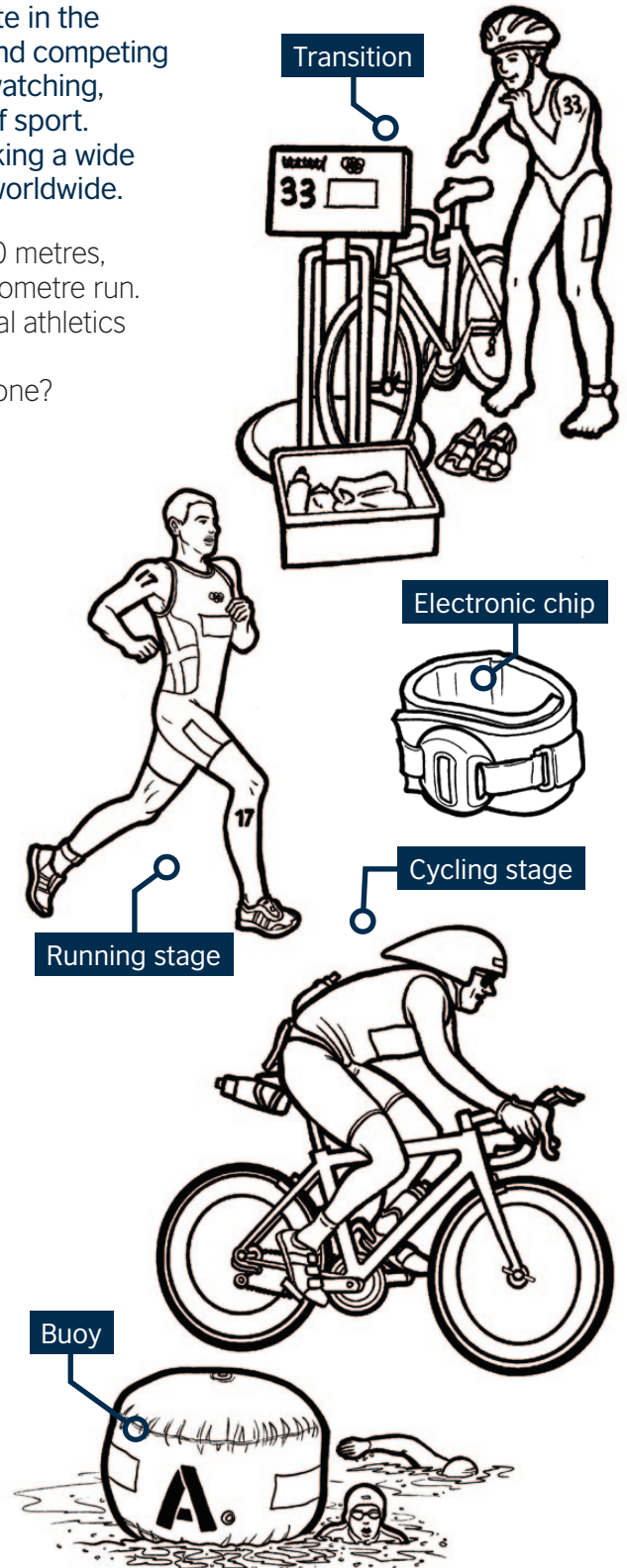


Triathlon

When athletes come together from around the world to compete in the Olympic and Paralympic Games, they are fulfilling their dreams and competing at the highest level. Billions of people across the globe join in; watching, listening to and reading about the greatest global celebration of sport. To celebrate the London 2012 Games, the British Council is making a wide range of classroom resources available for learners of English worldwide.

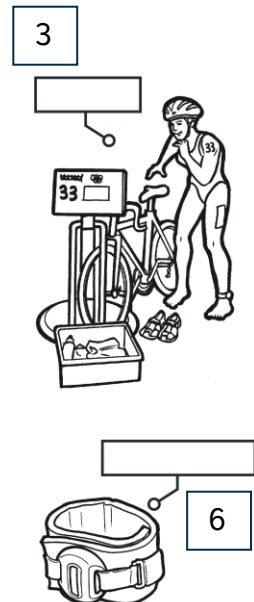
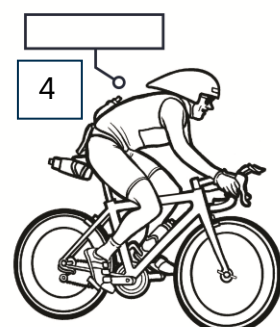
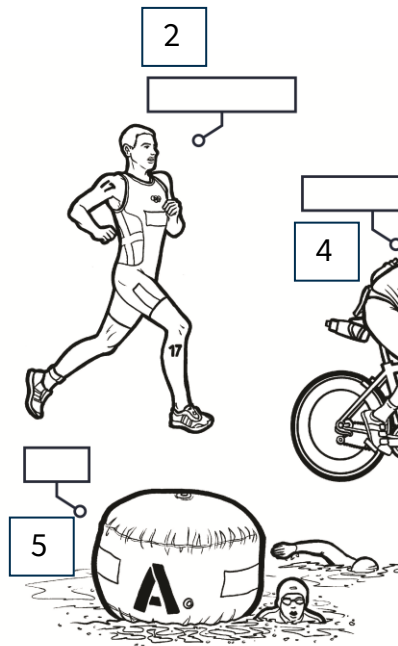
The triathlon is a very demanding sport where athletes swim 1,500 metres, then ride their bikes for 40 kilometres before finishing with a 10-kilometre run. It was invented in California in the 1970s as an alternative to normal athletics training, and is now one of the fastest growing sports in the world. Have you ever done a triathlon? If not, do you think you could do one?



