling and pushing harder is not the answer – it's about relaxing more and learning how to move through the water easily.

73. Same with breathing and swimming. Don't hold your breath. Breathe out fully when your face is in the water and breathe in fully when you turn your head to breathe.

74. Pack some food – fruits, gels, bars, healthy snacks, etc. when you do your long rides. The right fuel makes a big difference.

75. If you feel sick, don't train!

76. Use water, in all its forms, to help you recover – showers, spas, ice baths, ice packs.

77. Buy a small, robust camera and take it with you on long rides. You only live once.

78. If you are doing an evening training session, take some healthy snacks to eat immediately after training. If you don't, those take-away signs will be far too tempting to resist on the way home.

79. Learn some running drills and include them in your warm-up routine. They make a big difference on your speed and can also help to minimise your injury risk.

80. Learn how to change gears correctly – it will change your life.

81. A great cup of coffee in the morning won't necessarily make you a better triathlete, but it won't hurt!

82. Monitor your hydration level. If your urine is dark and has a strong odour, that's a pretty good hint that you need to be drinking more fluids.

83. Invest in a good pair of running shoes and have them correctly and professionally fitted. Don't just buy the ones recommended to you by a friend or whatever's on sale.

84. Learn how to inflate your

tyres to the road conditions, it will make a huge difference to your riding – particularly your bike handling.

85. Take your phone with you when you ride, but for emergency use only. Nothing is dumber than riding along taking phone calls or listening to music with ear plugs in both ears – very, very dangerous!

86. If you don't know them, learn the road rules and abide by them.

87. Never, ever give up. This is a tough sport and success takes time, hard work and dedication. But if you persist, anything is possible.

88. Make this the year you learn a swimming stroke other than freestyle. It makes swim training far more interesting.

89. And while you're at it, learn to tumble turn.

90. If you go out riding or running early in the morning or late in the afternoon, wear clothing that is bright and highly visible.

91. Aim to go to bed a little earlier. An extra hour of sleep each night is an extra night of sleep each week.

92. Don't go looking for short cuts, like wearing really large swim paddles or trying to pedal gears that require too much power and strength. Take your time – sustainable performance demands patience.

93. Buy a good quality bike pump and learn how to use it.

94. Include a few hills in your

bike and run training. It's an excellent way to build strength and adds a little more variety to your training sessions.

95. It's a good idea to monitor your fatigue and recovery levels. Each day, write down how you feel (a score of one means you feel terrible and a score of five means you feel great), how sore your muscles feel (a score of one means your muscles are not sore and a score of five means they are very sore) and rating the quality of your sleep out of 10 – (i.e. with 10 being the high score). These simple measures will tell you when your body and your mind are not recovering from training.

96. Thank your coach after every training session.

97. Shower after every training session. Do we really have to explain why?

98. Go to a good mechanic and have your bike set up for you correctly and professionally. It is possibly the smartest move you can make to ensure your riding is all it can be.

99. Put some talc or baby powder inside your swimming cap after each use (and after you dry it out) to keep it in tip top condition.

100. Keep a spare pair of goggles in your swim bag or at the very least a spare strap for your goggles.

101. Be proud of yourself. Just thinking about this sport is enough to fatigue some people. Be proud of you and your commitment to realising your potential. 

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