



Triathlon

GUIDE

----- INCLUDING -----

- CHOOSING YOUR TRIATHLON
- FOUR WEEK TRAINING PLAN
- OUR TOP TEN TIPS

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Welcome to Triathlon

Welcome to the wonderful world of triathlon. You, my brave friend, have decided to take on not just one, not even two, but three sports in one race.

Firstly, congratulations. Secondly, before the amount of prep for this type of event dawns on you, let me reassure you, help is out there and as a new triathlete, you've come to the right place.

This guide will cover all your 'before the off' basics, from picking a distance to top tips and getting stuck in with training.

Here at Sundried we are a team of level 3 REPS qualified personal trainers, fitness fanatics and experienced triathletes. We've used our own experiences as well as those of our professional athlete ambassadors to share with you all the things we wish we knew in hindsight.

From myself and all the Sundried team, GOOD LUCK in your first triathlon.

- Vicky Gardner, Writer, PT and Events for Sundried.



Know your distances

Triathlon's come in all shapes and sizes. Whilst as a newbie you're most likely to pick a sprint (like the Southend Tri) or a super sprint, it's important to know what's out there. Plus, once you've completed one tri, we're certain you'll be back for more. Who knows, you could be our next Ironman Champion!

NAME	SWIM DISTANCE	BIKE DISTANCE	RUN DISTANCE
Super Sprint Triathlon	400 meters	10 km	2.5 km
Sprint Triathlon	750 meters	20 km	5 km
Standard Distance Triathlon	1500 meters	40 km	10 km
Middle Distance Triathlon	2.5 km	80 km	20 km
Long Distance Triathlon	4 km	120 km	30 km
Ironman Distance Triathlon	3.8 km	180 km	42 km



So you want to be a triathlete

BELIEVE YOU CAN AND YOU'RE HALFWAY THERE, OR SO THEY SAY ANYWAY!

If you can answer these questions, you can complete a triathlon.

Before you make the commitment there are a few questions you need to ask yourself:

AM I HEALTHY? A triathlon is a real test on your health as well as fitness, so you need to be in a good place to start with.

Get checked at your local GP and eliminate any issues which may hold you back before you get started. If you have any old niggles or repeating injuries wait until you are fully recovered before starting out on a new challenge, it may be frustrating, but it will be worth it in the end.

WHAT KIND OF LEVEL OF FITNESS DO I HAVE? CAN I RUN, SWIM AND CYCLE? If you can't run a 5k, you'll struggle, however if you can swim, run a 5k and ride a bike, you should be able to train for a sprint triathlon. An Ironman, the 140.6 mile event with 2.4 miles of swimming, 112 miles of cycling and 26.2 miles of running however, is more than nearly all first-time triathletes should attempt on their first race and is one of the toughest challenges on the planet. Begin with a shorter sprint-distance event (400 to 500 yards of swimming, 11 to 15 miles of cycling and around 3.1 miles of running) or an Olympic-distance event (0.9 miles of swimming, 24.8 miles of cycling and 6.2 miles of running).



CAN I AFFORD THE KIT? Triathlons need a little more kit than just a swimsuit and trainers.

You'll need a bike, bike shorts, a flat kit bag (which will be a godsend if you get a puncture), a helmet, goggles, a race belt (essential for clipping your race number on so you can be easily tracked), a wetsuit, sunglasses, running shoes, a tri suit, water bottle, running hat, a transition towel (to lay your stuff out on so you can spot it's yours) and wetsuit lubrication to avoid any hickey-like marks forming on your neck and to ease the suit on and off (which is a skill in itself). You might have some of these items already, but the chances are you won't have a spare tri suit knocking about in your wardrobe. Don't panic though, you don't have to buy all of this and you can always hire or borrow kit.



DO YOU HAVE THE TIME? Training for a triathlon takes time, even a sprint distance requires a solid 12 weeks of good training and dedication to successfully complete the challenge. If this is a particularly busy time in your life, it may be hard to allow the time to train effectively. Training will become like a second job and practicing running, swimming and cycling can eat into your time. Training effects the rest of your lifestyle too, and again this takes time. Staying hydrated, eating right, stretching, and getting plenty of sleep all make big demands on your time.

