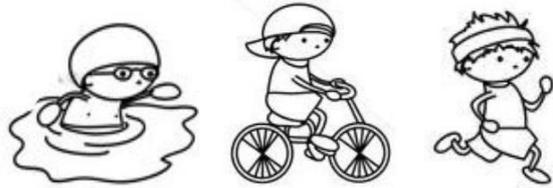


# Somerset Try-a-Tri



*“The perfect  
beginner’s triathlon!”*

## **TIPS Pt.2- ALL ABOUT THE BIKE**

(.....and bike equipment)

This is the second of our articles designed to help first-timers prepare for a triathlon. As the bike is the single most important item of kit needed for the race, I’ve decided to deal with it first. So these pages will tell you all you need to know about the rules & requirements of triathlon when it comes to bikes (and bike equipment).

### **WHAT KIND OF BIKE DO I NEED?**



You can use most types of bike for a triathlon. If you are planning to take part in triathlons long term, there is no reason why you shouldn’t get yourself a proper Tri Bike and use it in your first race. You won’t look out of place or come across as “too serious”. On the other hand if you want to have a go on an old mountain bike, that’s perfectly fine too at an event like the Try-a-Tri. There are a few rules to be aware of, so here are the key things you need to know. Although a Try-a-Tri is aimed at first timers, ALL the rules of triathlon do apply. For the full text of the rules, see the British Triathlon Rule Book:

<https://www.britishtriathlon.org/competitionrules>

The rules look a bit complex but please take a look – it’s your responsibility to know these before the race. Email me if any questions about the rules ☺

### **The Rules and what they say about bikes:**

The main points when it comes to bikes are:

1. Bikes must be well maintained and roadworthy.
2. Bikes must be of a standard size/shape. If unsure see the rulebook for the measurements. You can apply in advance to BTF for an exception to be made if you want to use a non-standard type of bike. Standard mountain bikes, road bikes, hybrids are all OK.
3. There must be a working brake on **both** wheels.
4. Bikes must be capable of freewheeling - so "fixie" bikes that won't roll forwards without the rider pedalling are not permitted. You can apply to British Triathlon for an exception to this rule (contact them direct at least 30 days prior to race).
5. Bar ends must be plugged (that's handlebars, and also tri-bars if you have them – see next page for picture).
6. Add-ons such as brackets and mounting points, must be positioned so as to prevent injury in the unlikely event of a crash/collision.
7. Bikes must be marked with the competitor's race number. We will give you sticky labels with your race number on for this purpose when you arrive on race day.

### **IS YOUR BIKE FIT FOR PURPOSE?**

A basic visual check will be made on race day, but the responsibility of ensuring your bike is safe and fit for use is down to you. If unsure, visit your local, friendly bike shop or mechanic for a safety check. We recommend Gary Harris in Bristol - his details are given later in this tip sheet.

Here are a few points to note....



Above: Bike 1 is a "fixie" that cannot freewheel and also has no back brake connected, so it *looks fine at first glance but would not be allowed in triathlon.*

Bike 2 is an "old school" racing bike. An excellent choice! Because of its age it might need a checkover by a mechanic.

Bike 3 is a regular mountain bike. Fine to use one of these in a Try-a-Tri.

Bike 4 is the real deal - a proper triathlon bike with aero bars and aero drink bottle, plus someone in shades & aero helmet riding it. If you have a bike like this, great, use it, go faster, etc.

Note: Riders on bikes 2 & 3 need to be wearing a helmet, as these are compulsory.



One thing we will definitely check when you bring your bike to transition is a specific safety clause, which relates to the safety of your bike in the unlikely event of a crash.

Please make sure you get plugs in the ends of your handlebars to make them safer. If you have a mountain bike with extra bar ends bolted on, please either take them off or plug them.

### **GARY HARRIS CYCLES**

For those of you in the Bristol area who want your bike safety-checked or repaired, we recommend you contact Gary Harris Cycles (formerly Bristol Bike Centre) – Gary and his colleagues support our race by offering mechanical support on the day, but don't leave it that late to get your bike checked over by a qualified mechanic – contact Gary or your local bike shop:



<https://garyharriscycles.com/>

Gary Harris Cycles (formerly Bristol Bike Centre)  
Common Mead Lane  
Hambrook  
Bristol  
BS16 1QQ

E-Mail : [hello@bristolbikecentre.com](mailto:hello@bristolbikecentre.com)

Phone : 07816 515082

### **Will I be at a disadvantage on a mountain or touring bike?**

So, will those with proper triathlon bikes have a big advantage over those on mountain bikes? On a long triathlon with flat, straight roads, the tri-bike does give a big advantage, but the Portishead course is relatively short, undulating and has quite a few twists and turns. Those of you on mountain bikes should not be left too far behind. If you want to improve the speed of a mountain bike, the key things you can do are to replace the knobbly tyres with smooth ones and/or pump the tyres up to their full pressure (see sidewall of tyre for max pressure recommended by the manufacturer). This reduces rolling resistance on the roads.

