



Tony's Coaching

tonyscoaching.com

Triathlon, running, cycling,  
endurance sports,  
personal trainer, ski instructor

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Starting with triathlon might at times seem overwhelming with all the gear, all the training and all attire needed to get into the sport. But it is really necessary with a high performance disc-wheel, the latest swim-skin and a super-aerodynamic tri-suit in the latest colors?

Here's a comprehensive guide to the gear to start with triathlon:

## SWIM

You definitely want to invest in one or a couple of pairs of good swim goggles. Make sure to have a fresh pair for race day, that sits good, doesn't leak and doesn't hinder your vision. Whereas in many cases "expansive is better", I don't find this to be true for swim goggles. Aim for a less expansive pair, and change often as they get scratchy. Find a pair that sits good and isn't too complex, bulky and big - they shouldn't hinder your vision.

For training you may opt for investing in a few "pool toys"; pull buoy, paddles, fins, kick board and more. To start none of them are really necessary, but after a while paddles, pull buoy and kick board is great gear to use in training.

### *Wet-suit*

Depending on where your race is it may be a wetsuit or non-wetsuit -race. Wetsuits can be quite expensive, if you buy one, try it out, and make sure that it has good seams, good shoulder/arm mobility and that it is made for swimming. Sizing is important. If you have the possibility try different models, and even better try swimming with different models!

### *Swim-skin*

The purpose of the swim skin is to reduce drag in the water. It can't be made of neoprene and so it doesn't add any buoyancy. Swim-skins are definitely not on the beginners "to buy"-list.

### *Tri-suit*

The tri suit is a two piece or one piece suit used through the entire race, eliminating the need to change clothes between swim - bike - run. I would recommend this as a piece of gear to buy early on in the triathlon career and also to test out in training before the first race.

There's an abundance of brands and models, and really it's more about finding a model that fits your body and personal style than anything else. The one piece doesn't glide apart (to create a massive sun burn on the lower back on the bike leg), but it's also very hard to take on and off mid-race should the need for a toilet visit arise. Pick a model with good pockets for carrying gels, pick a lighter color if you race under a hard sun. Make sure to check the events rules on garment leg and arm length before you buy one, and take into consideration protection from sun, wind, heat and cold.

There are tri-suits that are made to have the same characteristics as swim skins, these are more expensive than the more basic entry models.

## BIKE

Aerodynamic time trial bike or road bike? If buying a new bike and choosing between these two options as your only bike, I would recommend a road bike. A road bike allows for joining group rides with local groups and communities and a road bike is far more comfortable than a TT-bike - both important factors to create training adherence. Either way I strongly recommend to invest in a professional bike fit before buying your first bike. A too big TT-bike is far worse than a perfectly fitted road bike even on a 180km Ironman bike leg.

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Having both options available, TT-bike and road bike, I would almost always recommend a TT bike in a non-draft triathlon event. But to start with a road bike is a very good option! Moving the saddle forward, and attaching aero bars gives a decent position (but not perfect, let's be honest!) on the bike.

On any long course triathlon comfort is superior to aero, so make sure to fit your bike to your riding ability.

#### *Helmet*

Aero helmet take off some air resistance if worn correct and an aero position is maintained throughout the race. Riding in an upright position with an aero helmet or not streamlining the helmets backward facing beak will actually increase resistance. This takes some practise and skill. So I recommend getting a safe road helmet, with or without visor. If no visor is worn I strongly recommend sunglasses to be worn.

#### *Fluids, nutrition and spare kit*

On most bigger events there are excellent aid stations spread out across the bike course, so there is absolutely no need to bring a full pic-nic on the bike. Bringing a spare kit though and the knowledge to change tyres and fix a jumped chain is vital.

One or two bike bottles will be sufficient, with a couple of gels in the back pocket. Than you can refill on the course. Check the race events particulars before planning nutritional so that you know how often and what brand of energy is supplied. Always train you race day nutrition before the race!

There are aero bottles to attach to the aerobars or on the lower frame. As a first timer I don't think this investment is necessary to make.

Rather consider investing in some anti-shafe gel to apply in rich amount before the race.

#### RUN

Running shoes. That's it!

Sun glasses, hat is great to wear for a more relaxed form and the hat also gives some protection from the sun. A race belt, where the bib-number can be attached speeds up transition and may be an early purchase for the triathlete in the making.

#### OTHER

Sun screen protection and a good nutritional plan and a good training plan.

Good luck on your endeavour into becoming a triathlete.

Remember to smile when you cross the finish line!

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