STAGE 1: ACTIVE START

AGES 0-6 (EARLY CHILDHOOD)
DEVELOPMENTAL STAGE: PRE-BEGINNER

KEY OBJECTIVES FOR SUCCESS
PHASE OBJECTIVE/FOCUS
Early development period focused on fundamental movement skill acquisition including coordination, running, jumping, kicking, as well as introduction to water safety which will lay the foundation for more complex movements to prepare children for a physically active lifestyle.

ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT
TRIATHLON SKILL & DEVELOPMENT FOCUS
• Water safety and swim skill basics including bobbing.
• Bike safety including wearing helmet.

MULTISPORT ACTIVITIES
Outside free play including running, jumping and bounding.

TRAINING AND COMPETITION
RECOMMENDED EQUIPMENT
• Goggles
• Tricycle or Balance bike
• Helmet
• Shoes

PRACTICE GUIDELINES
• No formal practices.
• Water introduction and swim safety classes.

RACE GUIDELINES
No formal racing or competition.
STAGE 2: FUNDAMENTALS

AGES 6-8 FEMALE | 6-9 MALE (CHILDHOOD)
DEVELOPMENTAL STAGE: BEGINNER

KEY OBJECTIVES FOR SUCCESS

PHASE OBJECTIVE/FOCUS
Continued development and refinement of fundamental movement skills and the beginning of basic sports skills acquisition to prepare athletes for more advanced skill development.

Athletes are encouraged to participate in multiple sports and actives to help with development of fundamental movement skills and motor development.

For optimal skill acquisition, the basic triathlon skills of swimming and cycling are introduced. FUN competitions are also introduced.

ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT

TRIATHLON SKILL & DEVELOPMENT FOCUS
- Water safety and swim skill basics including breathing and body alignment.
- Bike handling including starting and stopping safely within a grass field or closed parking lot.

MULTISPORT ACTIVITIES
- Outside free play including running, jumping and bounding.
- Introduction to team based sports and practice structure.
- Run and lateral based sports (soccer, lacrosse, tennis).

TRAINING AND COMPETITION

RECOMMENDED EQUIPMENT
- Goggles
- Bike (fat tire) w/coaster brakes, or combination w/hand-brake
- Helmet
- Shoes

PRACTICE GUIDELINES
- Informal practices based on fun, games and interaction with teammates.
- Coach to athlete ratio: 1:8-10 (with volunteer support)
- Recommended no more than once or twice a week.

RACE GUIDELINES
Splash n’ Dash & Youth Distance Triathlon Events.
No more than once per month during season.

7-8 Year Olds:
Pool Swim ≤ 50-100m
Bike ≤ 2K
Run ≤ 1K

USA TRIATHLON.ORG/YOUTH
STAGE 3: LEARN TO TRAIN

AGES 8-11 FEMALE | 9-12 MALE (LATE CHILDHOOD)
DEVELOPMENTAL STAGE: ADVANCED BEGINNER

KEY OBJECTIVES FOR SUCCESS
PHASE OBJECTIVE/FOCUS
Accelerated learning of coordination and motor control along with further acquisition of swim and cycling specific skills.

Prior to the beginning of the growth spurt care should be given in training stresses. Continued encouragement for athletes to participate in multiple sports.

Athletes should be able to begin to transfer skills and concepts from practices to competition settings. Group interaction, team building and social activities should be emphasized. A balance of practices and racing will promote the continued development, mastery of skills, and practical application of skills within a race environment.

ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT
TRIATHLON SKILL & DEVELOPMENT FOCUS
- Swim skills and technique development across all four strokes.
- Bike handling including introduction of gearing within a grass field, closed parking lot or paved cycling trail.
- Introduction of hydration and nutrition basics.

MULTISPORT ACTIVITIES
- Outside free play including running, jumping and bounding.
- Continued experience with team based sports and practice structure.
- Run and lateral based sports (soccer, lacrosse, tennis, skiing).

TRAINING AND COMPETITION
RECOMMENDED EQUIPMENT
- Goggles
- Bike (fat tire) w/coaster brakes, or combination w/hand-brake
- Helmet
- Shoes
Advanced athletes:
- Hybrid or road bike

PRACTICE GUIDELINES
- Informal practices focused on foundational skill development in the shape of games and interaction with teammates.
- Coach to athlete ratio: 1:10-12 (with volunteer support)
- Recommended no more than once or twice a week.
- Recommended no longer than 45-60 minutes.

RACE GUIDELINES
Splash n’ Dash & Youth Distance Triathlon Events.
No more than once or twice per month during season.

