

In the Running

with Loreta Solers

Apart from the training in the weeks leading up to your first event, there are a few tips that will help you to be fully prepared for that all-important race run.

If the event is close to home, do one of your easy training runs around the race route. Go at an easy pace so you'll be confident that on race day you will definitely go faster.

At registration, ask any questions such as the location of turn around points or where the water stations are sited. Your pre-race warm-up should include some light exercise, so this is a good opportunity to check where to go at the end of each lap or the exact position of the finish line (there is nothing worse than stopping 5m short, and losing out to a rival/friend).

Correct Kit

What you wear will depend on the good old British weather. Your body gets hotter than it does when cycling, so you might want to take off a layer of clothing before starting the run. Whatever you do with your clothing, make sure that your race number is clearly visible from the front and don't go topless - these are BTA rules and you may be disqualified if you breach them.

You don't need to buy a pair of triathlon-specific running shoes. Use a pair of running shoes that you would normally use to train or race in, depending on the terrain you are running over. You can modify them for a quick transition by swapping the laces for some thin elastic cord (about 50p per metre from climbing/outdoor shops), or you can use spring loaded lace locks (approximately £2 from good sports shops).

If you decide to wear socks to race, be prepared to struggle to get them over wet feet. Always put talcum powder in both your running and cycling shoes and if you get blisters, put a smear of grease on the inside of the shoe in the danger areas. Never leave it until race day to try out new shoes or other kit. Wear them for at least one training session beforehand so you're confident that you'll be really comfortable.

Mastering Transition

As suggested in the cycling feature, when you set up your kit in the transition area prior to the race, it's important that you know the direction of flow through the area. Physically run through the transition so you know where to locate your bike at speed. A distinctive towel laid under your kit helps to identify the exact location. Practise exactly how you will rest your bike on the racking - under the brakes or the saddle. Take your bike off and return it to the bar (racking) a couple of times so that you don't get your hands or body tied in knots when you realise you're facing

Top 10 Run Tips

If the race is close to home, carry out your training runs around the race route.

Make sure that you know where the water points, turn points and finish line is before the race starts.

Modifying your race shoes with elastic or spring-loaded lace locks can help with a quick transition between events.

During the last mile of the cycle, try standing out of the saddle in order to stretch your muscles in preparation for the run.

A smear of grease inside your shoes can help to stop blisters.

Practice the transition before the event so that you are comfortable with the exact procedure on race day

At the transition point, make your kit easy to identify by perhaps positioning it on a distinctive towel

Initially keep the pace of the run relaxed and then aim to increase your speed with each subsequent mile.

If the race isn't going well, don't let negative thoughts take over and remember your training

On a hot day, use all of the water stations, even if you're not thirsty

the wrong way. If it's a hot day, leave a bottle of water or energy replacement drink ready to take with you on the start of the run.

During the Run

In the last mile of the cycle it helps to ease off the pace - or at least to cycle in lower gears so that your leg muscles get a bit of a rest. You could also try standing out of the saddle and stretching your calves - all in preparation for the run. Mentally rehearse what you will do as you get back to transition and change to the run split.

After a slick, well-practised transition, the first thing that you'll probably notice is that horrible feeling as your legs tell you that they don't like running so soon after cycling. Don't panic - everybody gets this feeling. Keep the pace relaxed and over the first mile gradually ease into your running style. Aim to increase your speed with each subsequent mile. Your legs will feel tired, so concentrate on pace and a relaxed rhythmic breathing pattern. Concentrate on using your arms to help if there are any hills to climb.

The most difficult part of the run is probably the mental aspect. All good distance runners concentrate on their pace, style and tactics all the way round the course, and triathletes are no different. If you start to go through a bad patch when every step is an effort, try different mental tactics to keep you going. Concentrate on catching up or staying with another competitor, think about your running style, lift the pace or look forward to the next downhill section. If it's really bad (everyone gets these phases) don't let the negative thoughts take over - slow down for a bit, think about how you are doing this race to enjoy it - you've trained for the event and you are going to finish it no matter how bad you feel right now.

