

Preparing for an event

One of the things that set triathlon aside from single discipline sports such as running is the amount of planning that needs to go into each race. You need lots of equipment, it all needs to work properly, you need to get yourself and it to the transition area and lay it out properly so you do the quickest possible transitions between disciplines. The list goes on..... so to help you out, have a look through the race checklist below to see if you've got everything organised.

Well in advance

Have a look through previous years results

Speak to someone who has done the race before

Review the course for each leg

Practice on the race course.

14-7 days before

Start tapering your training

Look after yourself. Get plenty of sleep, stretch and get sports massage if possible

Clean and Service Race Bike

3-5 days before

Check the weather forecast

Check event website for any last minute information

Pack your transition bag

Pack your race bike

2 days before

Take a rest day and focus on recovery

1 day before

Get up the same time as race day

Final taper session ideally done at the same time as race start

Prepare race day drinks and nutrition

Travel to race venue

Register

Assemble bike and perform bike check

Attach numbered sticker to helmet and bike frame

Write emergency contact details on the back of race number

Attach race number to race belt

Put swim hat in your transition pack

Race day

Final Meal (Breakfast) - ~ 3 hours before race start for a morning race

Bike & Run Warm-up

Put on Trisuit, race-belt and attach drinks / nutrition to bike

Attend race briefing

Enter transition area with bike and transition pack

Find your allocated area

Setup Transition stall

Put on wetsuit, swim hat and goggles

Walk to swim start with at least 10 mins to spare

Swim warm-up

Get in your ideal start position and focus

Start the Race!!

Pack your transition bag

Big plastic crates/boxes seem to be very popular with triathletes to use in transition to store their belongings. Whilst useful for keeping your area tidy, they are difficult to carry along with your bike and often require a friend to give you a hand. This equals extra stress on the day especially if you need to park along way from transition. There is a better way to keep yourself mobile, buy a transition pack (rucksack) to carry all your belongings. This will allow you to cycle down to transition making things quicker, easier and mean you can park where you want as the further away the better the warm-up. Perfect! You can buy specific transition packs but in general you need a rucksack of about 30L+ with good quality straps comfortable when cycling. So what needs to go in the bag? Well presuming you've followed our recommendations you will already be wearing your Trisuit and have put on your race belt/number; so in the bag you would have:

Standard or Aero helmet

Triathlon specific cycling shoes

Wetsuit

2 pairs of goggles - One for the race and a spare pair. Both should have been previously tried and tested in training

Swim hat provided by race organisers and spare swim hat if it is cold

Running shoes with elastic laces

Elastic Bands for fixing cycling shoes horizontal

Talcum Powder to help prevent blistering on the run

Spare Safety Pins in case needed for your race number

BTA Racing License or Day License

ICE Card - In Case of Emergency contact details. These should also be written on the back of your race number.

Emergency spare for the bike in case of last minute disasters. I usually carry spare cleats, a multi tool, mini-pump, tyre levers, and two extra inner tubes. I don't usually carry any spares on the bike during the race, but for novices or longer events I would STRONGLY recommend it.

Hydration and nutrition products: This will depend on the length of your race, weather conditions, physiology and personal preference. See the nutritional recommendations for more info. One thing you should include is one 500ml disposable drinks bottle filled with your drink of choice. This one can be sipped during the last 10 mins before the swim start then disposed of in an environmentally friendly manner.

Small transition towel

Plastic/waterproof bag/sack for wet gear post race

Optional Extras might include:

Wetsuit lubricant/s

Sun cream (make sure it is waterproof)

Neoprene adhesive

Sunglasses for the bike/run

Cap or visor for the run

Chamois cream

Heart rate monitor & strap

Remember to ONLY take what you NEED. It is useful to have the following items handy (e.g. in your car), but don't take them into transition:

Track Pump

Bike Tool Kit

Bike Spares

Turbo trainer

Shower stuff if you are a clean freak

A change of clothes

Recovery products

Mobile phone

Wallet

Setup Transition Stall

One of the key things you need to do after arriving at the race venue is to set-up your transition stall. We will presume you already have your tri-suit and race belt/number on and that you will take into transition everything you need for the race as from there you will go down to the race start. Here are the key steps involved:

Enter transition

Review the area

Rack your bike

Prepare your helmet and sunglasses

Layout towel, running shoes and extras

Get ready for the swim

Put everything away and leave

Enter transition

Enter transition with your bike and transition pack - To do this you will need your race number and stickers displayed clearly on your bike and helmet.

Find your allocated area - Make sure you rack where you are supposed to if the transition area is labeled up.

Review the area

Identify swim entry, bike entry/exit and run entry/exit points.

Plan your route to/from each point

Run through each and memorize how to find your allocated area again. Use fixed reference points, not other bikes or stuff that may move.

Rack your bike

Put your bike in an appropriate gear

Attach your cycling shoes to the pedals and make sure Velcro straps are open wide.

Using elastic bands fix the pedal horizontal

If you have previously completed a bike check and attached your nutrition you are ready to rack your bike by the saddle or bars

Prepare helmet and sunglasses

Place helmet upside down resting on your handlebars with strap undone and open wide. It might be worth practicing putting it on/off quickly a couple of times especially if it is an aero helmet.

If you plan to wear sunglasses during the bike leg, lay these out on top of your helmet.

Layout Towel, Running shoes and Extras

Put out your transition towel next to your bike but make sure it doesn't obstruct other competitors.

Put talcum powder into your running shoes, slacken the elastic laces slightly and make sure tongue is accessible before laying them onto the towel.

Put out anything else you may need for the race such as visors, additional nutrition and hydration.

Get ready for the swim

Put on your wetsuit. Before doing this you may need to apply lubricants if required.

Grab your swim hat, goggles and disposable drinks bottle

Put everything away and leave

Put everything else away in your transition pack along with any additional clothing you were wearing when you entered transition. Store your pack neatly out of the way.

Make your way out of transition to the race start

A few extra things to think about

Get into transition with plenty of time to spare

Stay focused by working through a list one thing at a time

Some common faults

Forgetting something!

Taking too much stuff into transition

Putting your bike into an in-appropriate gear to begin the bike leg

Not memorising your allocated stall and the best routes to/from it

Taking up too much space so your things get in other peoples way

Want to get better? Try these activities

Training exercises where you need to setup a transition

Practice Races to get used to the process under pressure before your main event