



TRIATHLON

A dark blue horizontal bar containing three white silhouettes representing triathlon disciplines: a swimmer on the left, a cyclist in the middle, and a runner on the right.

IN A BOX

The Complete and Practical Training Guide for Sprint and International Distance Triathlon

By

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Welcome Triathlete!

You are about to embark on a journey to compete in a special event that combines three endurance sports – swim, bike and run – into one exciting event: triathlon.

I still vividly remember my first triathlon in 1995 – a sprint-distance race (750-meter swim, 12.5-mile bike and 5-kilometer run) that took place in

Atlantic Beach, Florida. I drove down the morning of the race with my dad and registered. I had never even seen a triathlon except for the Hawaii Ironman® World Championships on TV. As I unpacked my swim, bike and run gear from the back of the car, I glanced around at the other athletes to see what they were doing then tried to emulate them. I nervously lined up with the other triathletes in my wave at the swim start. When the starting gun went off, all of my fear and anxiety disappeared and I lost myself in the motion of racing. I finished in the middle of my age group that race, but more importantly, I was instantly hooked on the sport of triathlon.

Over the years, I've learned how to plan my training effectively, how to balance my time and my life effectively, how to execute better on race-day, both physically and mentally, and how to consistently achieve top end results year after year.

I share this knowledge and experience with the athletes I coach, and in this book, I'll share what I know with you. I'll teach you the basics of triathlon training and give you a training plan that you can use to prepare you for your first or improve on your second tenth sprint or international distance triathlon.

Happy training!

David B. Glover

"It's all about the journey, not the outcome."

- Carl Lewis, Olympic Track & Field
Gold Medalist

Ch. 1: Where to Begin

Congratulations for taking on the triathlon challenge! Preparing for three different athletic events – swim, bike and run - can seem like a daunting task. Like all things, you start with the first step then take one step at a time until you reach your goal.

"Begin with the end in mind."

- Stephen Covey, author of *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*

To begin with, there are four standard distances for triathlons (although individual race distances may vary depending on the course):

DISTANCE	SWIM	BIKE	RUN
Sprint	750 meters	20 Km	5 Km
International or Olympic	1,500 meters	40 Km	10 Km
Half Ironman or 70.3	1.2 miles	56 miles	13.1 miles
Ironman or Iron Distance	2.4 miles	112 miles	26.2 miles

There are also mini sprints, which are less than a sprint distance.

For your first race, the best distance to start with is a sprint distance then progress to international distance then on to longer races if you so desire.

The first step is to choose your goal race(s) and register.

Choosing a Race

Where do you find a race? The Internet and local athletes are excellent sources of information about which triathlons are in your area. One of the best places to connect with athletes in your area is through your local triathlon club or at your local swim, bike, run or triathlon store. USA

Triathlon (usatriathlon.org), the governing body for triathlon in the US, has a list of all registered triathlon clubs on its website.

When choosing a race, here are some important factors to consider:

RACE FACTOR	CONSIDERATIONS
Time of year of the race	Do you have enough time have to train? Will you do the majority of your training in the winter or in the summer? How will the weather on race day compare to the weather that you've been in training in?
Size of the race and venue	Crowded course versus being alone for long periods of time? Many spectators or few spectators?
Swim	Pool, ocean lake or river swim? Pool swims are recommended for your first race, especially if you do not have any experience with open water swimming. If you do sign up for a race with an open water swim, you will want to practice in open water before the race.
Course	Does the course play to your strengths? For example, if you're a strong cyclist, you may prefer a hillier course to a flat course. If you live in a flat part of the country at sea level, racing on a hilly course at a higher elevation will put you at a disadvantage.
Area amenities	If bringing friends and family, are there other activities that they can enjoy while you're doing registration, swim practice, etc?
Other athlete support	Do you have friends who are training for the same race or another race around the same period of time? It can be lonely doing all of your long rides and runs alone.
Availability	Is the event available for registration? Many events sell out ahead of time so you may need to register early.
Reputation of event	Be sure to read about the race in athlete blogs and on discussion boards.

Most race registrations are done online through the race website. Many races will also offer discounted pricing if you sign up early.

When scheduling your races, I generally recommend no more than one race per month in order to allow adequate time for training in between races. Otherwise, you're racing all the time and not training. Plus, racing too much tends to lead to burnout more quickly.

Recon Your Race

After you've identified a few races that look interesting, do your due diligence to research each event in order to know what to expect:

- Read everything on the race website. Where and when do you pick up your race packets? Are there any special considerations like mandatory wetsuits for the swim or a looped course on the bike?
- Look at pictures to see what people are wearing during the race for the venue and the time of year (e.g. wetsuits or no wetsuits, long sleeve jerseys on the bike or sleeveless tri tops, etc?).
- Read race reports from other athletes. These can typically be found on blogs or triathlon forums. Do a web search on the race name and "race reports" to find out what others experienced at past races.

Ch. 2: Equipment Needed for Triathlon

Although there are hundreds of triathlon accessories available, there are really only a few necessary items needed in order to compete in a triathlon – most items are “nice to have.” Many triathletes do their first triathlon riding a mountain, hybrid or even a borrowed bike. Local triathlon shops will typically rent wetsuits or you can rent online if water temperatures are expected to be cool.

