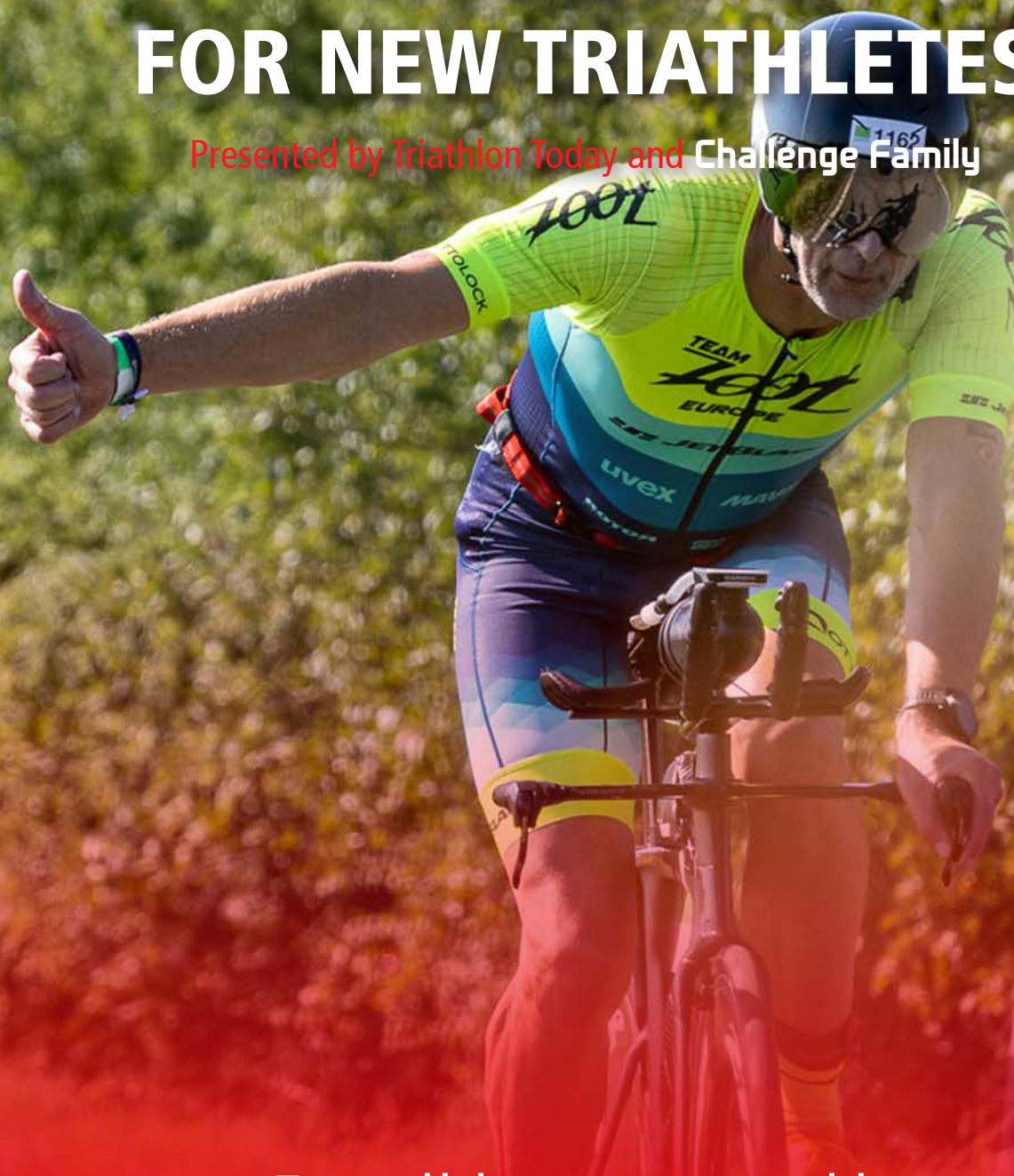




# BIKE GUIDE FOR NEW TRIATHLETES

Presented by Triathlon Today and Challenge Family



Everything you need to  
know to enjoy biking  
**THE BEST WAY POSSIBLE!**

# **WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING AT RIGHT NOW IS A BEGINNER'S GUIDE FOR BIKING.**

In triathlon, you typically spend most of the race on your bike. Relatively, you will be cycling longer than you swim and run. After you've exited the water, you usually feel a rush of energy and adrenaline going through your body, even more so if you hop on your bike amidst a big and enthusiastic crowd. What awaits you is a long ride. Long roads, maybe some hills, and overall just a tough mental challenge. It's the discipline where you can win and lose most time. Nearly everyone knows how to ride a bike, but in triathlon it's important that you're efficient, and – of course – you should be having fun out there.

In this starter guide, we focus on the bike part. We share all ins and outs about this second triathlon discipline. What kind of bikes are there? What gear do you need? What are you allowed to do and what not? What are watts and which stationary trainer is handy to complete your indoor rides on? How about the rules in the transition area?

**In short: everything you need to know to turn the bike part into a big success.**

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# DISTANCES

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There are triathlons in all shapes and sizes. That means the bike distance also differs per race. You will find some of the most common distances below.

## **LONG DISTANCE:**

A Long Distance – often referred to as Full Distance or Classic Distance – consists of 3.8 km of swimming, 180 km of cycling and 42.2 km of running. Those 180 km on the bike are rarely one lap; usually you will ride two or even more laps.

## **03:**

In a triathlon over the 03 distance, you bike 120 km. The 03 distance is not very common, though.

