


**Totally Terrific Transitions**  
**Mastering the 4th discipline**  
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A photograph of a triathlete in a white and green triathlon suit and a yellow swim cap, swimming in the ocean. The athlete is in the foreground, splashing water, with other swimmers visible in the background.

As soon as the race starts, the clock starts ticking and it doesn't stop until we cross the finish-line. Most of us will focus all our race prep on the swim-bike and run but those who also prepare for the transitions will be rewarded for their efforts. I'd like to help you with that.

**Before race day:**

**Read the race briefing.** This document will give you invaluable information. Amongst that information will be details on the layout of transition. This is important because in some races you will have everything in one place on the bike rack. In bigger races such as Ironman and Challenge brands, only your bike is on the bike rack and everything else is in bags in another designated areas. This will affect the flow of your transition, so it is good to understand this beforehand.

**General considerations for transitions:**

**1. Create a system that works for you.** Once you have read your race briefing, you will have a better understanding of the flow of the transition areas. Create a system with your race gear that will work best for you in the transition space. Ask yourself questions like:

- 1.1 What will I need to do first when exiting the water?
- 1.2 How can I easily find my stuff as I enter the transition area?
- 1.3 What item will I take off/put on first?
- 1.4 What can I do to save time?
- 1.5 What can I do to avoid losing items or causing obstructions to other athletes?
- 1.6 What is the fastest way to exit transition?
- 1.7 What are the rules relating to transition?

I aim to have answers to all these questions for you.

**2. Practice transitions.** Build time into your training plan practicing the different stages of triathlon. It does not have to take massive chunks of time and can easily be incorporated into your daily training. e.g.

2.1 When doing an open water swim, practice running out of the water and removing your goggles and wetsuit down to your waist.

2.2 For your long bike ride, have your running shoes ready where you will leave your bike. As you are finishing your ride, start to remove your feet from your bike shoes. Place your bike down, remove your helmet and put your running shoes on.

### **3. Create time savers.**

3.1 Invest in lock laces for your running shoes. On race day, with all the adrenalin flowing through your body, your finer motor coordination may not be on point. The last thing you want to be doing (in transition or on the run course) is fumbling around trying to tie laces.

3.2 Set up your race belt so that it is already clipped together and can just be hoisted up to your waist.

3.3 Have your helmet unclipped so that you are not wasting time trying to unclip it to put it on.

3.4 On race day, once you have set everything up, walk to where you will enter from the swim (commonly known as "swim in") look for your bike/ transition area and where it is in relationship to the entrance. Find a permanent marker - not someone else's bike close to where your gear is that you can aim for and then work out the quickest way to get there.

3.5 Do exactly (as in 3.4) the same for the bike entrance ("bike in").

3.6 Lubricate your arms, legs and the arms and legs of your wetsuit. This will make it so much easier to slide off.

**4. Use the least amount of space in the most effective way.** This consideration is for when you have to set up transition next to your bike.

4.1 Set up everything so that it is accessible in the order that you will need it.

4.2 Set up everything so that it will not interfere with another athlete (which could result in your stuff being kicked around and you not being able to find it).

### **5. Rules relating to transition areas**

Once again it is important to **read the race briefing** regarding this as there may be extra rules that are not generally in place. Rules that are universal for triathlons include:

5.1 Do not ride your bike in the transition area

5.2 Only athletes and race officials are allowed in transition once the race organisers have closed transition. - Please make sure that your supporters understand this.

5.3 Your helmet needs to be on your head and clipped up before you take your bike off the bike stand.

5.4 Your helmet may not be removed or unclipped until you place your bike back on the stand.

The best way to have these rules ingrained is to incorporate the practice of them in your day- to - day training.

## FAQ's

**Q:** Sitting down in transition or not?

**A:** Not! Sitting down wastes time and adds to the risk of getting a cramp or causing an obstruction to another athlete. Practice doing transitions standing up.

**Q:** Socks or no socks on race day

**A:** Practice both options before race day and see which works better for you. Some of us are more prone to blistering and therefore the 20 seconds saved by not wearing socks could come back to haunt us a lot worse on the run. If, however, you are luckily not prone to blistering, this could work for you but try it out first. Never try anything new on race day.

**Q:** Clipping bike shoes in or not?

**A:** Having your bike shoes clipped in will save loads of time and also space in the transition. It is also safer to run barefoot than in cleated shoes. That said, this is something that should be practiced beforehand.

**Q:** Flying mounts or not?

**A:** This is a very useful technique if you are on the pointy end of the shorter races, and it may give you the edge to take the win. If on the other hand, you are closer to the middle of the pack or racing longer, flying mounts will have very little significance and could in fact cause dangerous situations at the mount line. Leave your shoes on the bike by all means but mount and dismount normally.

Thank you for taking the time to read this and I hope that this guide will help you and more importantly add to a terrific Triathlon experience.

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