



SWIM GUIDE FOR NEW TRIATHLETES

Presented by Triathlon Today and Challenge Family

A swimmer is captured in the middle of a stroke in a body of water during sunset. The water is splashing around the swimmer's arms and head. In the background, there are other people in inflatable boats and a small buoy.

Everything you need to
know to enjoy swimming
THE BEST WAY POSSIBLE!

WHAT YOUR'E LOOKING AT RIGHT NOW IS A BEGINNERS GUIDE FOR SWIMMING

In our first starter guide for beginner triathletes, we aimed to provide triathletes with an introduction and some useful insights into the world of triathlon. You found information about the history of our beautiful sport, the different federations and organisations that are involved, the gear you need, tips for races, where you can race, rules and much more. But, of course, a triathlon starts with the swim. That's why we devoted this guide to that first discipline. Usually the part of a triathlon that is most feared by beginner triathletes. We provide you with some tips and tricks that you can use in training or races. We will tell you all about the equipment you require, and what things you should pay attention to when purchasing these items.

But mostly: we want to tell you why swimming is such a lot of fun.

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DISTANCES

There are triathlons over a great variety of distances, so logically the swim distance varies per triathlon. You will find each distance below.

LONG DISTANCE:

The Long Distance – often referred to as the Full Distance or Classic Distance – consists of 3800 metres of swimming, 180 km of cycling and 42.2 km of running.

03:

In a triathlon that takes place over the 03-distance, athletes swim a bit less. You get ready to hop on the bike after exactly 3000 metres of swimming.

MIDDLE DISTANCE:

The Middle Distance – also referred to as the Half Distance – consists of a swim that is 1900 metres long and so half the distance of a Long Distance.

OLYMPIC DISTANCE / STANDARD DISTANCE:

In an Olympic or Standard Distance, athletes get out of the water after 1500 metres of swimming.

SPRINT DISTANCE:

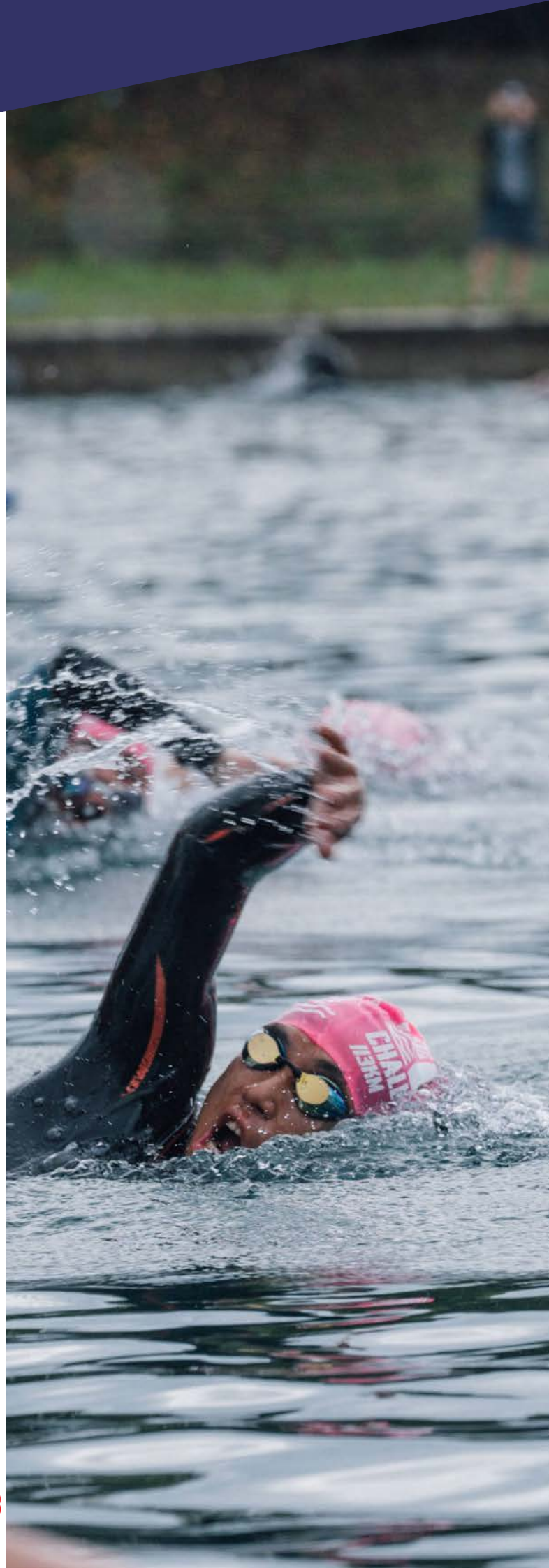
In the Sprint Distance, the swim is just 750 metres.

