



Kids Triathlon Basics

Welcome to the world of multisport.

Getting set for a kids triathlon can, and should be, real basic. For most of the kids, this is more about the experience of stacking three sports back to back and getting a feel for the process than it is racing. Sure it is perfectly acceptable to go fast when they can. But just like with adults, getting a feel for the swim, then transitioning to the bike, completing the bike course, transitioning to the run, completing the run course and finishing, is a new experience. And that's what makes it so much fun.

So let's run through the basic equipment list:

- towel to set down in transition and place gear on
- goggles or mask for the swim (maybe arm floaties, noodle, or life vest if needed or desired)
- small towel for quick wipe down in transition
- loose fitting shirt or top for the bike and run if desired
- number belt for the athlete bib number - not required but can speed up the process
- bike
- bicycle
- helmet - absolute requirement
- water/hydration bottle for transition area or bike to take a swig or two during transitions
- shoes for bike/run
- towel for post race
- clothes to change into post race

At check in, we supply a latex swim cap, the bib number, and a timing chip and ankle strap. If your athlete is intolerant to latex, please bring our own swim cap. We do real basic body marking, the bib number goes on the top of the right hand. You may add more extensive marking if you want - your choice. Many events do full marking with bib number on arms and legs and age on one calf. We really don't need that for a kids event. And many adult triathlons are moving away from that too.

The transition area is race action central. We'll have lines set up labeled by age group with a small piece of tape about 4 feet apart. Your athlete may set up along the designated row on either side of the line, keeping within the 4 foot section. You pick first come first serve. You may not set up along the perimeter marked by flagged roping. There is no notable advantage of any spot compared to the others. Everyone will go the same distance for the event. This is where you set up, or lay down the bike and place gear needed for the event, particularly what you will need for the bike and run, and leave whatever is going to be left behind after the swim, and bike. You can use the large towel on the ground. Pick a towel that your athlete will recognize to make it easier to find the spot coming back into transition. You may also help point the way as needed. We allow adults in transition areas. But, there is a lot of activity going on and you absolutely must pay attention to everyone else and make sure you are not in their way.

We run our kids triathlons based on age groups. We start the 12-13's first, then a two minute gap, and then start the 10-11's. Once they are finished, we make a couple quick course adjustments for the younger athletes. Then begin the 8-9's, another two minute gap, and then the 6-7's. This helps keep the course less congested, and the younger athletes are not intimidated by older ones flying by or over them.



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For the swim, aids like arm floaties, or life vest are fine if needed. No fins. The swim courses are set up are set up linear to the beach, in water shallow enough where the kids can touch bottom or stand up at nearly every point along the course if needed, particularly the 6-9's. The 10-13's course is out deeper, but still in relatively shallow water. On exiting the water, athletes have a short run/walk into the transition area.

When reaching their transition spot, athletes leave behind goggles or mask or any gear used for the swim, add a shirt or top if desired, bib number - however you set that up so we can see it on their front when approaching the finish line, put on their helmet and clip the strap, grab their bike, and head for the bike out chute. Bikes should not be ridden inside the transition area. Mount at the exit chute, and dismount before the bike in chute on returning.

This is typically the trickiest and most time consuming of the two transitions. It is no different than for adults. A little planning and a practice session or two and you should have the process you want to use down pat. There are no hard and fast rules here, keeping in mind that the clock is running. So you'll want to put a little thought into how you want to set things up, practice to see how it works, and then adjust and adapt if needed.

Planning based on what will be needed or used for the the bike and the run courses, will help streamline the process. Keep it simple.

The bib or athlete number can throw you off if not prepared. It is simply a 5 x 7 piece of water resistant paper with a large number on it and small holes for safety pins at each corner. We need the athletes to have this on them for the run, on their front, so we can see it as they approach the finish line. It can be worn on a shirt or top, or use a number belt. Adult number belts are about \$10.00. You can hand craft one in a number of ways, including using a section of elastic sewing tape you can buy at many department stores. The bib number can be attached with safety pins. We'll have a supply on hand. It is fine for the athlete to wear the bib number on both the bike and the run. But it has to be visible on their front as they approach the finish line.

A suggested plan is pin the bib number to the front of a shirt or top your athlete will wear on both the bike and the run. Somewhat loose fitting will make it easier to get on when wet or damp after the swim. Then when finishing the bike course, they come back to the transition area and place their bike and helmet at their transition spot and take off on the run. Some athletes may be using separate bike shoes. So in that case, you need to change shoes twice. That all happens at your transition spot. Simplicity makes things go smoothly.

As they complete the bike course, remember - dismount when entering the transition area. Walk or run the bike to the transition spot, leave the helmet and bike there, and head out through the run out chute from transition and onto the run course.

Practice the swim to bike and bike to run transitions a few times. And ideally, your athlete will have gone the general race distance once or twice as well so they have an idea what to expect.



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The bike and run event courses are relatively flat. The bike course has a few spots where the pavement has broken up a little. Patching has been or will be complete by race day. Those spots are easily seen from a distance. There are a couple pressure cracks where there is a bump. Nothing severe, but bumps nonetheless.

Your athlete will have no problem navigating the courses between our course markings, safety cones and adult course monitors helping to point the way at key spots.

While we allow parents or adult "support crew" in the transition area as long as you stay out of the way of everyone else, adults are not allowed on the event courses. You will be able to clearly see your athlete on the swim course and run up to transition. There are sections of both the bike and the run courses where you will not be able to see them.

Ramona Park has a permanent bath house with both rest rooms and areas for changing pre and post race. It is within 50 feet of the transition area so it is real handy.

Please remember to check your gear before leaving home, especially the bike helmet. Don't leave home without it.

If you have not had your bike checked out recently, take a little time and run it in to sponsor Pedal Bicycle in Kalamazoo or Portage, or a shop near you. Most will do a quick check for free and recommend any adjustments or updates if needed. Pedal will be on site race morning with a technician but that is to help with any last minute issues, not a full pre race bike check.

We do not allow athletes to wear audio devices during the race such as mp3 players with ear plugs. They endanger not only the athlete and his or her capacity to stay alert and aware, but then also endanger all others around them.

Please leave your pets at home. Assistance dogs of course are welcome.

Feel free to email or call if you have questions in advance of the race.

Thanks,

Jim Mishler
Spirit Racing LLC
269-978-2437
jim@spiritracing.us