

TOP TEN TRIATHLON TIPS FOR YOUTH AND PARENTS

By Alan Ley

1. Know the course and race distances. If at all possible train or visit the race course prior to the event. Make a point of knowing where the bike mount and dismount lines and the finish line. You can always push harder if you know the end is in sight!
2. Arrive early at the race site. There is already enough stress without having to hurry and rush. Get the race packet, body marked and set up the transition area. Make sure your area is free of clutter and your bike is in the proper gear. Know where your bike is located. All the bikes look the same after a swim and run.
3. Check and recheck your equipment. Sounds like common sense but there is not a transition area at a race where 30 percent of the bike tires are low or the chain is off. Take extra swim goggles, a clear water bottle (so you can quickly see how much fluid you have left) and warm clothes for after the race or swim warm up. Bring a pump, snacks and water or sports drink. Last, take extra safety pins and your race belt.
4. A good warm up prior to the swim start is a must. Be sure and put your face in the water and not just play. There are some great young pool swimmers but the cold open water with arms and legs thrashing is a new experience. Another little issue that occurs with kids is they go to a triathlon and it is the first time they have ever put on or swam with a swim cap on. Practice using a swim cap prior or the race.

5. As parents we have our young triathletes practice putting on there shoes and helmet with dry hands and feet. After exiting the swim they will be putting their shoes on with wet feet and buckling their helmet with cold wet fingers - so be sure and have them practice with wet feet and hands a few times.



6. The bike course can be scary with all the young triathletes on the course at the same time. Stay to the right side unless you are passing. If you stop, pull off on the right side of the road. Kids typically will go hard up the uphill but the slight downhill sections can cause speeds never before attempted. Stress control, caution and safety on the bike course. Better yet have them practice some controlled descents on easy grades.
7. Use sunglasses whenever possible on the bike. The wind can cause tears and blurring eyesight.
8. The bike to run is tough for new triathletes. Even good runners struggle to run well after riding. Prepare for this with practice and by starting with a slightly shorter stride, concentrating on form, being relaxed and breathing out during the run.
9. The last stages of the triathlon run are mentally and physically difficult. With a swim in the arms and a bike ride in the legs, finishing off the run will test the toughest kid. The mental components are hard to teach but encouragement in the form of finishing and feeling good about the process of training and racing must be

a priority of the parent. Focus your late race comments and motivation on the process and not outcome for your young triathlete.

10. Stand tall and be proud of what you and your child accomplished. They did it, they participated and completed the task! They and you are winners the second they stepped up to the starting line in that cold dark water and took their first stroke. You both were players in this game of Tri life and that's better than being a spectator!