KIDS TRIATHLON:

There are many distances when it comes to kids' triathlons, but generally kids don't swim more than 400 metres.

ULTRA TRIATHLONS:

For athletes that don't think a Long Distance is long enough, there are ultra triathlons. There are no given distances for that, as anything longer than a Long Distance fits into the category "ultra triathlon". Some athletes take it so far that they swim a few hundred kilometres.



YOUR GEAR

What gear do you need for swimming?

- **Swim shorts, bathing suit** for indoor training.

- **Swim cap** you usually receive these from an organisation when you join a race.

- **Wetsuit** this will make your outdoor swims much more enjoyable. It will keep you warm and help you float better. For some races a wetsuit will be required (when the water is too cold). There are wetsuits with long sleeves and short sleeves. If there is more fabric, you will not only stay warmer but also float better.

- **Trisuit** underneath your wetsuit, you wear a trisuit. After taking off your wetsuit, you can keep your trisuit on during the bike and run. This way you don't have to change your clothes.

- **Skinsuit** You don't like swimming in a wetsuit or it is not allowed because of the high water temperatures? A skin suit could provide you with some extra buoyancy. However, when the water temperature is too low during races, it's not allowed to swim only in a skin suit. You'll still need a wetsuit then.

- **Sports watch** Helps you track the distance you swam, ran or biked. It also tracks the speed and lap times.

- **Swimming goggles** especially when you learn to swim freestyle, these are essential. For swimming outside, it's recommended to get mirror glasses with a coating: this will help with sighting as it keeps the sunlight out of your eyes.



- **Float board** used to float for when you specifically want to train your legs; referred to as kicks.



- **Pull buoy** a foam 'marshmallow' that you put in between your legs. This helps you float up higher in the water with your legs and hips, which means you don't need to involve your legs as much. This is handy for when you're focusing on your arms and technique.



- **Paddles** You use these during swim training to work on your strength and feeling for the water.



YOUR WETSUIT

WHAT DO YOU NEED TO PAY ATTENTION TO WHEN PURCHASING A WETSUIT?

There is one thing that you will definitely need as a triathlete: a wetsuit. Firstly, it protects you from the cold – something that is certainly needed on a Long Distance – but it also gives you some extra buoyancy. That buoyancy will help you save energy for later, as you will get through the swim part more easily.

Wetsuits come in all shapes and sizes, and corresponding price ranges. Make sure to find out what works best for you. A high price doesn't always mean that the suit fits you better. Make sure you buy a wetsuit that is meant for swimming. Some beginning triathletes have made the mistake of buying a wetsuit that's meant for surfing; these are less flexible and make it harder to move your arms. Also, they are not as hydrodynamic.

Arm and leg length:

Make sure that the wetsuits fits you well: the wetsuit should reach until just above your ankles, and the sleeves should fit until just above – or on – your

