



TriCoachDara.com
Your First Triathlon



Here it is the event you have been waiting and training for! The last few months have all been geared to this day; your training has been perfectly orchestrated and planned so that you can be as ready as possible for your first triathlon. But what exactly happens on race day?

The race really starts the day before the tri when you check in and pick up your race packet and number. There is generally no race day registration, but you should check beforehand with the race organizers. When you check in, you should also take a look at the transition area and all three courses so you can familiarize yourself with your spot (if they have it marked out) and the entrances and exits for T1 and T2.

The week before the race, you should have your bike thoroughly checked over at your local bike shop.

To check in, bring with you:

An official photo ID (driver's license, student ID, or passport, etc.)

USAT card, if you have one. If it is a USAT sanctioned event and you are not a member, you can buy a one day membership.

And maybe your confirmation number (if you signed up on the Net).

At registration you will:

- Confirm your athlete number
- Show your USAT card
- Pick up your registration packet that contains your race numbers (one for each of the following: the front of your helmet, your bike frame, and the front of your run shirt –or you can wear it on your race belt), your swim cap, your timing chip, and safety pins to attach your shirt numbers if you do not use a race belt.

The Day before Race Day.

- Affix all your stickers and tags to everything.
- Check that your gear bag has all you need in it (both for the race itself and afterwards. Two separate bags are best so that your transition area does not get cluttered.) You can keep your post race gear in your car or leave it with a friend who is cheering you on!
- Do your pre-race brick: 30 minute bike ride and 15 minute run—with some 90 seconds accelerations to race pace **ON THE RACE COURSE**. Check out the transition entrances and exits, ride some of the run course, and drive some of the bike course if you can.

- If there is an open water swim clinic being held, take advantage of that and note what there is to sight on, and how the course runs. Is it a long way from the swim to T1? Should you leave sandals/glasses at the swim exit?

Race Day

Do nothing new on race day: from breakfast timing and content, to what you wear, to how you race. You trained hard for this and practiced everything, so don't mess it up by doing something new!

Get up in plenty of time to eat the breakfast you always eat before your long training sessions, and do whatever mental preparation you have been training with. Remember, you are trained and ready for this event!

Get to the transition area with **at least an hour to spare** before the race starts.

- Set up your transition area just as you have in practice.

Check that your front wheel is on tight, that the brakes and gears are working (you can do all this on the pre-race warm up).

There will be bike assistance people there to pump up your tires or help you with other technical bike issues.

- During the race, no one but registered triathletes will be allowed in the transition area, so have everything you need in there.
- Go to the body marking area and get your numbers put on.
- Go to the porta potty! There are not any porta-potties on the bike or run course, but there are plenty of porta-potties at the transition area.
- Do your pre-race warm-up, so that you finish in time to get in the water and swim before your wave leaves. They usually do a race meeting down by the water before the race starts, so you want to get there earlier than is necessary for your wave, so that you can hear the schpiel.
- Do what you have planned to to stay calm and race ready.

And the race begins!

Swim

In the 10-15 minutes before the race, you can sip on some Gatorade or water.

Out on the swim course, there will be race crew in kayaks or on PWC's to help you with directions if you get way off course. Additionally, should you have difficulty you can hold onto their boats until you are ok (say your goggles come off, you can hang on there while you put them back on). But if the boat makes forward progress you have to let go or you will be disqualified.

Swim the pace you have trained with and know you can do consistently.

Control your pace, as most novices go out WAY too fast and this can leave you gasping for air and in trouble. Swim YOUR race and don't get upset by contact in the water- it happens, just keep swimming!

As you approach the end of the swim, you can pick up your kicking speed a bit, but don't get crazy! Swim until your hand hits the bottom, then stand to run out. You swim quicker than you can run in thigh deep water!

Some races let you leave flip flops at the swim exit if there is a long run to the transition area, but you should check with race officials. It does add time to get them when you come out of the water, but it is better than cut feet. But then, I have sissy feet, so don't go by me.

Control your pace as you run to the transition area, so that you are not completely winded at T1. Don't rush your transition. Be methodical and do it just as you have practiced so that you have all you need for the bike.

Remember, Make sure your helmet is fastened before you leave transition!

Bike

When you first get on the bike, take in some plain water and then, if you feel like it you can have some gel or Gatorade. Follow your detailed and practiced nutrition and hydration plan to the letter throughout the ride. Even in a sprint tri, if you become dehydrated, your performance will suffer.

Initially, try to keep your HR in Z2 so you can settle into the bike, but then you may pick it up to the intensity/ HR and cadence you have been training with. Race YOUR race and do not chase other athletes as they could take you out of your zone, and a few minutes shaved on the bike can turn into many minutes lost on the run cos your legs are dead.

There usually are not be aid stations for the sprint distance bike segments, so make sure you have filled your water bottle (one will do for that distance). If there are aid stations, point to the person you intend to get the bottle from and slow appropriately to safely get it, but do not stop as there are riders behind you who won't be ready for a dead stop!

You should know how to deal with minor problems like a flat. Do NOT give up on the race just because you flatted- You can still finish! And if you have practiced changing tires, it won't take you very long.

For the saddle bag include: a simple allen wrench tool, an inner tube, and a CO2 cartridge and pump.

T2.

Go methodically through this transition, just as you did T1.

Make sure you have your race number on! Just grab your hat and race belt- you can put them on as you run.

Run

For the first few minutes, remember to shorten your stride and keep your cadence quick, so that your legs can make the transition between biking and running-don't be too concerned with pace yet. As you feel more comfortable, you can pick up the pace, but still run YOUR race and stay within yourself. Your HR may be quite high on the run, but try to keep the pace even or aim for controlled negative splits (each mile is slightly faster than the one before it so you finish strong and faster than you started.)

Have fun and savor the finish and smile big for the cameras and crowd!

Aid stations are located about every mile and will probably have water and Gatorade. They may have orange slices. Once again, follow your hydration and nutrition plan to the letter.

As you cross the finish line, you must have the race number in front, but for the bulk of the run, you can slide it behind you if you are wearing a race belt.

Post race

Drink up! But not plain water—some form of carb drink is best. It would be best to eat some carbs and protein (about a 4:1 ratio) within 30 minutes of finishing to replenish your glycogen stores and aid recovery.

Keep walking so that you do not cramp up, then stretch, and change into some dry clothes.

You made it! Well done!

Some nutrition Guidelines.

Depending on how long you think the race may take you, aim for the following targets:

24-40oz liquid per hour

100-300 calories per hour. Races of 90 minutes will only need about 100 cal, but Olympic distances will require the higher totals. Practice your strategy!

Generally, we can tolerate more liquid/calories on the bike than the run, so practice early in the bike ride so that when you get off the bike to run you do not have a lot of fluid or food in your stomach. Additionally, heat and hi exertion make it more difficult for your stomach to process its contents.

Your calories can come in liquid, gel or solid, but only use what you have been training with. Remember, nothing new on race day.

Created for [TriCoachDara](#) by Dara Wittenberg