9-10 Year Olds:
Pool Swim ≤ 100m
Bike ≤ 3K
Run ≤ 1K
STAGE 4: TRAIN TO TRAIN

AGES 11-15 FEMALE | 12-16 MALE (LATE CHILDHOOD-YOUNG ADULT)
DEVELOPMENTAL STAGE: INTERMEDIATE

KEY OBJECTIVES FOR SUCCESS
PHASE OBJECTIVE/FOCUS
Further development of sports specific skills, begin to introduce competition, and start to emphasize support training to continue development of speed, strength and endurance.

Players should consolidate sport specific technical skills with an increased emphasis on triathlon specific skills (in the later time period of this stage).

Continued encouragement for athletes to participate in multiple sports including coordination of practice and race schedules with middle and high school sport activities.

Social and emotional considerations are addressed by placing an emphasis on team-building, group interaction and social activities.

At this stage, athletes 13+ may consider the draft-legal pathway (see alternative pathway stages).

ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT
TRIATHLON SKILL & DEVELOPMENT FOCUS
• Swim skills and technique refinement across all four strokes, including open water swimming abilities.
• Bike skills and riding basics including hill climbing, cornering and riding in a group setting (later part of this stage) within a grass field, closed parking lot, paved cycling trail or wide low-traffic shoulder road.
• Strength work using body weight, yoga, and prehabilitative exercises.
• Emphasis of hydration and nutrition choices and their effects on performance.

MULTISPORT ACTIVITIES
• Outside free play including running, jumping and bounding.
• Run and lateral based sports (soccer, lacrosse, tennis, skiing).
• Layered triathlon sports (cyclocross, mountain biking, cross-country, track).

TRAINING AND COMPETITION
RECOMMENDED EQUIPMENT
• Goggles
• Bike (fat tire)
• Helmet
• Shoes
Advanced athletes:
• Hybrid or road bike
• Cycling shoes

PRACTICE GUIDELINES
• More formal practices based on foundational skill development and refinement.
• Introduction of some speed and agility efforts.
• Coach to athlete ratio: 1:12-15 (with volunteer support)
• Two-three practices per week depending other outside practices.
• 60-90 minutes depending on training focus.

RACE GUIDELINES
Youth Distance Duathlon & Triathlon Events.
Once or twice per month during season.

11-12 Year Olds:
Swim ≤ 200m
Bike ≤ 5-7K
Run ≤ 2K

13-15 Year Olds:
Pool Swim ≤ 200-400m
Bike ≤ 8-10K
Run ≤ 2-3K

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STAGE 5: LEARN TO COMPETE

AGES 15-18 FEMALE | 16-18 MALE (YOUNG ADULT)
DEVELOPMENTAL STAGE: INTERMEDIATE-ADVANCED

KEY OBJECTIVES FOR SUCCESS

PHASE OBJECTIVE/FOCUS
Preparing athletes for the competitive environment, continuing to refine technical skills and ability to adapt to training and race environments.

The focus is on optimizing fitness preparation and to begin to specialize in triathlon specific training individualized to the athlete’s particular needs in skill development, mental preparation, fitness and recovery.

Training volumes and intensity will increase to coincide with competitive event schedules including possible regional travel.

Social, emotion and school commitments should continue to be addressed along with mental skills that contribute to performance.

ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT

TRIATHLON SKILL & DEVELOPMENT FOCUS
• Swim skills and technique refinement across all four strokes, including open water swimming abilities.
• Bike skills and riding basics including hill climbing, cornering and riding in a group setting within a grass field, closed parking lot, paved cycling trail or wide low-traffic shoulder road.
• Introduction of mental skills including visualization and self-talk.
• Strength work using body weight, yoga, and prehabilitative exercises.
• Continued emphasis on hydration and nutrition choices and their effects on performance.

MULTISPORT ACTIVITIES
• Outside free play including running, jumping and bounding.
• Layered triathlon sports (cyclocross, mountain biking, cross-country, track).

TRAINING AND COMPETITION

RECOMMENDED EQUIPMENT
• Goggles
• Wetsuit
• Road bike
• Helmet
• Cycling shoes
• Indoor trainer
• Training and race shoes

PRACTICE GUIDELINES
• Formal practices including continued skill development and refinement, incorporating speed and agility efforts.
• Coach to athlete ratio: 1:15
• Three - four practices per week depending on other outside practices.
• 90-120 minutes depending on training focus.

RACE GUIDELINES
Super Sprint/Sprint Distance Duathlon & Triathlon Events.

Once or twice per month during season.

16-19 Year Olds:
Pool or Open Water Swim ≤ 400-750m
Bike ≤ 15-20K
Run ≤ 5K

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STAGE 6: TRAIN TO COMPETE

AGES 19-21 FEMALE | 19-23 MALE (YOUNG ADULT)
DEVELOPMENTAL STAGE: ADVANCED

KEY OBJECTIVES FOR SUCCESS
PHASE OBJECTIVE/FOCUS
Transfer from the training environment to a competitive environment. Athletes must consolidate technical skills, and maintain ancillary skills and underlying physical capacities.