WHAT DISTANCES WILL YOU CHOOSE? For most, a sprint triathlon distance is the perfect starting race, compromising of a 750m swim, 20km cycle and 5km run. However, if you've already got a marathon under your belt and are looking for the next challenge, you may be better off considering a full distance triathlon. The standard distance is 1500m swim, 40km ride and a 10km run. A middle distance triathlon is 2.5km swim, 80km ride and 20km run. The long distance triathlon is 4km swim, 120km ride and 30km run. The toughest challenge of them all, only for the brave is the Ironman, which is 3.8km swim, 180km cycle and a 42km run, so the swim, cycle and then a marathon!

WHEN WILL YOU TRAIN? You're going to need to fit your training programme into your regime and that may not be easy with work and other commitments. 5am starts will become oh too familiar. Early morning training is also great as a parent, as your kids are asleep so you won't miss anything and your partner can take care of them if they wake up, all before work. Don't just say when you're going to train either, write it down and make a schedule, that way you're more likely to remain on plan when life gets in the way, don't let curveballs interfere with your training.

WILL YOU JOIN A CLUB / TRAIN ALONE? When you complete a triathlon, you won't be wearing headphones, so don't get too dependant on running or cycling with music, as in most competitions they're banned for safety reasons. Joining a club allows you to meet people who share your same passion, to build friendships and become part of a team, fueled by motivating each other. Meeting up for training and paying for a membership can also increase your commitment and ensure you complete the necessary training. Triathlon club memberships also often receive discounts in local triathlon shops, which can help when first purchasing the kit, giving you a trusted place to go. However if you are a self motivated trainer, save money in membership fee's and get used to training alone. Come race day, whether you train as part of a club or as an individual, it's every man for himself and it's unrealistic to try to run with buddies or a partner.



HOW WILL YOU TRAIN? It is recommended you implement a training plan from day one, enabling you to plan in advance the goal for each session. For most people this will comprise of training 5-6 times a week, with most athletes averaging around 10 hours of training per week, the majority being spent on the bike. The swim is often the hardest part of training and so a lot of people will focus on their swimming, starting in a pool and working their way to an open swim. For beginners it may be worth investing in some swimming lessons to brush up on technique and ensure you are as strong (and safe) as possible when you hit the water on race day.

WHEN WILL YOU RACE? Always have an end date. Rather than 'I want to do a triathlon this year', find the event you want to do and sign up. Once you've done that you're committed with a deadline which will give you the extra incentive to stick with your plan. You can then also start researching the event itself and even go and check out some of the route to give you more of an idea on what you're working towards. For example if you know your course is particularly hilly, it will give you plenty of time to add some hills into your cycles to develop strength in that area ready for race day.

WHY AM I DOING THIS? You have to ask yourself why. Being honest with yourself as to why you want to do something is a huge part of the journey to achieving your goal. Is it to prove you can? To challenge yourself? Or did your brother complete a triathlon last year and you just won't let him beat you at anything. Whether it be to raise money for charity, improve health or because you're super competitive, knowing what's driving you towards the finish line is part of what's going to get you there when your body starts telling you it's ready to stop.

If you're happy with your answers to all those questions, why not give it a Tri?

Choosing your triathlon

Hopefully, the very fact you have this pack, means you've already committed to entering a triathlon. However, here are our top tips for making sure you've made the right choice.

BOOK EARLY - EVENTS SELL OUT

Events such as triathlon take a lot of training, so people tend to decide well in advance that they're ready to enter. With such detailed safety requirements, organisers often enforce a limit on the number of entrants. Once you've set your goal, book an event asap to avoid disappointment.

GET A COACH

For novices, training for a triathlon can feel complicated and a good coach will make your training feel simple, increasing your confidence and ensuring you're prepared for every aspect of the race. They'll help with your plan, nutrition and any questions which may pop up along your journey.

FINDING TIME - AND BALANCE - TO TRAIN FOR THREE SPORTS

In order to ace your first triathlon you need to practice each of your three sport disciplines and it can be difficult to fit in the time for training. Even if, for example, you're confident with your run, it's still worth practicing a run after a cycle or swim, as this very much changes your race dynamic. Training sessions where you include more than one discipline are called 'brick sessions'. Brick workouts stack together two sports and so are a great way of testing how your body will react after your muscles are pre exhausted. Brick workouts help your body handle the aerobic, anaerobic, and muscular demands of a triathlon event.

THE TRAINING

Now comes the tough part, the training.

As everyone is different and every body works differently, sometimes it can be hard to follow a genetic training programme, however they are great as the framework of your training and with simple minor adjustments to suit your body type and fitness they can take you from 0 to triathlete in as little as four weeks. Our training routine below is for someone who already has a reasonable level of fitness and is looking to step up their regular routine with triathlon. If you are looking for more detail in your programme, it is recommended that you hire a coach and of course, we're always happy to give you our advice here at Sundried.