1. Vocabulary

a. Write the correct words in the spaces provided.

a. Cycling stage	b. Running stage	c. Electronic chip
d. Buoy	e. Transition	f. Swimming stage



2. The rules of Triathlon

- An Olympic triathlon is a race with three separate parts. First, contestants do a 1.5-kilometre swim, then a 40-kilometre cycle ride, and finally a 10-kilometre run.
- Contestants do not have any breaks during the race. They must get ready for the next part of the race quickly.
- These changes (or 'transitions') are still part of the overall race. Contestants try to keep their transition time as low as possible.
- Contestants wear an electronic chip around their ankle to measure the time each stage takes.
- There are 'transition areas' on the course for contestants to get ready for the next stage.
- The first transition is after the swimming. Contestants get out of the water and put on clothes for the cycle ride. Then they get on (or 'mount') their bikes.
- The second transition is after the cycle ride. They get off (or 'dismount') their bikes, and begin their 10-kilometre run.
- At Olympic level, the race is usually completed in under 2 hours.

a. Match the words in the table with their definitions below.

a. dismount	b. transitions	c. transition area
d. triathlon	e. electronic chip	f. break

1. A race with three separate parts.
2. Competitors wear this around their ankle to measure their times.
3. The changes between different parts of the race.
4. To get off the bike.
5. Competitors don't get one of these during a race.
6. Where transitions take place.

3. Questions & Answers

Triathlon? That's running, cycling and swimming isn't it?

Well, swimming, cycling and running actually.

That's what I said!

Well, not quite. Triathlons are always performed in that order. Swimming always comes first, then cycling, and finally running.

Why's that?

For safety. The event is very tiring, and it could be dangerous for an athlete to become exhausted while swimming. So that's why they start with the swimming, when they are least tired.

I see. Sounds easy. Why did you say it was tiring?

Because of the distances. They swim 1,500 metres, cycle 40 kilometres, then run 10 kilometres.

I've changed my mind. It sounds horrible. Why on earth do people do it?

It's a test of endurance. And lots of people absolutely love doing triathlons.

Oh well. At least you can have a rest after each of the stages. Do they have showers?

No! And they don't rest. They go from one event onto the next as quickly as possible. Some contestants even leave their shoes already on their bike pedals. This means that when they finish the swimming, they can start the cycling really quickly.

So what's the secret of completing the triathlon quickly then?

As well as being incredibly fit, you need to save energy during the race. So, when you're swimming, use the arms more and the legs less.

That sounds like a strange way to swim!

Maybe, but it can make the legs less tired. And of course you need all the strength in your legs for the cycling and running later.

I see. So it's all about planning for the next stage then?

That's right. In the cycling, contestants often use a lower gear so that their legs are moving faster. This keeps them flexible for the running stage.

a. What do Triathlon contestants do? Put these things in the right order.

1. get the bike
2. leave the bike
3. get into the water
4. run 10 kilometres
5. finish the triathlon
6. swim 1500 metres
7. get out of the water
8. cycle 40 kilometres

b. Word order. Which phrase completes the sentence, a or b?

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------|
| 1. Swimming always _____ then cycling, and finally running. | a. comes first |
| | b. first comes |
| 2. So that's why they start with the swimming, when they are _____. | a. tired least |
| | b. least tired |
| 3. And lots of people _____ doing triathlons. | a. absolutely love |
| | b. love absolutely |
| 4. This means that when they finish the swimming, they can start _____. | a. the cycling really quickly |
| | b. really quickly the cycling |
| 5. So, when you're swimming, use _____ and the legs less. | a. the arms more |
| | b. more the arms |
| 6. In the cycling, contestants _____ a lower gear so that their legs are moving faster. | a. use often |
| | b. often use |

4. Solution

Exercise 1a

1. f; 2. b; 3. e; 4. a; 5. d; 6. c

Exercise 2a

1. d; 2. e; 3. b; 4. a; 5. f; 6. c;

Exercise 3a

1. c; 2. f; 3. g; 4. a; 5. h; 6. b; 7. d; 8. e

Exercise 3b

1. a; 2. b; 3. a; 4. a; 5. a; 6. b