



Q & A for Beginners

What is a duathlon? A duathlon is a competition that is composed of running and biking. The usual format for a duathlon is run-bike-run, meaning you start with a run, then transition to the bike, then transition back to running again. Your time starts when you start the race, and finishes when you cross the finish line. This means that the time it takes you to switch from running to cycling and back again is part of your race time.

Is everybody really good? Some people are some aren't. Just like your local 5K, there is a group of hardcore athletes going for the win, there is a bunch of middle of the pack types, and there are some back of the pack racers. The participants in a duathlon really cover the full spectrum of athletes, and everyone is welcome, regardless of ability.

Is a mountain Bike OK? Absolutely. Many athletes who are not going for a big win ride their mountain bikes, and your body position is a little more comfortable on a mountain bike anyway. Approximately 1 in 15 competitors in the Shamrock Duathlon will be riding a mountain bike. Remember, this is for fun!!!

Do I need to purchase a USA Triathlon One-Day Membership? Yes. All participants in HMF multisport events must be members of USA Triathlon, the national triathlon governing body. You may either become an annual member for \$45 or a one-day member for \$12. This fee goes directly to USAT to cover insurance costs. This fee is in addition to the race entry fee. If you think you will participate in more than 3 events annually, it is advised to become an annual member. There are lots of other benefits as well. Check it out at www.usatriathlon.org. You can complete all paperwork with HMF when you pick up your race packet.

What are the rules? There are very few rules to the sport of duathlon, and they are all enforced for athlete safety and to keep the race fair. As a result, most rules are related to the cycling portion of the race, so we'll go over them now, starting at the beginning of the race.

You must know and complete the entire course; this includes entering and exiting the transition area at the proper place.

Most races have a rule that there is no cycling in the transition area. They will have a mount line just outside the transition area, and you must run or walk your bike out of the transition zone and past that line before beginning to ride.

Anytime you are on the bike, including before and after the race, you are required to wear a helmet and have it buckled. Any competitor who unbuckles his/her helmet while on the bike, or who mounts his/her bike with an unbuckled helmet will be disqualified. A good rule of thumb is to buckle your helmet before you take your bike off the rack, and when you finish cycling, wait until you rack your bike before you unbuckle your helmet.

Drafting, or cycling directly behind or alongside another competitor, is strictly prohibited, as it provides an unfair advantage in an individual sport. You must leave at least 3 bike lengths between your front wheel and the rear wheel of the bike in front of you. If you choose to pass another cyclist, you must pass on the left, and you have 15 seconds to get your front wheel past the front wheel of the person you are passing. The person being passed must then fall back 3 bike lengths before trying to re-pass you. This way, two cyclists won't be riding side by side going back and forth for miles.

You must ride to the right side of the road, so that a passing cyclist can pass on the left. Riding on the left side of your lane is called blocking, and carries a time penalty for the offender.

No crossing the center line of the road, even to pass. NEVER!

Other rules include no glass, pets, friends, family, or nudity in the transition area, and no pets, baby joggers, iPods, or outside assistance allowed during the race.

Can I wear my iPod? Absolutely Not. MP3 players and iPods are prohibited and will result in an automatic disqualification from the race. They make a race very unsafe. Most races are contested on roads that are open to traffic. An iPod limits your ability to hear cars, other participants, and the instructions of race officials.

What do I wear? What to wear in a duathlon really depends upon the weather on race day. If it is warm, then shorts and a shirt will do. If it is chilly, perhaps a jacket, long fingered gloves, or even tights might be required.

Yes, all of that may seem pretty obvious, but when it comes to race clothing, a few tips can make your race day a whole lot more fun.

First, we'll address the article of clothing we get the most questions about - shorts! Running shorts, while great for running, have no padding for the bike (a fearful thought to some), and blow about in the wind, thus slowing you down on the bike.

Bike Shorts, on the other hand, are more aerodynamic and the padding is certainly a blessing when you might be on the bike for an hour or more. However if you have ever

run in a pair of bike shorts, the feeling can only be described as what a toddler must feel like walking around with a diaper on.