4 week sprint triathlon training plan

This plan is for competitors who already have a good baseline of fitness. If you can comfortably run 5k, swim and ride a bike regularly, then this is for you. The following plan consists of 4 days of training, with 3 days of well earned recovery. You can swap the order as you feel best suits you and as with any training routine, it is essential you listen to your body.

For each exercise listed, we've detailed a RPE rating. RPE stands for rate of perceived exertion and helps to understand the level of effort you should be putting into each training session for those of you who aren't strapped up to a heart rate monitor.



















As well as following a training plan, we recommend you think of the finer details such as practicing getting into and out of your wetsuit, into and out of the swim and from the transition area to your bike.

At your first tri if you haven't already used cleats, race day probably isn't the best day to try, as they take some getting used to. Knowing what's coming from transition and keeping your kit to a minimum can help to make the day run a lot smoother and gives you far less to worry about.

Your 4 day training plan is on the next page:

RPE SCALE	RATE OF PERCEIVED EXERTION
10	MAX EFFORT ACTIVITY Feels almost impossible to keep going. Out of breath, unable to talk. Cannot maintain for more than a very short time.
9	VERY HARD ACTIVITY Very difficult to maintain exercise intensity. Can barely breath and speak only a few words.
7-8	VIGOROUS ACTIVITY Boderline uncomfortable. Short of breath. Can still speak a sentence.
4-6	MODERATE ACTIVITY Breathing heavily. Can hold a short conversation, but is becoming noticeably more challenging.
2-3	LIGHT ACTIVITY Feels like you can maintain for hours. Easy to breathe and carry a conversation.
1	VERY LIGHT ACTIVITY Hardly any exertion, but more than sleeping or watching TV etc

4 WEEK SPRINT TRIATHLON TRAINING PLAN

	DAY 1	DAY 3	DAY 5	DAY 7
WEEK 1	TEMPO RUN RPE 8 30 Minutes 2 x 5 minute bursts, running at as fast a speed as you can maintain for 5 minutes. 	35KM ENDURANCE RIDE RPE 5-7 Aim for a hill and push through the quad burn! 	SPRINT INTERVAL SWIM RPE 8 1400m (56 laps 25m pool) Every 7th lap is a sprint lap, race to complete the lap at your fastest speed. 	SPRINT INTERVAL BIKE RPE 9 45 minutes 8 x 2 minute max power Try to remain at a high cadence, the higher the RPM and Watts of power the better. If you don't have these measures just make sure during your intervals you're pushing yourself to PE 9. So hard! 
WEEK 2	ENDURANCE RUN RPE 7 35 minutes See how far you can go in the time limit, aim to maintain a constant speed and add in hills if possible. 	TEMPO BIKE RPE 8 30km 2 x 5km bursts For two 5km intervals, push yourself to top speeds. Use the rest of your ride as active recovery. 	ENDURANCE SWIM RPE - 6-8 1200m This is a constant swim, maintain your pace for the set distance. 	SPRINT INTERVAL RUN RPE - 8-9 40mins 8 x 1 minute sprint intervals. During push intervals push yourself as though the finish line were in sight. 
WEEK 3	TEMPO RUN RPE 8 30 minutes 3 x 4 minutes bursts, running at a tempo you can maintain throughout the four minutes. 	ENDURANCE BIKE RPE 8 35km Hills Make sure you find yourself a big old hill and go for it. This one's all about building strength and stamina. 	SPRINT INTERVAL SWIM RPE 8 1400m 6 x 100m Sprints For your push laps, make sure you're swimming at as fast a pace as possible. Use your remaining distance as recovery but make sure you maintain good technique. 	BRICK - GYM RPE 9 30 mins swim + 30 mins run Unless you're lucky enough to have access to open water and a run route it is most likely this will be practiced at a gym session. Make sure you go at a time when both the gym and pool are available for use. Swim for 30 minutes and then head up for a 30 minute run at as fast a speed as you can maintain.  
WEEK 4	ENDURANCE RUN RPE 6-7 30 minutes This should be a light run after your brick session, designed for active recovery. 	TEMPO BIKE RPE 8 30km 2 X 7km bursts Use these two intervals to push to your maximum maintainable intensity, make the rest of the miles up in recovery riding. 	ENDURANCE SWIM RPE 6-7 1,000m This swim is longer than your race day swim, but put in your full effort throughout the distance and maintain your stroke pace. 	BRICK - GYM RPE 9 40 minutes bike + 30 minutes run This can be in a gym or outdoors, depending on what resources you have available. On race day you need to be familiar with the sensation of running with jelly legs post-ride.  