If it's a hot day, try to use all of the water stations, even if you don't feel thirsty. Squeeze the plastic cup and take a few sips of water, pour what is left over your body - it will help you to stay cool. If an electrolyte or energy replacement drink is available at the stops, it's probably only wise to drink it if you are familiar with it and have used it before in training. For all triathlons that take less than two hours to complete, water will be just as efficient as energy replacement drinks. Apart from dehydration and overheating, the other common physical problems that you might encounter are stitches and cramp in your legs. In both cases, slow down, take smaller steps and try to physically relax. If they still don't wear off after a few minutes, stop and stretch then massage the offending muscle. With a stitch, this means bending to one side. Taking deep breaths also helps.

After the Finish

As you cross the finish line, don't forget to give a big victory wave for all the spectators. Congratulations on finishing your first of many triathlons. Before you rush to sign autographs, remember that if you look after your body now, it will be much happier tomorrow.

Drink some liquid - energy replacement drinks are a good choice and will aid recovery. Spend some time stretching your legs and even jog a mile at a very easy pace - both will help prevent stiffness the next day.

Jargon Buster

Fartlek means 'speedplay' and refers to alternate fast runs and easy jogging.

Cramp, the scourge of the athlete. If it bites, slow down, try to relax and if necessary, stop, stretch and massage the offending muscles.

Spring-loaded laces are a time-saving way to help you out when putting on your shoes at the transition stage

Rhythmic breath could well help to keep you going when your legs get that tired feeling

Finally, make sure that you eat some carbohydrate (for example, an energy bar, baked potato or bread) so you start to replenish your energy stores as soon as possible.

Eight week Run training schedule

This guide is designed for those with little experience of competitive running. For further information and advice, read the training feature on page 39. The main idea is to develop endurance that will enable you to run the whole distance comfortably, after completing the two previous disciplines. It's a gradual progression of time and distance endurance, slowly building up to the required distance. Unless otherwise noted, training is at an easy pace - in other words you should be able to hold a conversation with someone at the same time as running. Remember to warm up and down before and after all training sessions: do some easy stretching in a warm environment and start and finish all sessions at an easy pace.

| Week | Session 1 | Session 2 | Comments |
|------|---------------------------|--|---|
| 1 | 2 miles easy jogging pace | 1.5 miles round track or measured distance: one lap jog, four laps run (increase pace a little), one lap jog | Keep first week relaxed. Use Session 2 for measuring yourself against later |
| 2 | 3 miles run/jog easy | 2 miles run at same same pace as session 2 of week 1 | On Session 2 when you raise the pace, increase your stride |

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| | | | length and use your arms |
| 3 | 3 miles easy run | 3 miles with middle mile at consistently raised pace | Don't set out too fast on the fast mile of Session 2 - raise the pace a little and then more so if you have the energy towards the end |
| 4 | 4 miles easy run | On track: two laps easy, four laps faster then weeks 1, two laps easy | You should be able to run faster than during week 1 |
| 5 | 3 miles easy run | 3 - 4 miles with fartlek. Warm up jog then 4 - 5 efforts lasting between 30 seconds and 1:30. Warm down jog. | Fartlek means 'speedplay'. Alternate fast runs with 2mins easy jogging. Try to get a real change in pace |
| 6 | 2 - 3 miles easy run | Cycle race distance plus run 2 miles with 1.5 mile steady then .5 mile easy. | This is a brick session. Keep the cycle relaxed - steady. On the run, concentrate on your style. |
| 7 | Run race route at v/easy pace making sure you know exact route | 4 miles with 1 easy, 2 miles steady/fast, 1 mile easy. | Last hard session - use it to feel good. Remember your technique! |
| 8 | Relaxed 3-4 mile run | No second session - or if very keen, easy 2 mile jog | Time to rest up for the race and look forward to |

