

| Tactic | How Are You Making the Tactic Happen? | When & Why to Implement: | Stocking the Tactic Tool Kit |
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| Overall Race Day Tactics | | | |
| Pacing | Setting splits for each leg or even shorter markers on the course. Factor in course and race conditions of topography, winds, temps, surface, and more. | Prior to race day demonstrate in training that target pace is attainable and sustainable in races. | Set time splits at known distances along the course, by odometers, or GPS watches. Pace to your milestones set in kilometers or miles. Don't get sucked into a competitor's plan of going too fast or too slow to your interim targets. |
| Slow-accelerate-sustain | Setting variable pace targets including a negative split. Setting splits for each leg or even shorter markers on the course. | Use at start of the race and/or the start of any leg. Can eliminate your competition when you push the pace. | Go out slow, then accelerate to quickest sustainable pace. Requires strength, quick physical recovery, and self-awareness of pacing. |
| Ease in at altitude | Going slower at the swim start compared to other races not considered at altitude. Especially minimize kicking. | At any race 5,000 feet (1500 meters) or higher above sea level. You do not want to get into oxygen debt at the start of a race. As you race at higher altitudes you lose breathing efficiency. | Your leg muscles require vast amounts of oxygen compared to your other muscles. Less kicking at the start can ease the affects of racing at altitude. |
| Swim | | | |
| Self-slotted start | Showing up in the swim queue early to ensure you start at your desired location. | Decide before the race so you mentally visualize your race start. Establishes your decision to control your race. You need to decide and not second guess your race tactics. | Includes time trial start races so you can choose an appropriate pacing slot. Realize you can find smooth water at the far sides of the pack or up front if you can hold the pace. |
| Quick start for positioning | Surging with quick swim start ahead of competitors. | At the sound of the horn for race start to get superior positioning up front. | Requires strength, quick physical recovery, and self-awareness of pacing. |
| Finding feet/Finding bubbles | Drafting behind swimmers with same pace by either getting as close as possible behind a competitors feet without impeding your stroke or his kick, or by swimming within an arm's reach to a competitor's side at waist high. | Early in the swim leg to grab the fastest swimmer you can draft. Saves energy and demonstrates you can hang with your top peers. | A fast swim leg will not win a race for you but lose it if you overcooked your effort to draft faster than you can sustain in a race. |
| Pass others | Swimming faster than competitors. | At any point on the swim course. Results in establishing your race confidence and putting you on race pace for the swim leg. | Know how to maintain pace while others around you slow. Develop your self-awareness of pace when catching others in front of you, in your wave, or racers from earlier waves. |
| Getting passed | Maintaining steady pace as faster swimmers pick up their pace in your starting heat or faster swimmers from other waves starting behind you. | At any point on the swim course. Don't over cook your swim to maintain pace above your plan. | Know how to stay calm while others pass you in the race. Be relaxed. Execute on your race plan. |

ADVANCED -- TACTICAL TRIATHLETE

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| Stand up to exit the water at the optimal location | Swimming until fingers touch the bottom, then standing up to run out of the water. | Once your fingers touch bottom during the pull phase of your swim stroke. Standing earlier than finger contact with the bottom will result in slower exit time and excessive energy expenditure to finish your swim leg. | Be patience at swim end. Rushing to exit in waist high or deeper water wastes precious energy and induces undesirable anxiety when not going as quickly as expected to get out of the water. |
| Diving underneath incoming waves | Diving under waves breaking near the shoreline. Sighting wave action until getting beyond the breakers for smoother swimming. | Dive just before waves push or impede your swim progress. A wall of water from a wave can push you in the wrong direction back towards shore causing you to swim over the same area previously covered. | Know how to anchor you feet into the sand until the wave passes. Learn timing of when to dive under the wake or wave. Look out for others in front of you that don't know how to dive the waves and steer clear. |
| Body surfing to the beach in open water | Sighting waves to catch for a speedy ocean swim finish. | Catch your ride in the wave break area. The shore bound water will push you faster than you can swim. The opportunity will not last long but you'll be sitting on top of the world during your ride. | Body surfing is great cross training to develop the required skills for this tactic. It's a helluva lot of fun too! |
| Bike | | | |
| Pacing | Monitoring power output with cycling power meter. | Periodically thru-out the bike leg. Power will be a more objective metric of energy expenditure than perceived exertion, mph/kph, or heartrate. | Ensure your meter is calibrated and powered on race day. Be confident with maximum sustainable output to reach your time and place objectives. |
| Follow outside the box | Set your pace at the same level as a rider in front of you just beyond the drafting box. You initiate the role solo as a tracker and do not share duties as in the pogoing tactic. | When cycling near competitors of similar pacing. This conserves physical and mental energy though requires tenacity to follow the rules. To consistency stay with others nearby without drafting. | Takes some of your individuality away when you become the tracker of a competitor. Sometimes you may be faster if setting your own pace. Sometimes you may be more effective by balancing out biking requirements with running requirements during a race. |
| Being Passed | Maintaining steady pace as faster cyclists pick up their pace in your starting heat or faster cyclists from other waves starting behind you. | At any point on the bike course. Don't over cook your bike to maintain pace above your plan. | Know how to stay calm while others pass you in the race. Be relaxed. Execute on your race plan. |
| Stay aero | Riding a bike that fits properly, equipped with proper aero bars, and with correct body positioning. | Throughout the race except when safety situations triggers you to sit up or when climbing. Aero positioning will save you race time and energy output for a faster pace and quicker finish. | Start with the right size frame and cranks for your body measurements. Consider a professional bike fit. Add a seat your butt feels comfortable riding on. Then buy additional bike gear as your wallet allows. |