A great compromise (relax, my next word will not be Speedo!) is a pair of duathlon or tri shorts. These shorts are similar to a bike short, except they have slightly shorter legs, and a thinner pad that will not bother you when running.

What you wear on your upper body, whether a Jog bra, a tank top, or a shirt is really your preference. The one thing to keep in mind is that you will not only be running in this article of clothing - you will be biking in it as well, and you do not want to be dressed in a sail when you are on a bike. Often a short sleeved or sleeveless bike jersey works best, and the zippered front will allow you to cool down if the temperatures rise before the second run.

How do I train for Running & Cycling Training for a duathlon can be as simple as 2 words - run, bike.

However, if you have performance goals, we have devised several duathlon training programs for you to choose from. **Check our website for details.**
www.hartfordmarathon.com

What do I eat on race day? And what do I bring to refuel in Transition and while biking? Never try something new on race day that you haven't tried first in training. Some people do well with Gatorade, others do well with Hammer Nutrition. Some eat Snickers Bars and others swear by Peanut Butter and Jelly Sandwiches on white bread (that would be me). Most importantly, only eat on race day what you have trained with and know you will tolerate on race day. As for during the race, light and easy nutrition is the best nutrition. If you are doing a race that is less than 4 hours in duration, you will do just fine with a few Gu's or a Powerbar. Try unwrapping a Powerbar and sticking it around your handlebars. Kinda gross, but very useful. As you bike, you just pull off chunks to eat!

Do I need a support person? No! Well, let me revise that. Having friends and family cheer you on and provide moral support is a wonderful thing. Having them help you with your bike, fix a flat tire, or hand you food and water is a violation of the rules of multisport racing.

Duathlon is an individual sport, and each athlete must be responsible for him/herself for the duration of the event. The only assistance a racer may receive is from designated race aid stations or support. Therefore, it is a good idea for a future duathlete to learn how to repair a flat tire.

How early should I show up for my first race? This is a common question from first-time racers, and I usually recommend 60 to 90 minutes. You have to pick up your race number, go to the bathroom, warm-up and stretch, and unlike a single sport event like running, multisport racing requires you to stage your gear (in transition). Also, since it is

your first time out, there are bound to be questions you will have and things you will forget to do. After a race or two, you will have the drill down and can modify that time.

What do I do with my bike while running? The center of activity for any multisport race is the transition area. This is an area, surrounded by a fence of some kind that contains enough bike racks for all of the competitors in the race. Spots on the bike rack are assigned based on bib number. This will be "your" transition spot. When you finish the first run, you will come to this spot and retrieve your bike. When you finish the bike ride, you will return it to the exact same spot on the bike racks and "rack your bike" before heading out on the final run.

After the race is finished, you can return to your transition spot and reclaim your bike.

How does a transition area work? Once you have racked your bike, lay out a towel on the ground beside your bike, being careful not to invade the space of your neighbor. It is rude to set up a huge campsite in transition, and once you have been to a few races, you will see what I mean. It is obnoxious to bring coolers, foot baths, and other large gear into transition, but you will certainly spot someone who does.

Now that you have your spot, lay out your bike shoes (if you use them), bike helmet, sunglasses, gloves, or whatever else you may need during the race onto your towel. The rules, however, state that no glass, pets, friends, or family are allowed into the transition area. For the safety and security of your gear, the transition area is reserved for athletes only.

Once your gear is in place, double check your bike to make sure it is in the appropriate gear for starting the bike ride. You can always spot a beginner when they start the bike in a gear that is WAY TOO BIG to start in.

Next, take a walk through the transition area. Find the entrance where you will come in after the first run, and make sure you can quickly locate your bike. At every race, there are a handful of racers who frantically search for their bikes following the first run. A practice walk from the transition entrance to your bike will help you to avoid this problem. Likewise, you will want to find the exit you will use to start the bike, the entrance you will use when you finish the bike, and the exit you will use when you start the final run.

Most races also have a rule that there is no cycling in the transition area. They will have a mount line just outside the transition area, and you must run or walk your bike out of the transition zone and past that line before beginning to ride. When you finish the bike ride, you will dismount at the line and run or walk your bike into transition.

