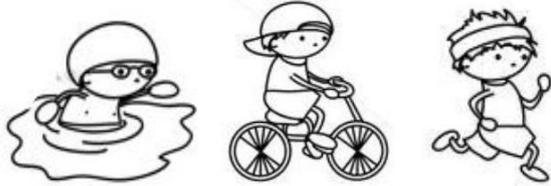


Somerset Try-a-Tri



*“The perfect
beginner’s triathlon!”*

TIPS Pt.4 – Them’s the rules!

This article is an introduction to the rules of Triathlon for anyone taking part in an event for the first time. It’s based around the Sri Chinmoy Somerset Try-a-Tri but most of what’s here would apply to any Tri event in the UK. A lot of what’s mentioned below is also referred to in our tips about kit, cycling etc. but as it’s remarkably easy to fall foul of the complex rules of Triathlon when you are new to the sport, we’ve decided to send out something dedicated to helping you avoid those time penalties and disqualifications that can happen all too easily. 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 BTF website states “All competitors taking part in events that have received their appropriate Home Nation Association Event Permit should familiarise themselves with these rules, in order to comply fully and avoid incurring a penalty for infraction.” So click on the above link and have a read – if there’s anything you don’t quite understand, just send me an email.

I’m going to summarise the key rules that people need to know for the Try-a-Tri, starting at the beginning of Race Day.

Arrival and Setup

The rules kick in even before the race starts! On arrival at the race you need to:

- Pick up your numbers from Registration.
- Get "marked up" with numbers drawn on your arm and leg.
- Head to the Transition area to rack your bike.

Some key rules for this bit:

*Only competitors and officials can enter the Transition area – your helpful family member or friend who has come along to cheer you on can't help you set your kit up. So you need to be able to take your bike and kit into Transition on your own. The race marshals in there will be able to help you if you have questions about setting up your gear. Remember to put the number stickers you were given at Registration on your bike and helmet before you arrive at Transition.

*Your bike will be briefly checked before it's allowed into Transition. It has to be compliant with the rules of Triathlon (2 working brakes, no unplugged handlebar ends etc.) and in roadworthy shape. Remove any unnecessary fittings such as light mountings.

*You used to be able to store your kit in boxes and bags alongside your bike in Transition, but not any more! A recent rule change requires "Clean Transitions" so no boxes and only the smallest of bags are allowed. Other kit has to be spread under your bike or hanging from the handlebars etc.

*You need to rack your bike in the numbered spot allocated to you and you are not permitted to erect any kind of "marker" to help you find it later.

After set up, you'll be required to attend the pre-race briefing and then you'll be all set for the race. Once Transition is "closed" in advance of the race start, you are not permitted to go back in, so make sure you have all the kit you need in the right places before the doors close.

The Swim



***False starts** are quite common in the Try-a-Tri so it's worth holding back and going at the correct moment (when the starter says "GO", unsurprisingly) as if you go off a second too soon you **incur a time penalty of 10 seconds**.

***Avoid "impeding" other swimmers.** You need to be able to swim a straight line along the correct side of your swim lane and not stray into the path of others – this is especially important when you are overtaking. Advice on how to overtake safely & fairly will be in the pre-race briefing sheet that every athlete will be given at registration.

***Any frontal swim stroke is allowed** but backstroke is not permitted.

*When you exit the pool after completing the swim, you may not use the steps – you have to pull yourself out of the water at the end of the pool.

First Transition

Once out of the water, head for the exit and into the Transition area where your kit and your bike are laid out ready for the bike leg.



*The crucial rule here is to make sure your **helmet is on and clipped up** before you touch your bike. It has to fit properly and the straps must be secure – in other words tight enough to keep it in the right position on your head so that it will protect you in the unlikely event of a fall/collision.

***Avoid impeding others** with your bike and kit (or yourself). Impeding others is a rule infringement. Just keep your wits about you and your eyes and ears open and there shouldn't be any problem.

***You must have your torso fully covered when leaving Transition**, so if wearing separate top & shorts rather than a once-piece suit, ensure they overlap and no part of your midriff is visible. This ITU rule applies to all UK triathlons.

*There's a strict **no nudity** rule in triathlon. The rules of triathlon are quite strict on this, as they are on the "torso fully covered" issue mentioned above – **you can't even have your top unzipped** (unless the zip is at the back).

*As you leave Transition you must have your number visible on your **BACK** for the entire ride, and you must be **wearing a helmet for the entire ride**.

***Obey the instructions of all marshals** – including those at the road crossing as you exit transition. They can't stop the traffic, so if there's a car coming, they'll have to **stop you** for your own safety.