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| Spectators surge | Increasing speed relative to nearby racers in the vicinity of spectators. | Locations on the course where spectators are congregated. Spectators cheering tends to boost competitors' mental wellbeing and adrenaline that can be translated into faster biking. | Don't overcook the legs just because spectators support gives you a temporary boost. Keep your emotions and adrenaline in check. |
| Spin up cadence | Change to a lower gear and increase your cadence by 10%. | For the final 500 Meters or last minute of your bike leg. The easy speed helps flush out some of the lactic acid in your quads and glut muscles. Will help make the run legs feel better thru transition and on the start of the run leg. | Consider pulling your feet out of your shoes and spinning with your feet on top. Encourages you to use an easier gear and prepares you for a quicker dismount off the bike. |
| Run | | | |
| Hang & follow | Staying on the shoulder of a competitor. Accelerating above your current pace by pumping arms quicker and lengthening your stride all the way to the finish. | When the competitor runs at your desired pace. Saves energy and demonstrates you can hang with your nearest competitor. Imposes beliefs in others that you will not be dropped by the pacer. Forces others to respond to your same level of will or they fall off the pace. | Requires patience from you to be steady and the right runner at your targeted pace. A variation is to tuck in behind the runner during a headwind as he will end up working much harder than you to maintain pace. |
| Hang and drop | Running to stay with a competitor as long as possible. | When it will help you gap others but not for the duration of a race. If you run with someone longer than expected you can still boost your confidence. Also easier to run harder with someone than by yourself. | Great for the bike too..... |
| Run the tangents | Running the shortest distance between curves and around turns. Not staggering on straightaways. Looking ahead on the course and not blindly follow the person immediately in front. | Throughout the race. Running the tangents can prevent unwanted extra race time. | Run straight lines when possible on curving roads. Preview the course specifically looking for opportunities to go straight and save time. Let your competitors take the loose turns and go wide adding distance and time to their run splits. Swim and bike straight too. |
| Fartlek | Changing your running pace to faster, then slower to recover, then into steady planned pace. Temporary increasing speed to pass someone, then backing off to recover and settling into your steady comfort pace. "Pass-Recover-Pace-Repeat" | Fartlek is great to use when wanting to drop a competitor running with you. A temporary burst in run speed often demoralizes a competitor into thinking he can no longer hang with you. Separately, use a fartlek acceleration for a mental boost when you want to slow but instead surge to reset your pace expectations. | Fartlek is a surge, recover style of running. No matter how steady you want your run splits to be you may need to back off pace or speed up to hit next split target. Those pace changes are a subtle type of a fartlek derivative. Include planned fartlek training runs. Helps you handle your own pacing fluctuation and gives you confidence to demoralize your competitors. |

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| Fartlek -- Landmarks | Choosing landmarks, such as signs or cross-streets to launch into a surge of speed until the next marker, then ease back down into a pace run speed. Repeat. | To drop competitors with a structured plan using landmarks as the trigger. Transforms you to aggressive leader from follower to set the pace you want. Not vice-versa. | Fartlek can be used in portions of the run leg. Its main theme is speedplay which allows you the flexibility to change speeds to beat your competitors. |
| Pass just one more & repeat | Thinking with short-term goals of passing one runner at a time. | In the middle of the race. You may think the middle of the race is too early to pass competitors. To build your confidence, set your objective to pass only the runner immediately in front of you. Once you succeeded, then focus on the next runner to pass. Repeat to the finish. | Focusing on the process of passing one runner at a time makes the objective of finishing higher in the race standings easier. It's a simply stated objective with immediate feedback to continue or re-set. A pass will boost your confidence. |
| Pass five more people | Thinking more strategically with a multi-pass objective that requires a sustainable pace. | In the middle of the race. Reinforces your confidence and expands your world of achievable objectives. | Focuses on the process of passing multiple competitors for a higher finish. |
| Spot a kit color to pass | Identifying a specific runner by kit color and steadily gaining on him until passed. | Any time in the race. Often used on turnarounds when specific people can be identified. Provides interim objectives during the race. | Can be a specific kit design, a competitor's club colors, or even a specific person. These are variations of other passing tactics that require similar skills. |
| Final kick to finish | Accelerating above pace by pumping arms quicker and lengthening your stride all the way to the finish. | 200--300 meters out from finish line, earlier if you can go FAST all the way in. The increased speed gets you to the line quicker which promotes your well being and may earn you a KQ spot. That would definitely make the race pain dissipate quicker. | Seconds count. In Ironman Utah, four people in the same age-group finished within 15 seconds of the last qualifying spot for the Ironman World Championships in Kona, Hawaii. The last qualifier beat his competition by 1 second. The three others are still hurting from that race. |