

TIPS Pt.5 – Those tricky transitions...

We always think of Triathlon as being a combination of 3 disciplines, but really there are 4 – in addition to swimming, cycling and running you have to transition between sports, and that transition process is timed and included in your final result for the race. So, it pays to give it some thought and make sure you're prepared for those transition phases just as you are for the swim/bike/run. The first thing you need to get clear about is your setup, the part that takes place before the race start where you rack your bike and lay out your kit on/under it. How you do this will depend on the kit you are using, so I have included details of two different setups in the pictures on the next few pages.



Here's a shot of the Try-a-Tri Transition area a few years ago when we held it at Portishead, showing the bike racks (bikes are racked with the nose of the saddle resting on the bar). If you have taken part in, or watched, a Triathlon before you may remember seeing people using boxes or backpacks to store their kit in transition, but a recent rule change from the British Triathlon Federation means that **NO BOXES OR LARGE BAGS** like the one in the foreground of that photo can be left in Transition. Your kit now has to be laid out alongside, or on, your bike – **we used to leave our kit on towels in the old days and that is why you see that in the photos in this guide, but the latest revision of the British Triathlon Rules has banned this use of towels** – you can have one in transition to dry e.g. your feet before getting bike shoes on, but it has to be stored in your (small) bag. Your kit can be stored resting on the bike itself or just on the grass.



Once the race is underway you come into the Transition Area twice – firstly, after the swim (this transition is called T1) and then after you have finished the bike section (that’s called T2). I’m going to run through both with you, showing 2 different scenarios – one for someone with “all the gear” (bike with clip-in pedals, proper cycling shoes, Tri suit & Tri belt) and the other for someone using more basic equipment (bike with flat pedals, aiming to swim in trunks/costume then pull on a tee shirt for the other sections). For both scenarios I’ll explain how to arrange your kit before the start, then how to get through T1 and T2.

*Be aware that for the Try-a-Tri at Tockington, we have a **Split Transition** for T1, quite a common feature in triathlons. This is what race organisers do when the pool and the bike rack are some distance apart rather than immediately alongside each other. It simply means that you have a couple of items right by the pool exit which you pick up straight after the swim, then you make your way to the proper transition area to get your bike/helmet/race number etc. The reason for this split transition is that we realise people will want to get their shoes on for the walk/jog from pool to bike rack, as it’s over 100 metres and on mixed surfaces.

ALL-THE-GEAR TRANSITION – T1: If you have a Tri Suit, a Triathlon number belt and clip-in cycling shoes, you’ll probably want to set things up as shown below.



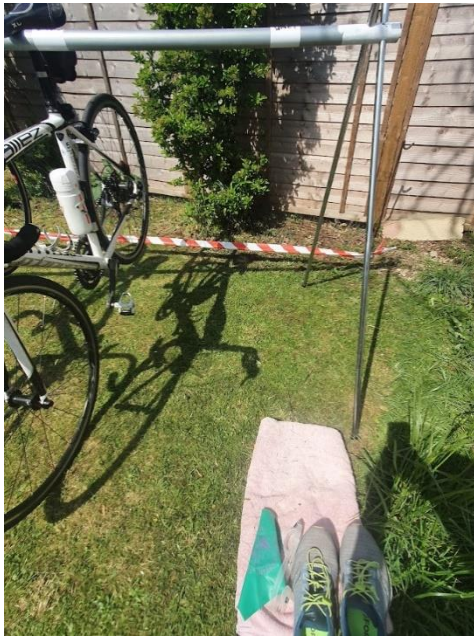
Poolside (below) – running shoes is all you need here.



Transition area (left) – here you need your bike, bike shoes, helmet, race number. Plus any extra kit you might want if it is cold or wet.

As you come out of the pool you’ll take off your swim cap and goggles and slip on your running shoes for the jog to transition. Once you get to the transition area you’ll stash your trainers, goggles and swimcap and put on your helmet (must be fully clipped up), race number (facing to the back) and bike shoes. Then you can take your bike off the rack and push it through the transition area and out through the transition exit, ready to get on where it says Cyclists Mount Here and ride the bike course.

When you get back from the bike ride, you’ll find the same space in the transition area and it will look like this (pic on next page).



You arrive back to an empty space on the bike rack with your discarded swim items and also your running shoes waiting for you. Put your bike back on the rack, stash your bike shoes and helmet on the bike or next to it and slip those running shoes on again ready for the run.

T2, the bike to run transition, is the simpler one of the two.

The only other thing to remember is that when you start the run your race number has to be on your front rather than on your back, so the great thing about a race number belt is that it only takes a second to pull your number round to the front as you start on the run.

A reminder of the rules – you have to dismount your bike at the Cyclists Dismount Here sign and push it into transition, then re-rack your bike before you unclip and remove your helmet.