***Don't** mount your bike until you pass the sign that says "Cyclists Mount Here". (It's often a surprisingly long way from the bike rack to the mount line!) You have to push your bike all the way to the mount line - it's fine to hold your bike by either the bars or the saddle when pushing it.



The Bike Section

Once on your bike you have to be aware of the rules of the road – the Highway Code. Most Triathlons in the UK do not take place on closed roads – there is traffic around and pedestrians on the pavement (or crossing the road) so you have to ride legally and safely.

***Obey the highway code** for the whole ride.

***Don't ride in any way that's unsafe/dangerous.** It will definitely lead to disqualification!

***Only overtake on the RIGHT** of other riders.

*If you take a wrong turn you have to **return to the place where you went wrong** and complete the whole course. You can't take an "alternative route" even if it is the right distance, or longer. It's your responsibility to know and follow the correct course, even though there are plenty of signs and marshals.

***Littering on the course is not permitted** and carries a heavy penalty – rubbish has to go in your pockets or bins provided.

***Avoid DRAFTING** (riding alongside, or in the slipstream of, another rider, or a vehicle). This is probably the most complicated rule in Triathlon so here's a full explanation from BTF:

To draft is to enter the bicycle or vehicle drafting zone: the bicycle draft zone will be 10 metres long measured from the leading edge of the front wheel.



Standard and shorter distances: 10m

A competitor may enter the draft zone of another competitor, but must be seen to be progressing through that zone. A maximum of 20 seconds will be allowed to pass through the zone of another competitor; Entry into the bicycle drafting zone: a competitor may enter a bicycle draft zone in the following circumstances: • If the competitor enters the draft zone, and progresses through it within 20 seconds in the overtaking manoeuvre; • For safety reasons; • Before and after an aid station or the transition area and dismount line; • At an acute turn; • If the Event Organiser excludes a section of the course for safety reasons. Overtaking • A competitor is passed when another competitor's front wheel is ahead of theirs; • Once overtaken, a competitor must move out of the draft zone of the leading competitor within 5 seconds; • Competitors must keep to the side of the course and not create a blocking incident. Blocking is where a competitor who is behind cannot pass due to the leading competitor being poorly placed on the course; • Traffic regulations must be followed when competing on open roads; competitors must only pass another competitor on the right.

If that explanation of Drafting is a bit complex, here's a simple guide:

- Don't ride alongside or close behind (within 10 metres of) another rider unless you are overtaking them.
- You have 20 seconds to overtake, starting from when you come up to that point 10 metres behind them.
- If you don't get past them in 20 seconds, drop back until there's a gap of 10 metres between you again.
- If you feel up to it, you can try again and see if you get past!

Transition 2

As you return to Transition for the second time, remember you have to dismount your bike before you pass the sign that says "Cyclists Dismount Here".

Once in Transition 2:

*Rack your bike back in the place where you took it from (your numbered place on the bar).

*Don't let your kit get in anyone else's way – it has to go back under your bike or hanging from it.

*The no nudity rule still applies and is very strict on the run section – if you have a front zip on your top (or tri suit) it has to be done up. Really!

Run Course

*Leaving Transition, remember to **obey any marshal instructions** you hear and stick to the correct course.

***Littering is an infringement** on the run course so any rubbish should be discarded in a bin – there are plenty on the Try-a-Tri run course. Plastic bottles can be discarded at the water station where we have a recycling bin, or given to any marshal.

*You must have a number visible on your **front** for the whole **run**.

*It's your responsibility to **count your laps** – we'll be using chip timing and have marshals counting laps as a backup but you have to know how many circuits you've done and make sure you complete the course.

*Headphones and use of music players / phones is not permitted on the run.



So that's a summary of the rules, email us if you have any questions at all, we'll do our best to make it clear.

If you do fall foul of one of the rules, it will result in either a time penalty or disqualification (DSQ). Fortunately the DSQ is extremely rare in our Try-a-Tri! Time penalties do occur though and are usually for false starts, impedence in the pool etc.

All infringements are logged by the Race Director and written up on whiteboard at the Registration Tent (just a few metres from the finish line). There will be a list of infringements and penalties displayed next to the whiteboard so you can see them before you start – typically you get a verbal warning for any infringement that can be corrected, or a 10 second penalty (i.e. 10 seconds added to your time in the race results) and only a DSQ if it's something dangerous or unfair. On TV you may have seen elite triathletes asked to wait 10 seconds in a "box" marked on the course but in the amateur sport we simply add the seconds to your finish time.

So, them's the rules folks, sorry there's so many but you can't have fair and safe race without them.

GOOD LUCK WITH YOUR TRAINING!!

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

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