



Suggested triathlon preparation for 8-10 year olds

How fantastic to be so young and preparing for your first triathlon! To ensure that it is pleasurable and memorable there are lots of things that you can do with your child to ensure they are ready.

Don't forget the mental side of preparation! Most young children have boundless energy, but can find triathlon a bit daunting as they try to remember what to do next. Make sure that they are very comfortable with the basic idea that we swim, bike, run non-stop! Sounds obvious, but you never know! Also it's a great idea to ask them how they will get from one thing to another - hearing a confident description is a guarantee that the child is engaged (much better than repeated instructions which we all know can go in one ear and out of the other).

So how about physical training?

It is very important **not to do too much too soon** - this would risk injury, and also might put the child off before even starting.

Pace awareness is key. Most children will happily sprint off, but soon tire. If you can impress the idea of starting slowly on your child they will have a huge advantage. It really helps if they are ready for this on race-day, and are not worried when they see others sprinting off.

The next thing is **fun** - always try to bring some variety into training - and why not make it useful as well? Walking the dog or a trip to the corner shop can all be turned into fitness activities. 'Drop something off at a neighbour's house, and run back - I'll time you'

The final thought is about **putting it all together** -the fun of triathlon is how funny it feels to run after cycling, so it's good to practice this nearer race day.

What about the swim?

The swim is 100m which many children can do easily. If not, then start by getting the child to attempt one length (25m). Let them rest and then try again. Use your judgement at this point - would a couple of lessons be valuable, or do they just need to build up a bit of stamina? If they swim well, get them to practice a few reps of 50m or even 100m and think about pace control so that they save some energy for later.



For fun, you could black-out a pair of spare goggles (use electrical tape) and then see how far the swimmer can go before they go off course. This needs to be supervised as the swimmer may get disoriented, but the point is to remind them that the event features an open-water swim - unless they can swim perfectly straight, then they will need to look up to see where they are going.

And the cycling?

For cycling it is important to get the basics right...

Does the bike fit the rider?

Can the child handle the bike confidently?

Regular rides of 20 - 30 minutes on safe routes will build up stamina. If a safe park or woods can be found, then by all means, encourage the child to practice going a bit faster. Riding up a hill and then coasting back down is simple and highly effective.

And finally the run...

Running is very natural for children, but it's usually all or nothing! The race is 1.3k (about 3 laps of a running track). This could take anywhere from 5 to 15 minutes. A good idea is to go to a park, and suggest that the child runs for 1 minute. Ideally this would be with you or always within sight of you. Plan a simple route such as 'past those trees, over to that seat and back to me'. You will very quickly get a feel for whether the child is running too quickly based upon whether they are fine and ready for more, or red in the face and puffed out. Let them rest and then get them to repeat slower, faster or perhaps a bit further. Over a period of time you will be able to increase the number of times they can do this, reduce the rest period or perhaps get them to do two laps without stopping. It doesn't have to be scientific.

Later on you might progress to cycling 3 laps, and then jumping off the bike and running one lap.

In summary, build up gently; emphasize pace awareness (hare and tortoise); have fun and don't forget to ask them to tell you how it is all going to happen!

Please contact coach@thetrilife.com for any questions as you go along.