

[Here is an article I wrote for the Calgary 70.3 E-Zine](#)



The Doctrine

It's a lifestyle, not a workout.



Ironman 101

Issue #1

So you're relatively new to triathlon and may be feeling a little overwhelmed by the accomplishment you are about to work towards? Because of the significant percentage of you that have signed up as choosing our race as your first Half-Ironman and some even being brand new triathletes (welcome to the family), we have decided to create this little supplement to 'Personal Best E-Zine' to help you negotiate your way to a successful and positive experience on race day.

1.) Don't stress out.

You have taken on a significant task. This will require a lot of preparation, effort, and organization. However, you must remember you are a beginner and you have an entire community of athletes to draw from that were once exactly in your shoes. Ask new training partners that seem to have incorporated triathlon into their family in a healthy manor what lessons they've learned along the way. Chances are they will be happy to tell you about their experiences when they took triathlon too seriously, too quickly. You have made a conscience decision to enjoy a truly great challenging sport and chances are you would like to enjoy it for a long time. Dropping everything in your life for training is not the way to go about this. Establish a training routine that suits your current lifestyle and slowly adapt it as you progress into the sport. Do not look at a 10 year tri-veteran and simply mimic. We want you around for the long-haul! Taking it back to the title 'Don't Stress Out', be happy with what you can CURRENTLY do for preparation and go with it. If you find small improvements along the way in which to evolve your lifestyle, then great, but keep them at baby steps and you'll find your tri-transition will go much more smoothly in the end.

2.) Don't try to train like a vet.

This has been learned the hard way countless times, and for some, on multiple occasions! Similar to the first point about lifestyle incorporation, I would like to emphasize that a slow build to training volume and intensity will only do you well in the long-term. Looking back 7 years ago, I would completely crumble in short order, both physically and mentally, if I had tried to train like

I do now. Therefore, following ‘Don’t Stress Out’ will serve you well in two areas, the second being it will ensure you don’t try to absorb too much training in too short a time. Adapt your lifestyle slowly to incorporate more training. Your body, mind, family, and friends will thank you for it.

3.) Remember this is still a hobby; it needs to stay fun.

Wrapping up the previous two points, it is important to place this new venture into perspective. No one would make a conscience decision to incorporate triathlon into their lives if they didn’t initially believe it was going to be a challenging FUN experience. Yet time and time again, I encounter people who have let a strict training regime get in the way of enjoying their hobby. Be flexible. You are not a pro. This is not to say, don’t train hard and don’t have structured workouts. Just ensure to place them in perspective with your family, work commitments, and other social endeavors.

4.) Lane swimming is not triathlon open-water swimming.

I am sure Scott Curry will address this in one of his articles here; however it is important to reiterate to new triathletes that you are training for a sport that happens to incorporate three other sports within its constructs, but does not consist of any of the three sports in their individuality. Many triathlon groups acquire a swim coach that attempts to incorporate lane swimming methodology and training into a triathlete’s regime. This is unfortunate but unavoidable in many cases. You need to learn to adapt and tailor the swim workouts to best prepare you for triathlon, not a master’s swim meet full of pure swimmers.

5.) Learn from the right people.

One of the great things about this sport is it inspires people. It motivates them and rewards their determination to accomplish a truly difficult feat. However, on the coat tails of that, people are so positively motivated, that they often can’t wait to express their enjoyment in their sport in the form of advice. It is a new triathlete’s task to learn quickly who to listen to and not attempt to take on all the helpful advice given to them at every training session by every teammate. Moderated online forums are very helpful when questions are answered by experienced coaches; however, they can be very deconstructive when a question is answered in an open free-for-all of triathlon participants. Ensure you know where the information is coming from and gather information from people that truly inspire you with their knowledge, experience, and excitement for the sport.

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Dr. Trev Williams

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