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*Whether you think you can, or that you can't, you are usually right.*  
*Henry Ford as used by Cherie Gruenfeld*

How long will the race take me?

If this is your first race, your goal is to finish and finish strong with a smile on your face! Don't get caught up in race finishing time goals, but knowing an approximation helps tremendously for good mental training. Follow the guidelines below to calculate your own time.

Competitive athletes should turn time estimates into solid goals that are reasonable, realistic AND challenging. Calculating goals accurately and executing them appropriately is the key to race success. If you podium, great. Keep the focus on YOUR personal best. Podium is all about who shows up. That is not in your control. Personal best? Totally in your control.

#1 **Determine your best times** for each sport. Look in your log!

#2 **Estimate transition times.** How? Look on the race website at last year's transition times if they are available. Take an average of the field assuming the course is the same. If none of this is applicable, check the race route and try to determine distances and guess!!

#3 **What is your race strategy?** This is often based on your limiters, where you are in the race season or cycle, and your experience racing.

Example #1: Swim: All Out, Bike: Hold back 20% from top speed. Run: Easy start with strong finish.

Example #2: Swim: Easy aerobic, Bike: scorch the trail, Run: Whatever is left strong.

#4 **Know how you will approach each sport** based on your training experience.

Swim: Are you a strong swimmer, do you need to relax during the swim?

Bike: Will you blaze the hills standing, stay seated, keep an eye on MPH, RPE or HR?

Run: What are your run/walk intervals? What is your pace goal? Steady pace or neg split?

#5 Once you've calculated all these factors, put them together for a **REALISTIC yet challenging goal**. Some sports may be at your best time, some may be 10-20% lower than your best.

#6 **Determine how you will stay goal-oriented.** Will you use your running time watch? Garmin? Will you write your goals on your arm? Keep them your head? Go by perceived exertion?

#7 **Factoring Race-Day Adrenaline!** Some of us get a race-day rush that helps us go faster than we've trained. Caution: when you are so far off your training pace, you risk "bonking," cramping, and general misery toward the end of the race. You don't want this to be you. If you have executed your swim and bike well or sub-max, you'll have a great opportunity on the run to give it the rest of your energy. Make a calculated effort to stay in your training zones or slightly below, and give extra energy at the end. It is much smarter than giving all too soon and dying on the run. Just ask around.... Some of your teammates experienced this before and it is NO FUN.

#8 **Embrace your mental training mantras!!** I am strong! I am fast! I am amazing! As the race gets longer, I get stronger! I am DOING IT!