## **MIDDLE DISTANCE:**

A Middle Distance, on the other hand, is one of the most popular distances. It's exactly half of a Long Distance. That means you will bike 90K during a Middle Distance.

## **OLYMPIC DISTANCE / STANDARD DISTANCE:**

This short and spectacular triathlon distance follows the Olympic format (as the name suggests). You will bike 40 km in these races.

## **SPRINT DISTANCE:**

A Sprint Distance is ideal for beginning athletes or athletes that like speed. The distances are relatively short: you bike "only" 20K.

## **KIDS TRIATHLON:**

Junior Challenges – often only for kids – can have a variety of distances. Generally, kids won't ride more than 20 km, but usually the distance is much shorter.

## **ULTRA TRIATHLONS:**

For those athletes who don't consider a Long Distance long enough, there are ultra triathlons. There are no set distances for these; rule is that everything longer than a Long Distance fits the category of ultra triathlon. Don't be surprised to hear of athletes who swim hundreds of kilometres, bike thousands and run a few hundred



# YOUR GEAR



## *This is what you will need to bike:*

- **Triathlon Bike/Road Bike** Obviously, you'll need a bike. There are mountain bikes, gravel bikes and all sorts of bikes, but for a triathlon it's best to find yourself a triathlon bike or road bike. Those are the lightest and most aerodynamic, which means you can go fast.

Triathlon bikes are usually more expensive than road bikes. The difference is in the frame (triathlon bikes usually have a "fat" frame) the handlebar and seat post are positioned forward, which makes it easier to rest your arms on the handlebars. For the Long Distance this is more comfortable and more aerodynamic.

For beginning triathletes, a road bike is perfect to get to know the sport. On a road bike you can easily mount aero bars, which allow you to lie on your handlebars. In case you like triathlon, you could always purchase a triathlon bike later.

There are many types of road and triathlon bikes. There are so many brands and models, that it's recommended to get a bike fit, so that you figure out how you should be positioned on the bike.