What kit do I need for my first triathlon

You've probably just realised you are actually doing this, so you're going to need some kit!

Never fear, Sundried have got you covered with our guide to kit, including all the bits you can't live without on race day!

THE WETSUIT If you're entering an official event, they'll have rules around you wearing a wetsuit - and being in the UK, it's rare the water temperature reaches above the temperature where wetsuits are forbidden, so you'll want this race essential.

Wetsuits keep you warm and also aid you buoyancy - so for new triathletes they're great. The wetsuit helps you to stay afloat during your open water swim. It won't do the work for you, but it certainly helps. For your first tri, it can be expensive to fork out for all the new kit, so why not hire or even borrow a wetsuit? We recommend <http://www.trinswimwell.co.uk/>

If you end up becoming a regular triathlete, your wetsuit will become a necessity in your open water training regime. Having your own suit also means you have plenty of time to practice getting into and out of it...tricky! Now if you're entering a pool based tri - you can get away with your swimsuit, but hit the open water and this is the best option.



TRI SUIT Now technically you can live without this, but then you're looking at packing separate kit for your swim, ride and run. Wearing a tri suit just makes life that much easier.

Rather than having to change from wetsuit to cycle shorts to your running gear, a tri suit is designed to stay with you from start to finish. Why the tri suit? Tri suits usually come in a half suit or a full suit. Whether you opt for the all in one or two-piece is entirely up to you, both do the same job and that job is to provide simplicity for what is, due to the very event's nature, a complicated race.

How does a tri suit help you? Tri suits are designed to be worn throughout the entire race and to guide you through each discipline. Made from thin, breathable material that will slip under your wetsuit, the top is usually sleeveless. The bottoms has a small pad in the crotch for your ride, which typically is slightly less padded than you may find in bike shorts - so not to chafe you when you begin to run with them. **Sundried Tri suit will be released shortly where all Southend Triathlon competitors will receive a 30% discount using code [SOUTHENDTRI](#).**

GOGGLES Most swimmers will have a decent pair of goggles to protect their eyes from the dreaded sting of chlorine, but when it comes to sea swimming your goggles are often needed for more than just keeping water out of your eyes. The glare from the sun on a bright day can prevent your ability to see the buoys as you swim - which are what keeps you safe and heading in the right direction! Tinted goggles will aid your vision and help you stay on track.

SWIM CAP Often, race organisers will provide these, as your swim cap may have your number on it. If not it's recommended you wear one, not only will it keep your hair out of your face, preventing it from obscuring your vision, it also keeps your head dry, meaning you're not cycling and running with cold, wet hair, which will make you feel colder.



BIKE For a sprint distance tri, you don't really need to worry about investing in an expensive tri bike, as your only cycling for 20 km. However if you want to pick up some speed opt for a road bike or a hybrid over your mountain bike. It's best to pick the same bike you train with rather than battle with getting familiar with a new bike on race day. Trust me, you've got enough to worry about.

HELMET Safety first. A helmet could save your life. In any race you will not be allowed to ride without a helmet. Be sure to check your helmet fits properly - prior to your race. And ladies - try your helmet with your hair the way it will be when it comes out of a swim cap ie.FLAT.

TRAINERS Triathlon specific trainers have nifty little extras - such as bike clips and quick fastening laces, but they're not essential for a beginner.

TRANSITION TOWEL You hardly have time spare to be toweling yourself down, but your towel also serves as a great marker for your disorientated post swim self to look out for. Most triathletes just stand on their towel whilst they quickly transition to the bike.

RUNNING TOP A running top to slip on over your tri suit is essential. Opt for a technical t shirt, as these are designed to wick sweat - meaning it will dry quickly if you're already wet! The Sundried technical T shirt offers comfort and support and is perfect for this leg of the race. Avoid cotton which will weigh you down when wet.

WATER Water should and most probably will, be handed out by marshalls throughout the race course, but it's always best to have your own in case you need extra - or miss a marshal! This is a tough sport and you will be dehydrated. Don't do a Jonathan Brownlee!

You've got the training, you've got the kit, now for our top tips.



