

FitFacts®

Gearing Up For A Triathlon

WITH THE RISING POPULARITY OF TRIATHLON RACING AND THE DOZENS OF NEW SPRINT RACES POPPING UP NATIONWIDE EVERY YEAR, IT IS EXCITING TO SEE SO MANY NEWCOMERS GIVING THIS SWIM-BIKE-RUN SPORT A TRI.

EQUIPMENT

To provide some pointers on entry-level gear, even for those on a tight budget, it's important to look at each individual sport:

SWIM

This sport may be the least expensive in terms of needed equipment.

For women, a competitive one-piece swimsuit is ideal, because it provides less drag than a two-piece suit. Most men wear briefs or jammers.

Finding a comfortable pair of goggles that fits your face (and nose) might take a few tries with different brands, but at a price of around \$13 is very affordable.

While you don't have to invest in a wet suit right away, given the cost between \$200 and \$600, it is likely that you will want one for racing. Many triathlon clubs and race organizers provide wet suit rentals.

A wet suit is typically a good investment because it provides flotation and less drag to allow swimmers to glide faster through the water with less effort. A neoprene suit can also serve as a mental "security blanket" in open-water races, because it allows you to float.

BIKE

The bicycle is likely the biggest purchase you'll make to get started in this sport. But once again, by shopping around, you're bound to find a great deal on a new or used bike.

The toughest decision for many beginners is whether to buy a road bike or triathlon-specific bike; tri bikes typically cost more.

No matter which bike you pick, finding the right bike size and a correct bike set-up are key. Look to a reputable bike dealer or a friend with bike expertise for guidance.

Never ride your bike without putting on a helmet first. It can save your life in a crash, and is mandatory for racing.

Helmets come in various prices (from \$50 up to \$200). As long as they meet the safety standards of the Consumer Product Safety Commission and are clearly labeled by the manufacturer, your head is protected. You also want to invest in a pair of cycling shorts (\$20 and up) and a bike jersey made out of breathable fabric (\$20 and up), a pair of gloves and sunglasses.

A saddle bag (\$15) with a patch kit, spare tube, compact hand pump and CO₂ cartridge may sound like a luxury item, but it is the best insurance for getting back on the road when you experience a flat tire. In a race, you'll be expected to know how to change a flat tire.



RUN

Anyone who has visited a local running shoe store may have experienced sticker shock. But any good coach or long-time runner will tell you that investing in a quality running shoe will provide support and comfort, and is the best insurance against running-related injuries.

TRIATHLON APPAREL FOR RACE DAY

Invest in at least one tri-specific garment that can be worn for the swim, bike and run without the need to change between activities. Visit your local triathlon-specific store or go online to find the right size and preferred brand. Many athletes prefer wearing one-piece suits during racing; others prefer two-piece suits.

Now you're on your way to becoming a triathlete and can enjoy all the wonderful benefits this sport has to offer: Cardiovascular fitness, meeting new friends to train and race with, feeling the adrenaline rush and pride and joy of finishing your very first triathlon race and likely getting hooked on a sport where professionals and amateurs (called age-groupers) race side by side.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[*The Triathlete's Training Bible and Your First Triathlon* by Joel Friel](#)

[*Triathlon 101* by John Mora](#)

[Slowtwitch](#)

[TrainingPeaks](#)

[Beginner Triathlete](#)

Magazines: *Triathlete Magazine*, *Inside Triathlon* and *Lava*