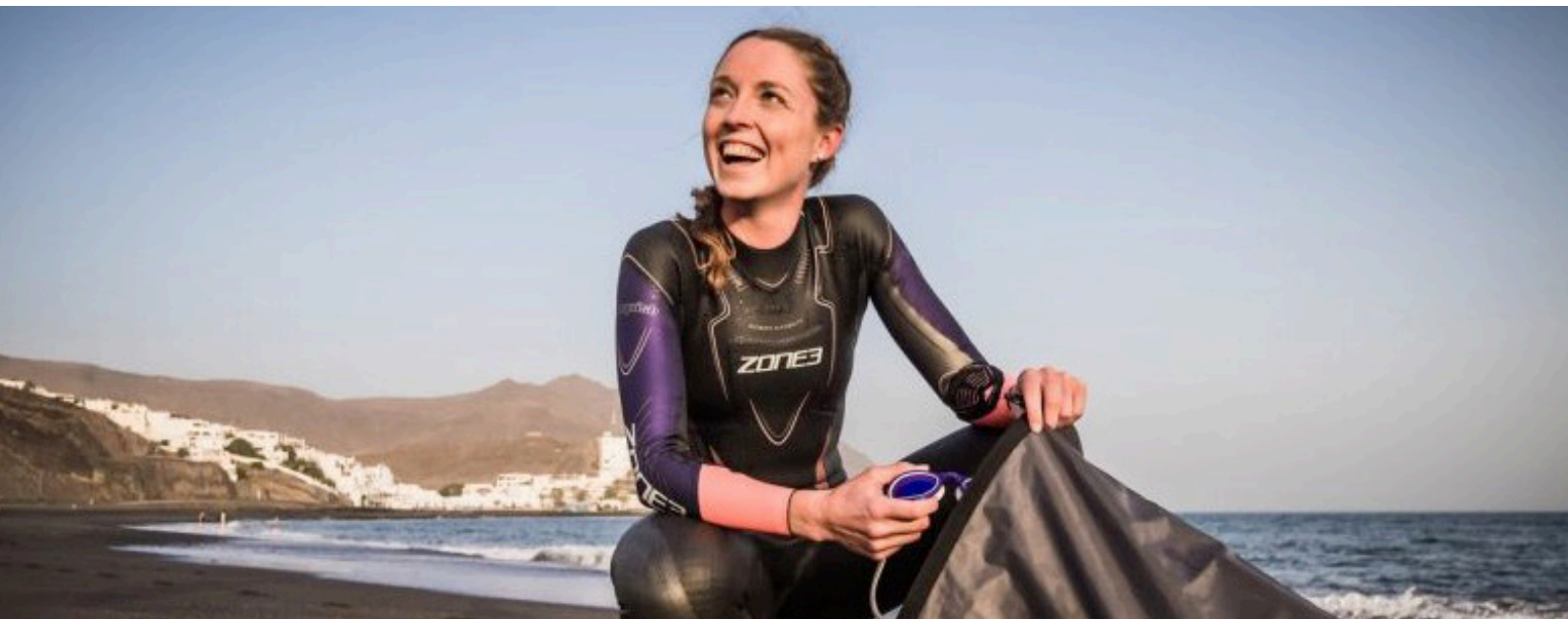
wrists. Check if you can move your arms and legs freely. Especially in the armpits you need to have some space left. Keep in mind that a wetsuit never moves completely smooth when you're out of the water. Therefore, you should preferably test a wetsuit in the water. Do you prefer to use a wetsuit without sleeves? That's a possibility too; it allows you to move your arms and shoulders better, but you will sacrifice some warmth and buoyancy.

Body:

A wetsuit should fit around your body tightly so that it feels like a second skin. It's important that you are able to move freely, so try to stretch your arms, bend and rotate them, and do them same with your legs. Also try to bend forward and feel if you can still breathe well. Besides, check if the suit doesn't have too much extra space that wrinkles up; if it does have folds, the suit might be too big for you. A suit that is too big will make the water run in, which doesn't only slow you down, it also cools you down.

Zipper:

There are wetsuits with zippers on the front and back. Find out what works best for you. Most people prefer to have their zipper in the back, as that helps you move through the water smoother.



PUTTING YOUR WETSUIT ON, AND TAKING IT OFF.

Putting a wetsuit on can be quite a challenge and time-consuming. But don't worry: even the best athletes struggle with it. Fortunately, there are many things that you can do to help you in the process.

Firstly: be careful with your nails and other sharp things. A wetsuit is generally made out of synthetic, elastic rubber, that is very vulnerable. Nails, rings and watches sometimes damage a wetsuit. It's usually little cuts, which doesn't mean you need to throw the wetsuit out, but of course you'd prefer to avoid it.

You could do that by using gloves to put your wetsuit on or keeping your socks on. Plastic bags around your feet and hands also do the trick. It doesn't only help you "glide" into it, it also protects your wetsuit from nail cuts.

Underneath their wetsuit, triathletes wear a swim short or trisuit.

1. Grab your wetsuit and open the zipper completely.
2. Make sure you are dry. If you are wet or sweaty, it's more difficult to "glide" into the neoprene.
3. Take your watch off, **and put it back on once your wetsuit is completely on.**
4. When fitting the wetsuit on, try to pull from the inside as much as you can, instead of the outside.
5. Put one of your feet into the wetsuit and pull up the wetsuit until 10-15 centimeter above your ankle. Repeat for the other leg. It's no problem if your wetsuit now stretches around your lower legs.
6. Carefully, continue to pull the wetsuit up – from the inside – until above your knees and hips.
7. Make sure that the wetsuit fits well around your cross and hips. By creating enough space now, you will have space left for when you pull it over your shoulders.
8. Now, put your arms into the wetsuit one by one.

9. Pull up the sleeves over your hands and wrists; until about 2-3 centimetres above the wrist.
10. Gently pull the wetsuit up over your arms and eventually your shoulders.
11. Ask someone to help pull the wetsuit up in your back, so that you get more space around the shoulders and armpits. This is very important to help you move better.
12. Close the zipper and Velcro, if your wetsuit has that, tightly
13. It's recommended to get in and out of the water after putting your wetsuit on, so that you get a chance to fit your suit well. Don't worry when some water runs in. That helps to keep you warm.

Do you often get skin rashes from swimming in a wetsuit?