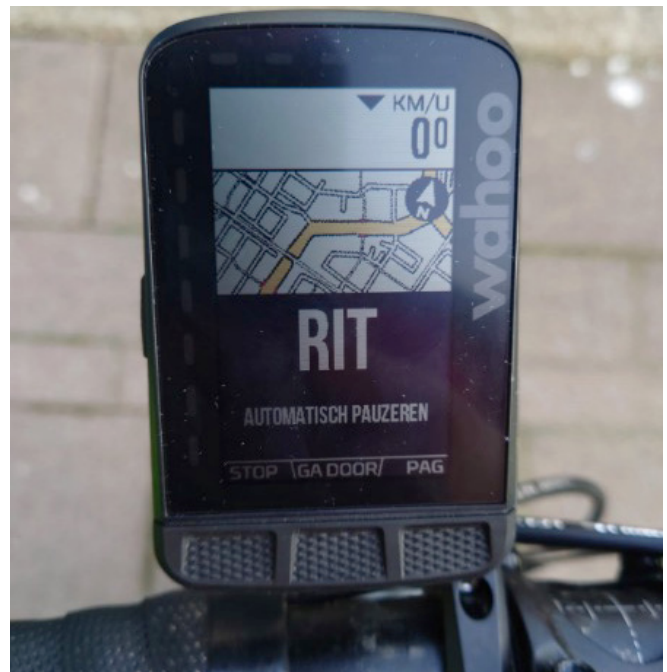
- **Helmet** Just like with bikes, there are many kinds of helmets. Whatever helmet you go for: you should make sure to use a helmet when training and during races it's mandatory. A good helmet will prevent the worst head injuries in case you would crash.

Nowadays, you see many triathletes wear helmets with an integrated visor. That way, you don't need to wear glasses during the bike part; the visor already keeps the sun and bugs out of your eyes.



- **Glasses** If you ride with a helmet that has no visor, glasses are definitely recommended. Glasses are nice to protect your eyes from the sun, but they also help to keep the wind and bugs out of your eyes.

- **Bike Computer** It's not essential, but it does help a lot: a bike computer. Here it also applies that there is so much to choose from. There are very cheap and simple models that will give you an idea of the speed you reach, but there are also advanced models that have navigation, show you your heart rate and display the amount of watts you push.



- **Bike Shoes** Race- and triathlon bikes usually come with cleats. You will need special bike shoes to clip your feet onto the pedals. Making sure your feet are tight to the bike, helps to transfer power onto the pedals. You don't only push the pedal down, you're also able to pull the pedal back up. You can easily unclip your feet by moving your heels to the outside. Be careful, though, the first time, you might struggle to unclip, or you could even forget. Take some time to get used to this and practice it on a quiet road.

- **Shoe Covers** If you plan to ride outdoors in winter – when it's cold and wet – shoe covers are recommended. You wear these over your normal shoes to keep your feet warm.

**- Bike clothes** Good bike clothing is important. During a triathlon race you'll likely wear a trisuit, but during training rides, it's much nicer to wear "normal" bike clothing. Try out what type of chamois in the cycling shorts – the padding – works best for you. Find yourself clothing that breathes, fits tight and use multiple layers to be prepared for all types of weather. A windbreaker is nice to use on cold days, and if you have sensitive hands, it could be nice to get yourself some cycling gloves.

**- Tubes and tires** If you're unlucky – but it will always happen on some point – you could get a flat tire during a bike ride. Depending on the material that you ride with – clinchers, tubes, or tubeless – there are different things that you need to do to fix it. Most people will ride with clinchers or tubeless, though. With these tires, you can use a spare inner tube. With most tubeless tires, you can also put in an inner tube in case you have a flat; even if you usually ride without an inner tube. Make sure to bring some spare material when you go out for a ride, and don't

forget to check your tire for anything sharp when you replace it (to avoid it from happening again). You could use a little bike pump to blow air back into your tire, or you could make use of a CO2 cartridge. The latter is faster and easier to take along, but harder to use. Most athletes use these only in races. If you've never used one before, it could take some practice to master the skill.