You will rack your bike in exactly the same spot where you racked it before the race. If you use a brightly or uniquely colored towel to mark your spot, it will make it easier to find after cycling. After the race, you can return to the transition area to reclaim your gear.

How is a race timed? The event is timed using the Winning Time Chip System. Each participant will receive a small transponder (chip) attached to a soft, comfortable Velcro strap. You must fasten the strap to your ankle prior to the start of the event.

The chip will automatically register your time as you finish each leg of the race, and when you cross the finish line. No chip means no times will be recorded.

After crossing the finish line, you must return your timing chip or you will be charged the replacement cost. If you drop out of the event, you must be sure to stop by the finish line and return your chip.

Participants will also receive a paper bib number that must be worn on the front of the shirt, or on a race belt, with the number visible on the front when entering/exiting transition.

You will also receive a bike frame number which must be affixed to your bike frame prior to the start of the race.

How do relay teams work? Duathlon relay teams are composed of 2 or 3 team members. One person is the runner, the other is the biker and the third is a runner (for teams of 3). The runner will begin in a starting wave with the other relay teams and complete the entire run course. The runner then runs through the transition area and transfers the timing chip and ankle strap to the ankle of his biker teammate. The cyclist will be waiting at their bike.

The biker then completes the entire bike course, and transfers the timing chip and ankle strap back the runner who is waiting in the same location.

The runner now dashes through transition and completes the second run course, crossing the same finish line as the solo racers.

How can I speed up my transitions? Practice, Practice, Practice. I recommend alternating 100 meters of easy running with 100 meters of easy biking, so you can really focus on getting fast at making the switch. The pro's can be speeding away on their bikes less than 30 seconds after finishing the run - there's no reason you can't too. And remember, the transition is a timed portion of the race that isn't based on athletic prowess. You can improve your finish time faster by learning to make quick transitions than you can with an extra 10 hours a week of training!

Now, if you are just out to have a good time, there is nothing wrong with putting on gloves, taking a big drink and a bite to eat, and just catching your breath in transition. But if you are shooting for your best performance, there are a few tips that will speed up your transition.

First, rack your bike with the front wheel pointing out - that way you can just grab it and go. Next, unbuckle your helmet and lay it on your aero bars (if you have them) or the ground with the open side up and the straps outside of the helmet - that makes it easy to grab and put on.

If you practice, you can actually leave a pair of bike shoes clipped in to your pedals and slip your feet into them while you are riding. If this is your first race, however, just leave the shoes on your towel with the straps open for easy entry. If you plan to ride in your running shoes, that will make your transition that much faster, but it is true that cycling shoes are faster when you are riding. If you plan to race in your running shoes, that's perfectly acceptable, though. Many beginning duathletes are happy riding in running shoes.

Next, let's talk about running shoes. If you plan to switch shoes between running and biking segments, you might want to invest in either elastic laces or lace locks. Both are available at running shops, and will allow you to pull your running shoes on and off without having to deal with tying your shoes.

Next, think of the things you need to ride, and those you can do without. Top racers jump on the bike with nothing but the clothes they were running in, a bike helmet and glasses, and bike shoes.

Less competitive racers will pull on gloves and perhaps a pair of bike shorts over their running shorts to name a couple of items. Many will also drink while standing in transition, when they could be drinking from the bottle on their bike while cruising along at race speed!

So in a nutshell, practice, practice, practice - and think about what you're doing while you practice.

Other Tips

- Wear your race number on the front. It makes it much easier for race timers if your number is pinned to the front of your shirt in plain view, and this is also how race photographers will identify you. Also, if there is a tear-tag at the bottom of your number, please don't pin the tag to your shirt.
- Don't wear extremely baggy clothing on the bike - this especially applies to nylon jackets.
- Remember, headphones (iPods) are not allowed in a multisport event, and you will be disqualified if you do use them.
- Have Fun!!!

Please email us Info@hartfordmarathon.com with any additional tip ideas you may have so we can include them in our info for beginners!