During this stage training volume remains high while intensity increases with the importance of competitions. The training season is typically extended and is disciplined and triathlon specific. Competition schedule could include some regional and national travel.

Athletes may choose to attend triathlon specific training and competition environments outside of their area of living that fit this level of athlete development. The training is individualized to the athlete’s particular needs in skill development, mental preparation, fitness and recovery.

ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT
TRIATHLON SKILL & DEVELOPMENT FOCUS
• Swim skills and technique refinement across all four strokes.
• Developing and refinement of open water swimming abilities including buoy turns, sighting, and water entry/exit.
• Advanced riding skills including U-turns, pacelineing and cycling tactics within a grass field, closed parking lot, paved cycling trail or wide low-traffic shoulder road.
• Practical application of mental strategies including visualization and self-talk.
• Strength work using body weight, yoga, and prehabilitative exercises.
• Continued emphasis on hydration and nutrition choices and their effects on performance.

MULTISPORT ACTIVITIES
• Outside free play including running, jumping and bounding.
• Layered triathlon sports (cyclocross, mountain biking, cross-country, track).

TRAINING AND COMPETITION
RECOMMENDED EQUIPMENT
• Goggles
• Wetsuit
• Road or TT bike (depending on race format)
• Helmet
• Cycling shoes
• Indoor trainer
• Cycling computer/Heart rate monitor
• Training and race shoes

PRACTICE GUIDELINES
• Formal practices including continued skill development and refinement, incorporating speed and agility efforts.
• Coach to athlete ratio: 1:15
• Three - five times per week depending on other outside practices.
• 90-120 minutes depending on training focus.

RACE GUIDELINES
Super Sprint, Sprint and Olympic Distance Duathlon & Triathlon Events.
Collegiate Club (all)

Once or twice per month (depending upon length) during season.
STAGE 7: TRAIN TO WIN

AGES 19+ FEMALE | 19+ MALE (YOUNG ADULT)
DEVELOPMENTAL STAGE: ADVANCED

KEY OBJECTIVES FOR SUCCESS

PHASE OBJECTIVE/FOCUS
The focus of this stage is the stabilization of performance on demand characteristics and excellence within the highest level of performance at the ITU, World Championships and Olympics. This is the final phase of athletic preparation that only a very small minority will achieve.

Performance factors should be fully established to optimize performance in national or international competitions.

It is important to build a winning strategy with these athletes, and to individualize training and recovery programs to prevent over-training.

ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT

TRIATHLON SKILL & DEVELOPMENT FOCUS
Complete mastery of previous stage skills.

MULTISPORT ACTIVITIES

- Outside free play including running, jumping and bounding.
- Triathlon focused activities.

TRAINING AND COMPETITION

RECOMMENDED EQUIPMENT

- Goggles
- Wetsuit
- Road or TT bike (depending on race format)
- Helmet
- Cycling shoes
- Indoor trainer
- Cycling computer with power/Heart rate monitor
- Training and race shoes

PRACTICE GUIDELINES

- Formal practices including continued skill development and refinement, incorporating speed and agility efforts.
- Coach to athlete ratio: 1:15
- Five - seven times per week.
- 90-120 minutes depending on training focus.

RACE GUIDELINES

Sprint, Olympic and Long-Course Distance Duathlon & Triathlon Events.

Collegiate Club (all)

Once or twice per month (depending upon length) during season.

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STAGE 8: TRIATHLON FOR LIFE

AGES 19+ (YOUNG ADULT-ADULT)
DEVELOPMENTAL STAGE: ADVANCED

KEY OBJECTIVES FOR SUCCESS
PHASE OBJECTIVE/FOCUS
Continued experience with triathlon through group training, racing, and giving back to the sport through volunteerism and coaching.

ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT
TRIATHLON SKILL & DEVELOPMENT FOCUS
Complete mastery of previous stage skills.

MULTISPORT ACTIVITIES
All sporting activities.

TRAINING AND COMPETITION
RECOMMENDED EQUIPMENT
• Goggles
• Wetsuit
• Road or TT bike (depending on race format)
• Helmet
• Cycling shoes
• Training and race shoes

PRACTICE GUIDELINES
• Formal practices including continued skill development and refinement, incorporating speed and agility efforts.
• Coach to athlete ratio: 1:15
• Five - seven times per week.
• 90-120 minutes depending on training focus.
• Multisport club practices, and group rides.
• Masters swimming programs.

RACE GUIDELINES
All distances, all multisport race formats.

Age-Group Regional, National and World Championships.

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