**- Bike bag** When out cycling you will need to bring some things along: spare tubes, tire levers, a bike pump or CO2 cartridge. You could mount a special bike bag under your saddle, to put these things into. Some bikes have special compartments for this, in the frame, for instance. Also, some bikes have a little emergency pump mounted on the frame; not very aerodynamic, but definitely convenient.

**- Chain lube** It's important to take good care of your chain. Chain lube will help to keep your chain running smooth. Don't use too much of it, though, because then dirt could stick to the chain.



# TRAVELING AND RENTING A BIKE

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## *Some tips for traveling with your bike or renting one from the organisation.*

Big chance that at some point, as a triathlete, you will travel far for a race; maybe even abroad. And, of course, you'll need a bike then, too. It would be nicest to ride your own bike, as you are used to it. But how can you bring it?

If you travel by car, it's easy to take your bike apart – take out one or even two wheels – and put it in the trunk. With smaller cars it could be a challenge, but then you could decide to make use of a bike carrier. If you use a bike carrier, it's recommended to protect your bike from dirt, rain, and wind by using a bike cover.

If you want to protect your bike very well, you could also buy or rent a bike case. Bike cases are mandatory when traveling by plane, but optional when you travel by car, train or public transport.

There are hard- and soft cases available, as the name suggest, one has a soft outside and the other is hard. A hard case gives you the best protection, but it might be harder to get your bike into it, as you need to take it apart more than with a soft case. With some soft cases, you don't need to take the handlebars off, but it makes your bike more vulnerable.

A bike case will easily cost you a few hundred euros. That can feel like quite a waste, as you probably only rarely travel with your bike. Most triathlon stores have bike cases available for rent, which is makes it much cheaper if you don't travel so often.

If the thought of bringing your bike abroad freaks you out, you could also decide to rent a bike on the race location. The race organisation will usually provide you with some information about this option. Check out the athlete guide that you receive before a race to find out where you can go. Make sure that take notes of your bike position at home, so that you can try to set up your rental bike in the same way.



# CYCLING ON RACE DAY:

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## *This will make it easier.*

For a beginning triathlete, it can be quite nerve racking to bike in a race. You possibly don't know the route, you get passed by fellow athletes or you pass others, you feel uncertain whether you can deal with this distance. With some tips, we hope to take some of that stress away.

- A)** Make sure that you know what you can expect from the course. If it's possible, it's smart to do go for a spin on the racecourse in the days leading up to the event. That way you can figure out what you need to pay extra attention to and where the most difficult parts are. It will also mentally help you, as you know exactly what's coming and how to pace your race. If it's not possible to go for a test ride, you can find course maps on the website of the organization and in the athlete guide.
- B)** At the bigger races, you usually leave your bike in the transition area the day before the race. It's smart to get some air out of your tires after you rack it, because a blowout could happen when your bike stands still in the heat for a long time. Especially on tarmac, it can get hot. Don't forget to blow air back into your tires before the start. Figure out before the race whether bike pumps are available in the transition area, if not, you should not forget to bring your own.
- C)** Don't take off too fast. It can be tempting, as you can feel a lot of adrenaline and energy after the swim part. But make sure to stay calm and not burn too many matches in those first few kilometres. You can always pick up your pace later again.
- D)** Race your own race and don't pay too much attention to others. You probably have your own goals and a personal race plan. It doesn't matter if other athletes fly past you. Keep in mind: a triathlon has three disciplines, and only at the finish line can you tell how everyone did.
- E)** Be careful. Keep right (or left, depending on the local rules). Give other athletes space and listen to the instructions given by the organisation or traffic wardens. Also, pay attention to your breathing and make sure that you are relaxed on the bike. If you lie down in your aero bars, watch what is in front of you and don't constantly look down. Safety first.
- F)** Especially when racing a Middle- or Long Distance, it can be smart to take it easy in the last few kilometres. That takes the tension off your legs, which helps you prepare for the final run discipline.
- G)** If there is a lot of wind, it's smart to not dig too deep when you have headwind. Chances are that you will waste too much energy and when you – finally – get a tailwind again, you might not have energy left to make use of it.
- H)** Keep paying attention to your nutrition during the bike part. Eat and drink regularly; preferably at least every 20 minutes. Depending on the distance and time that you are racing, you could eat bananas, sports bars, gels, and sugar or salt capsules. If you struggle to "eat" gels, you could mix them with water.