Put some Vaseline in your neck before swimming to avoid that. Make sure to ask someone else to do it or wash your hands well after applying it, because the greasy substance on your hands makes it more difficult to "grab" and feel the water while swimming.



RENTING AND TESTING A WETSUIT.

Nearly all triathlon stores organise wetsuit test days. As a beginner triathlete, it is recommended to visit one of these days. You often get the possibility to test different wetsuits, and you can ask experts for tips and tricks.

The good thing about these wetsuit test days is you can try multiple wetsuits, which helps to decide what works best for you. Usually you're allowed to test the wetsuits in the water, allowing you to really experience what the wetsuit is like.

Do you have your first race planned, or do you want to see if triathlon would be something for you? Then you might want to consider renting a wetsuit instead of buying one. You can check with your local triathlon store if they rent out wetsuits.

WETSUITS: WHEN TO WEAR AND WHEN NOT TO WEAR?

Most times triathletes will swim with a wetsuit on, but there are occasions when an organisation doesn't allow athletes to wear a wetsuit. These rules are usually set by a federation. There are generally three scenarios:

1. The water temperature could be too cold, which means wetsuits are mandatory
2. The water temperature fits within a certain range and athletes get to choose whether they would like to swim with or without a wetsuit
3. The water temperature is too high, which means wetsuits are not allowed. Most athletes would then swim in a swim- or speedsuit, or – less hydrodynamic, but much cheaper if you don't want to buy a swim- or speedsuit – they only wear their normal trisuit.

The water temperature is typically communicated on race morning, before the start. Often, athletes already received updates about the water temperature in the days leading up to an event, to give them an idea of what to expect.





TIPS

Tips to become a better (open water) swimmer.

Many beginner triathletes feel reluctant to dive into open water for a swim training. Especially during a race, it can be frightening; you're in between many athletes who are fighting for space. We provide you with some tips, so that you feel more relaxed in the water.

- A)** Most big events organise a test swim – a course recce – in the days leading up to the race. You will get a chance to swim the course, find out where the buoys are, how you can navigate. To feel more prepared and to know what's coming, it's recommended to join a test swim if you can.
- B)** Most triathlons have a so-called swim start; in that case, a big group starts simultaneously from the water. If you're a beginner triathlete, it's recommended to find yourself a spot on the outside of the start line; so that you can look for some extra space if you feel stressed.
- C)** In addition to that: make sure you figure out what your swim level is. If you swim slow, it's best to find a position in the back of a field, otherwise you risk other athletes swimming "over" you. In case there is a so-called "rolling start" – where athletes start in smaller groups – then it's wise to choose a later start time, so you're not bothered by faster swimmers.

- D)** Find out where your focus sighting points are along the swim course. Usually there are some things you can use for navigation: trees, buildings, bridges or signal towers. Also, figure out where the buoys are. All these things will help you to get from A to B in a straight line.
- E)** Try to find some relaxation during the swim. Don't let the behavior of other athletes stress you out. Find your own rhythm and pace, and pay attention to your breathing. Feeling relaxed is key for a good swim. Look at your focus points every few strokes to see if you are still following the right line.
- F)** Do you still feel panicky? Try to go to the side, away from other athletes, so that you can take it easy for a little. If the situation is really bad and getting away from the group doesn't help: raise your hand and signal the safety staff.



TRAINING IN THE POOL

These items are useful;

SWIM GOGGLES:

Of course, you don't only use swim goggles when swimming outside, but also in the pool. If you want to purchase goggles, find out what lenses you prefer. Some goggles have lenses that will block the sun-light; that's ideal when the sun is low while swimming outside. On the other hand: these goggles can be quite dark when swimming inside. There are many sizes and shapes; if you have the possibility to fit the goggles on, then try to see if they fit around your face well so that there won't be any water coming in.

PADDLES:

With paddles you can improve your technique and strength. Paddles make the under-water phase harder, but help you to follow the right line.

PULL BUOY:

a pull buoy is a floating "marshmallow" that you put in between your legs to get extra buoyancy. When you use a pull buoy, you don't use your legs as much, so it helps you to focus extra on your swimming technique.

SNORKEL:

To focus even more on your technique, a snorkel will help you with your breathing, as you no longer need to move your face to breathe.

FLUTTERBOARD:

A flutterboard is used to improve your kick. You keep the flutterboard – with stretched arms – in front of you and use your legs to kick yourself forward.

ZOOMERS:

Flippers that help you improve your technique, strength, and condition. Zoomers force you to make the right move, which improves your technique. And by moving more water, you go faster, which improves your position in the water.





Enjoy Triathlon,
#SeeYouAtTheFinishLine!