Here is the list of necessary equipment that you will need for all triathlons:

NECESSARY	COMMENTS
Bike	You can literally use almost any type of bike as long as it has two brakes, two wheels and is in good working order. Most importantly, your bike should fit be sized and set up properly for you. Tandem bikes (two riders on one bike) or recumbent bikes are not allowed in races. It’s always a good idea to bring your bike in for a tune up to a local bike shop before a race in order to make sure everything on the bike is functioning properly.
Bike helmet	You are required to wear a bike helmet approved by the US Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) may be used in USAT sanctioned events. Helmets must be worn at all times while on your bike – this means before, during and after the event.
Running shoes	Unless you run barefoot. If you are using pedals with toe straps, you might run in the shoes you ride with.
Swim goggles	The goggles will protect your eyes from both the water and other swimmers as well as enhance visibility during the swim.
Comfortable clothing	Wear technical, synthetic material. Check your local triathlon, bike or running store for recommended options. Cotton is not a good option, as it can cause chafing and does not wick sweat away.

Here is a list of “nice to have” equipment that you don’t necessarily need but may decide to buy once you have a few races under your belt.

“NICE TO HAVE”	COMMENTS
Wetsuit	Provides additional warmth and buoyancy during the swim. Wetsuits help weaker swimmers by raising their hips and feet up thereby better streamlining the body.
Triathlon bike	The geometry and set up of a triathlon bike frame with aero bars enables a rider to position his or her body into an aerodynamic position more comfortably.
Aero wheels	Improves aerodynamics of the bike at higher speeds.
Clipless pedals and bike shoes	Provide firm surface contact for better power transfer than regular soft-soled shoes. Be sure to practice in a grassy field with clipping in and clipping out with clipless pedals before riding on the road!
Aero bars	Improve aerodynamic positioning by flattening your profile from the front.
Aero helmet	Offers improved aerodynamics over a regular helmet.
Heart rate monitor (HRM)	Provides feedback on your level of effort as indicated by heart rate. A HRM is very useful for training to know whether you are going too hard or not hard enough.
Bike computer	Speed, cadence and power – all feedback
Triathlon top and shorts	Provide comfort and style when racing. Tops will have pockets on the back / side for energy gels and shorts will have a thin pad for bike comfort while still allowing you to run in them. You can wear a tri top and shorts from start to finish and reduce transition times.
Race number belt	Stretchable belt to which you attach your race number. You can move the number from the back (bike leg) to the front (run leg) by simply rotating the number around. Alternative is safety pins.
Neoprene timing chip	Most races use plastic timing chips to record your split times as you cross timing mats. The straps that are provided by races are typically plastic and

“NICE TO HAVE”	COMMENTS
strap	can cut into your legs
Speed laces or lace locks	For the run, these laces will allow you to quickly lace up your running shoes without having to tie them.

When training outdoors prepare appropriately and consider the following conditions:

CONDITIONS	COMMENTS
Cold / Icy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Layer clothing - remove as needed • Booties / toe covers when cycling - neoprene covers work best for complete coverage • Wear, head and face protection as needed – a cycling jersey with a light hood works excellent • Wear gloves cycling and running. • Have dry clothes ready to change into post workout. Your body will cool down rapidly after a workout, especially with wet clothes on.
Hot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wear light-colored, breathable layers for sun protection • Wear sunscreen
Wet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wear waterproof (not just water resistant) and visible, brightly colored clothing • Have dry clothes ready to change into post workout. Your body will cool down rapidly after a workout, especially with wet clothes on.
Dark	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use lighting when running and cycling at night – think “Christmas tree” – so that you are readily visible to vehicles and other athletes • Wear brightly colored, reflective clothing, vest, ankle bands, etc • Carry extra batteries (or extra lights) if working out for an extended period of time

Ch. 3: Training for the Four Events in a Triathlon

When training for a triathlon, you are actually training for four events: swim, bike, run and transition. There are two transitions in every triathlon, which may or may not be at the same place depending on the race: (1) swim to bike transition and (2) bike to run transition. All four events count towards your total race time and all four need to be practiced in order to be successful as a triathlete!

"Build your weaknesses until they become your strengths."

- Knute Rockne, former Notre Dame
football coach

The science of triathlon training relies on the principle of progressive overload. The idea is that you do a workout, which stresses and breaks down your body. In recovery from the workouts, your body adapts and builds itself back up stronger than it was before. This is called overcompensation, and it's how you build fitness.

Before we dive into how to train for each of the four events, let's look briefly at the components of a balanced triathlon training program:

COMPONENT	COMMENTS
Warm Up	Be sure to begin each workout at an easy effort in order to increase your body temperature and blood flow to muscles in order to guard against injury.
Cool Down	End each workout at an easy effort to lower blood pressure and heart rate gradually in order to reduce stiffness and promote recovery.
Endurance	Workouts that involve large muscle groups of legs and core body over a sustained period of time, such as swimming, biking and running, strengthen the heart and increases body's capacity to use oxygen more effectively.
Strength	Strength workouts strengthen and tones muscles while protecting the body from injury and improving power generation. Any workout program should include, as a minimum, some core strength exercises each week.