



Tips for Swim-to-Bike and Bike-to-Run Transitions

By Elaine Seasly

Packing

- Pack everything the night before the race. Lay everything out in a mock transition area, think about doing the transition and remember anything you may need, then pack everything up. Leave everything by the front door for the morning.
- Use a checklist to remember what to pack. This makes packing for the next race much easier.
- Use a large bag for holding all of your transition stuff. You don't need to buy an official "transition bag" from a store. You can use a large duffel bag or carry-on luggage bag. Sometimes races provide plastic bags for your transition stuff.
- Pack your bike and run shoes as well. Wear flip-flops to the race for walking around in. When the race is about to begin, put your flip-flops in your transition bag. They will be there after the race, and you can change out of your soggy running shoes into nice, dry, airy flip-flops.

Arriving at the Transition Area (TA)

- Get there early to get a good spot and to have enough time to lay everything out without having to rush.
- Sometimes races have pre-assigned transition areas that correspond to your race number.
- Since you packed everything in a transition bag, all you should need is the bag and your bike. This way you won't need to make several return trips to the car to get your stuff (which may be quite a walk!).
- Some races require your bike to be racked and your transition area to be laid out the day before the race. Think about the possibility of wind/rain if this is required.

Racking the Bike

- The end of the rack gives you the most room.
- You can rack the bike either by the handlebars or the seat, whichever is easiest and the most stable.
- Think about which direction you will be leaving the transition area with the bike, and rack the bike in the direction that is easier. You don't want to have to turn around with the bike in a crowded transition area.
- Some people tie a balloon or a ribbon next to their bike on the transition bar to mark their transition area.
- Be sure to put the bike in an easy gear for take-off!
- Remember to re-set your bike computer.

Laying out the Transition Area

- Place a towel or mat on the ground next to your bike. This will mark your transition area.
- Place your run stuff at the back end of the towel, and your bike stuff in the middle. Leave an empty spot at the front to stand on. Remember, you'll be wet and in bare feet, so this spot on the towel will help dry your feet.
- You may want to hang a small towel for your face on your bike or on the transition rack next to your bike to be able to dry your face quickly.

Bike stuff:

- Open the Velcro straps of your shoes and loosen them so that you have plenty of room to easily get your feet in.
- If you have to run through grass or sand to get from the water to the TA, have a fresh bottle of water by your bike shoes to rinse your feet off. Some people also bring a small basin of water to rinse their feet off.
- If you wear socks on the bike, put them on and then peel them down half way inside out, then slip them off your toe. This forms a nice little pocket to stick your toe in. Sprinkle some baby powder in the sock to help prevent sticking. Then stick each sock in each shoe.

- Open your helmet strap and place your helmet on the bike handlebars (if it's stable) or on the ground towel next to your bike shoes. Put your sunglasses and gloves (if you wear them) in your helmet.
- Attach your race number to a race belt. If it is required to be worn on the bike, put it under your bike shoes. If it is only needed for the run, put it under your run shoes.
- Put anything that you want in your jersey pockets (gels, energy bars, etc) in between your bike shoes.
- Place your water bottles on your bike.
- Put any additional clothing (jerseys, windbreakers, etc) next to your shoes, or have it in your transition bag so that it won't blow away if it is windy.

Run stuff:

- Have quick laces on your shoes, or untie your shoelaces.
- Put your hat/visor between your shoes, as well as any gels/energy bars you may want. Also put your race number under your shoes (if it is only required to be worn on the run).
- If you wear socks for the run, see the sock trick in the above bike section.
- Place your transition bag by your bike, but out of the way enough to where you won't snag the bike on the bag when you move it. You can put your goggles and swim cap in your bag right after the swim.

Review the Transition Area

- Once you have everything set up, find out where you will be coming in from the water/pool and walk from the water/pool to your transition area. Remember any landmarks along the way so that you don't forget where your TA is.
- Walk up to your TA and mentally review everything. Think about putting on your socks & shoes, helmet, sunglasses, etc. Think about removing your bike from the rack and make sure nothing is in the way to snag it.
- Walk the path that you will be taking out of the TA to the bike course. Note any upcoming sharp corners and turns.
- Walk the path from the "bike in" area and find out where the dismount line is. Walk back to your TA and think about re-racking your bike and putting on all of your run stuff.
- If you forgot anything, hopefully it is in your bag!

Split Transition Areas

- Split transition areas are where T1 (swim-to-bike) and T2 (bike-to-run) are in different places. For these you will need to have plastic bags (often provided by the race) to put all of your swim, bike, and run stuff in. Check out both TAs the day before the race and note where you will be coming in and leaving the TA.
- Be extra careful in packing your transition bags, as you may have to drop them off the day before the race. If anything is missing, you won't find out until race day.

Swim-To-Bike Transition (T1)

- As you approach the end of your swim, start thinking about how you will exit the swim and where you need to go.
- If it was a wetsuit swim, peel the top half of your wetsuit down right after exiting the water. Use the wetsuit strippers if the race provides them. If not, head to the transition area and take the rest of your wetsuit off there.
- While running from the water to T1, remove your cap and goggles.
- Place your wetsuit on the transition bar next to your bike and above your towel with your tri stuff. Throw your swim cap and goggles into your transition bag.
- If it is a split transition, bag all of your swim stuff in the bag provided, including your towel after you are done standing on it.
- Put on your bike stuff. Some people prefer to stand while others like to sit while putting on shoes. You can sit on your towel, or bring a small stool or bucket (flipped upside down) to sit on.
- Don't forget to clip your helmet strap! (You can be DQ'd for an undone helmet strap).
- Grab your bike, and un-rack it. Make sure it doesn't snag on anything. If you have a rear bottle rack behind the seat, make sure your bottles don't fall off when un-racking the bike.
- Roll your bike out of the TA and mount the bike only after the designated mount line (volunteers will probably be there to tell you where). If you need to stop to mount the bike, move to the side of the lane.

Some folks run and jump on the bike, so watch out for them. Only run and jump on the bike if you've practiced it a lot!

Bike-To-Run Transition (T2)

- Slow down as you approach the transition area. Dismount your bike before the dismount line (volunteers will probably be there to tell you where). If you need to make a complete stop to dismount, move to the side of the lane. Some folks will jump off a moving bike and run into transition, so watch out for them. Only jump off a moving bike if you've practiced it a lot!
- Roll your bike through the TA and find your transition spot. Rack your bike and take off all of your bike stuff.
- If it is a split transition, a bag of your run stuff will be given to you as you enter the transition area off of the bike.
- Put on your run shoes, and grab the rest of your run stuff (hat, number belt, water bottle, gels/nutrition bars, etc). Your hat and number belt can be put on as you run out of the TA. But if it is too much to carry you can put everything on before leaving the TA.

Packing up After the Race

- After the race the TA will look like a disaster zone. Make sure you have everything packed up before leaving. You can even refer to your packing checklist to make sure you have everything.
- The flip-flops you wore before the race should be waiting in your transition bag, and sometimes it's nice to change into those for the walk back to the car.