SIMPLE GEAR TRANSITION – T1 If you are doing the swim in trunks/costume and don't have clip-in cycling shoes or a number belt, it is going to be slightly different.



At poolside you need your shoes, but you might also want the top/shorts you are going to wear for the bike/run – it's entirely up to you if you want to leave your run/bike clothes in transition or have them poolside, it's whatever you feel comfortable with.

Either way, once you have exited the pool and got your trainers on (socks are optional) you head with goggles and swim cap in hand, over to the transition area where you will have your bike & helmet ready.

Remember that you need a race number on your back for the bike ride and one on your front for the run, so these should be pre-pinned to both sides of your kit. There will be pins as well as race numbers in your racepack which you pick up on arrival.



T1 – as you can see (just about) in the picture you'll arrive in Transition with your trainers on – you'll also be carrying your goggles and swim cap. Stash those swim things in transition, put on any clothes you haven't already got on (tee and shorts if you didn't have these by the pool, another layer maybe if it the weather is cold or damp). Then you just need to put on your helmet and clip it up, then pull your bike off the rack and push it up to the Mount Line ready to get on and ride.

T2 – when you return for T2, you will push your bike from the Dismount Line to the transition area then re-rack your bike in the same spot you took it from. Then unclip and remove your helmet and as you already have your run kit and trainers on you are ready to run! The run is always hotter work than the bike ride so if you did put on an extra layer for the ride, you'll probably take it off before you start the run.

OK so that is a basic guide to transition – if you have any questions get hold of me on garga.sctc@zoho.com or browse the numerous videos on YouTube that show you how it's done. Remember for the Try-a-Tri event at Tockington the only thing that is not 100% bog-standard is the fact that the pool and the bike racks are a little distance apart – so you must remember to take your running shoes (as well as goggles and swim cap) to the pool with you when you go over for your swim start, so you can wear them on the way back to your bike.

Another thing to note is that in our race, the spaces on the bike rack are not individually numbered to match your race number, they are just labelled Wave 1, Wave 2, Wave 3, Wave 4 or Wave 5.



You will know in advance of the race what start wave you are in – whether you are going to be one of the first wave of 16 swimmers starting at 8am or part of one of the later waves at approx 8.15, 8.30, 8.45 or 9.00am. Just make sure you know which wave you are in and rack your bike on one of the spaces reserved for your wave. That way you will not be trying to un-rack your bike at the same time as the person right next to you – you will have more space in transition. Bikes are racked as shown with the saddle resting over the bar.

There is a One-Way System in transition is to make it fair – everyone has to push their bike the same distance during the race, whether their bike is at the end of the rack right near the gate or the far end. Marshals will direct you in transition in case you forget where you're going!

TRANSITION TIPS:

*When you arrive on raceday and pick up your racepack it will contain 2 race numbers plus 2 number stickers. One sticker is marked Helmet and the other (a very long one) is marked Bike (it goes around the seatpost with the number out behind your saddle). Put the stickers on before you go into transition. When you collect your bike at the end of the race you will be asked to show one of your large race numbers so we can see it matches the bike sticker and know for sure you are going home with the same bike you arrived with!

*It's good to have talcum powder or Vaseline in your shoes to help with getting your feet in easily (especially with wet feet!).

*Elastic laces in your trainers save lots of time.

*Practice running without socks and if it goes OK – no blisters – you can do the Try-a-Tri without any. If it doesn't work for you then have socks either in your shoes at poolside or in Transition to put on before you put on your cycling shoes.

*Triathlon Belts (aka Race Number Belts) are well worth having.

*Memorise your transition routine and repeat it to yourself as you approach T1 and T2 – in my case when I'm jogging out of the swim section towards T1 I'm saying "glasses, helmet, number, shoes, bike" to remind myself of the order I have to do things in.

*That reminds me – if you wear glasses, the easiest thing is probably to stow them in your bike helmet and put them on before you do anything else in T1. Same goes for sunglasses if you want to ride/run wearing them.

*The rules have recently changed about TOWELS – although in my pics above the items are laid out on a towel this is no longer permitted for some reason! Towels can be stored in transition but have to be in your bag these days, not under your kit.

*Read our other Try-a-Tri Tips about kit, clothing and Triathlon Rules as these all affect what you have to do in Transition.

*Bikes have a space on the rack about 60cm wide in the Try-a-Tri. The standard for a Triathlon is usually 50cm. Bear this in mind when setting up your kit in practice and on race day – 60cm is more than standard in a triathlon but it is still not a lot!

*Practice Transition. Don't make race day the first time you try it. Remember to get in touch if you have any questions at all about Transition. Your Race Director will be very busy on Race Day, so he's more than happy to answer emails with questions beforehand.

*There are lots of videos of how to do a triathlon transition online so why not watch a few of those?

GOOD LUCK! <http://uk.srichinmoyraces.org/triathlon>

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