# TERMINOLOGY

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## *Important to know.*

- **Drafting** Riding too close to the person in front of you. Because this gives you an unfair advantage in comparison to others cyclists, many races do not allow this. Only in some races on the Olympic- or Sprint Distance drafting is allowed. In most other races, you can get a penalty for this behavior. Usually, you have to keep a distance of 12 or 20 metres (typically measured from your front wheel to the next person's front wheel).

- **Littering** It's not allowed to leave your empty bottles or gels out on the road. You're only allowed to get rid of garbage in designated areas. If you don't comply with these rules, you risk getting disqualified.

- **Aid Stations** An aid station is a recharge stand where you can get food and drinks, like Coca-Cola, bananas, gels, bottles with sports drinks or water. It's recommended to figure out where exactly the aid stations are before a race. That way you can make a nutrition plan, so that you never run out of fuel. Usually the designated littering areas are right before and/or after these aid stations.

- **Bike Fit** Most triathlon stores or bike stores offer bike fits. With these bike fits, a specialist tries to figure out how to position you on a bike in the best possible way; most aerodynamic, while remaining comfortable. Unfortunately, when one goes up, the others comes down. It's a matter of finding the right balance. When they know your right angles and position, it will be transferred onto your own bike.

- **Watts** The watts that you push give you an indication of how much power you transfer onto the pedals. A power meter on your bike or indoor trainer can show you a number. The amount of watts usually tells you more than your heart rate, as it's not affected by external factors. Generally, lighter athletes ride lower watts than heavier athletes. If you divide watts by body weight, you get watts per kilogram. That number helps in comparing your own performance with others.

- **FTP** Your FTP – Function Threshold Power – is the number of watts that you can push for one hour during maximum effort. You can use this number for training sessions that require you to ride on, or around your anaerobic tipping point.

- **RPM/Frequency/Cadence** Your pedal frequency, or cadence, is measured in RPM (Rotations Per Minute). The lower your resistance, the higher your RPM, and vice versa.

- **Mount Line** Where you have to jump on and off the bike, there is a mount- and dismount line. That's because you are not allowed to ride your bike in the transition area. Only after crossing the mount- or dismount line, you can hop on or off your bike. If you hop on or off after this line, you risk getting a time penalty.

- **Transition Area, T1 and T2** The first transition area, T1, is where you grab your bike after the swim. In the second transition area, T2, you rack your bike before you put on your shoes to start the run. In most races, T1 and T2 are in the exact same spot. However, some races have two transition areas.



# INDOOR CYCLING

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## *Trainers and Programmes*

Nowadays, many athletes ride their bikes indoor, especially in the winter period. Of course, there is nothing like riding your bike outside in nature, but indoor sessions are highly effective too. And they are care free: you don't need to pay attention to the road, and you're very unlikely to get a flat tire.

Indoor trainers come in all shapes and sizes. Popular brands are Wahoo and Tacx. There are also old-school rollers, where you use your race bike to balance on two rolls. There are simple indoor trainers, where you have to take your rear wheel out to install your bike on the trainer, but there are also luxurious smart trainers, that give resistance when climbing, or make you feel like you're riding off-road if you take a virtual dirt route.

You will need special training programmes for these, though. Popular programs are Rouvy and Zwift. With Rouvy you can ride the course of some well-known triathlon events or cycling races in real-time; they are the real courses, including the same elevation. It's ideal when you're training for a specific event abroad. In Zwift you ride in a virtual and animated world. In both programmes you can ride together with friends, join races or complete special workouts.





Enjoy Triathlon,  
**#SeeYouAtTheFinishLine!**