Top 10 tips for a triathlon

1 Get a good night's sleep the evening before, Triathlons often have early starts - especially if the tides early. If you're traveling some way for the event, try to get to a hotel nearby. Remember hotels tend to bump up their rates if they know an event is on, so book plenty of time in advance.

2 Join a club. Most triathletes will join a club once they get a feel for the event, but why wait? It can be a great opportunity to find training buddies, new events and gather all the best advice from local triathletes. You may even be able to pick up a lift to the event. Plus, of course, joining an affiliated club will get your British Tri Foundation membership, which may save you money on event entry!

3 Hire professional help. If you're nervous, why not hire a professional triathlon coach. When picking a coach there are three levels qualified by The British Triathlon. Foundation level 1 are your basic coaches, whilst level 3 boast the most experience in the field. For a new triathlete, a level 1 coach will be perfect. Most local coaches can be found easily through google, or contacting BTF.



4 **Arrive with plenty of time. The last thing you want to be on race day, is panicking that you're going to be late.** There are plenty of other things to panic about, trust me! Road closures often take place prior to the event start, so try to use public transport if you can and set off with plenty of time spare for delays.

5 **Practice sea swimming. No matter how good a pool swimmer you are, open waterswimming is completely different to a pool swim.** Finding your pace amongst a wave of other swimmers affects your stroke and rhythm and you need to be prepared to take a kick or a punch as you find your space. Then there's tide, debris and finding your direction towards the buoys. It's not easy, but who ever said triathlon was! The sea swim is often the most daunting part of the challenge, so get in practice of battling the elements. Physically, mentally and emotionally, it's a far more intense challenge than a pool swim, so practice, practice, practice!

6 **Bring some moral support and get them to check you haven't forgotten anything! It's great to have a familiar face to cheer you on and to relax you before your first triathlon when nerves are high.** Your family and friends can also be the extra set of eyes to check you've packed everything and of course, you need them to be taking plenty of pictures of you doing your thing at your first event!

OUR LAST TIPS ARE FROM OUR SUNDRIED PROFESSIONAL TRIATHLETES:





7 ALICE HECTOR IRONMAN 70.3 CHAMPION SAYS:

// I would say what people tend to notice when they start triathlon is the horrible feeling you get trying to run when you've just cycled hard! Your body doesn't quite know what's going on. Rest assured, with practice, it eventually feels like second nature, and seasoned athletes run almost as fast off the bike as they would in just a run race. So to strike a balance in your first event, I'd definitely recommend doing a few 'brick sessions' in your training. This simply means going for a run straight after a cycle session. It doesn't have to be long; just 5 or 10 minutes, **//** but this will get the body conditioned for what's to come on race day. Do this once a week and you'll reap the benefits.

8 CLAIRE STEELS DUATHLON WORLD CHAMPION

// Don't rack your bike in a hard gear. It is easily done, especially if you don't have time to take your bike for a little spin before you rack it in transition. Try to remember to leave it in an easy gear. The last thing you want to do is run out of transition, jump on your bike and realise that you can't turn the pedals! Believe me, I've been there!!! **//**





9 **AMY KILPIN** AGE GROUP TRIATHLETE SAYS:

Make sure you are well prepared for the environment in which you'll be racing. This means if you are going to be racing in hot conditions, prepare your body as well as possible for the extra demands that are going to be placed on it during the race – for example, you might want to train on an indoor trainer without a fan/windows. You will also need to think about adapting your nutrition strategy based on your race environment – if it's hot conditions, you'll need to take on regular electrolytes and/or add salt to your energy drinks so your body can absorb as much fluid as possible. The same principle applies if you might be racing somewhere cold – ensure that you have enough layers for the bike and if appropriate, a jacket if it's going to be wet. Think about what tyres you might need to put on your bike in wet conditions. By preparing accordingly for specific conditions, you will be confident that you are entering the race with as much control as you can have over the environmental challenges you might face. It's an important but often overlooked consideration if you want to get the best out of yourself in every circumstance.'

10 Relax and have fun, as your first race try not to worry about other people overtaking you or making sure you finish before a certain time, just finish. Enjoy your first new sport, allow yourself mistakes, you'll learn from them for next time. Listen to your body and enjoy your day.

CONTACT US:

We're here to help so if you need any more advice contact:

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GOOD LUCK.

We wish you all the best of luck for your first event.

And my parting words:

SWIM, LIKE THE BOAT SANK.

BIKE, LIKE YOU'VE STOLEN IT.

RUN, FOR YOUR LIFE!