At the end of the day, Try-a-Tri events are more about the challenge of completing a triathlon rather than going flat-out to beat the other competitors. No one outside of the sport is likely to ask if you won, or if you finished in less than an hour, but if they hear you have completed a proper triathlon, they will be impressed! Our club's philosophy has always been that the real competition is with yourself – being the best you can be with the equipment you have is a worthwhile goal for the race.

## **SECURITY**

A few people have asked me about security, and whether or not bikes have to be locked up in transition. Well, from 6.30am until the end of the event, the transition area will be secured with 2m high "heras" security fencing - the type you see around building sites. The entrances will be guarded by race marshals, and only competitors who can show their race number will be able to enter the compound. You'll need to show your race number to remove your bike (also marked with the same race number) at the end of the race.

## **RECENT CHANGES TO THE RULES**

Here's an excerpt from the current (at the time of writing) edition of British Triathlon's competition rules:

"Addition of "Disc brakes: (i) **Disc brakes are allowed** in the following events: • All draft-illegal triathlon and duathlon competitions;"

That includes our Try-a-Tri and Sprint-Tri so you are fine to use a bike with disc brakes. Better contact the BTF directly through their website (see link on page 1) if you have any questions about the above 😊

Remember, you need to be aware of the rules of triathlon and take responsibility for having a bike that meets the requirements so if you have any bike-related questions please do get in touch well before the race.

## BIKE HELMETS



Helmet 1 - perfect! The "Pro's Choice". Aerodynamic and state-of-the-art.

Helmet 2 - Fine. A good quality bike helmet that meets the requirements.

Helmet 3 - Err.....no. A bit outdated.

Bike Helmets are compulsory for triathlon. No exceptions! This will be checked when you arrive at transition before the race starts, and your helmet must be in good condition, fit properly/securely and be of an appropriate standard. The rules state:

"Approved cycling safety helmets of ANSI Z90.4, SNELL B90, EN 1078 or an equivalent national standard must be worn by competitors."

Take a look inside your helmet for a sticker or some other evidence that your helmet meets one of the above standards. If you aren't sure, contact the manufacturer or the shop where you got it from and ask them if it does. If not, you have plenty of time to pick up an appropriate helmet.

## CYCLING SHOES vs TRAINERS

The other main piece of bike-related kit you need to think about is shoes. You can, of course, wear special bike shoes that clip into your pedals - most experienced triathletes do this. You can also get by with traditional, flat pedals and a pair of trainers. I'll deal with this in more detail in the article on shoes and clothing / transition. Having specialist bike shoes will make you faster, but on the other hand the transitions are a little more complex when you have to change from bike shoes to run shoes. The choice is yours....

## **PUNCTURES & MECHANICAL PROBLEMS**

In triathlon, if your bike has mechanical problems or you get a punctured tyre, you are responsible for fixing it yourself. You are also allowed to take help provided by the organisers. So, if you have bike trouble in the race, you can either fix it yourself at the side of the road then carry on or you can inform the nearest marshal and he/she will try and get help to you from one of the race team or Gary's crew from Gary Harris Cycles as soon as possible. But, you are not allowed to accept help from anyone else such as a family member or friend coming out in a car with a new tyre for you.



The aforementioned mechanic crew will be at the race to come and help you if required, but you may have to wait your turn for assistance. Personally, I always carry a spare inner tube, pump and tyre levers so I can mend a puncture myself then get back on and finish the race. Even international triathletes sometimes have to do this (unlike cyclists in the Tour de France, who get presented with a spare wheel or even an entire spare bike from a support vehicle). If your wheels are not "quick release" you would also need a spanner to get the wheel off in order to fix a puncture. The easiest way to carry this extra stuff is in a seatpost bag (see pic) tucked under your saddle, except for the pump, which usually has to be clipped to the frame. Important safety point: anything strapped or clipped on to your bike must be **TOTALLY** secure - a pump that falls off its mounting and goes into the spokes of your wheel can cause a nasty crash. I always use a plastic cable-tie or Velcro strap around my pump so it is 100% secured to the frame.

## **DRINKING ON THE BIKE**



Water stations will not be provided on the cycle course, so we advise everyone to carry a bottle of drink on the bike. Aero bottles with straws for hands-free drinking, like that shown in the picture, are ideal but not essential. You can also just use a "normal" bike bottle in a cage fixed to the frame.

Make sure the bottle is secure and doesn't come loose on a bumpy road, and practise drinking while riding. You can also keep a bottle of drink in the transition area and take some both before and after the ride.

There will be drinks available every mile on the run.



*Remember: don't try any new equipment on the day of the race that you haven't tested in advance.*

Feel free to send us your questions about bike related matters – if you're not sure whether your bike is suitable for triathlon check out the link to the rulebook earlier in this article or pop in to Gary Harris Cycles / your local bike shop to get it checked out.

GOOD LUCK WITH YOUR TRAINING!!

<http://uk.srichinmoyraces.org/triathlon>

[Garga.sctc@zoho.com](mailto:Garga.sctc@zoho.com)

07702 410797

