

Becoming a BTF Group Coach

by Steve Parrott (June 2026)

How did you find out about the opportunity?

I first heard about the opportunity to become a British Triathlon (BTF) qualified coach through Laurence, the Lead Coach at Stortford Tri Juniors, where my son George has been training regularly. Having spent many years involved in the sport myself, I jumped at the chance to put my experience to good use and help pass on the knowledge I had gained along the way.

After a year as a Foundation Coach, Laurence suggested that I take the next step and work towards becoming a Group Coach. With a new round of courses coming up, it felt like the perfect opportunity to continue my coaching development.

One of the advantages was that the BTF development days were being held at Bishop's Stortford College, making the commute incredibly convenient. Before signing up, I reviewed the course content and time commitment. My main concern was fitting everything around work, family life, and my own training for a middle-distance triathlon.

The registration process was straightforward. Stortford Tri Juniors nominated me for the course, after which I received all the details regarding dates, venues, and payment. As British Triathlon is keen to support the development of youth coaching, a bursary scheme was available that reduced the course cost by around 50%. Once I had enrolled and paid, the club promptly reimbursed the full amount.

What was involved?

The course begins with an online webinar that provides an introduction to the programme and explains what to expect throughout the qualification process.

From there, learners work through a series of online modules at their own pace. These cover advanced swimming, cycling, and running techniques, as well as how to identify and correct poor movement patterns across all three disciplines. Additional topics include race tactics, nutrition, sports science, and anti-doping measures, including the correct procedures to follow if doping is suspected within the sport.

I found the nutrition, race tactics, and swimming modules particularly interesting and informative. Some areas of the sports science content were more challenging, but the flexibility of the online format meant I could revisit sections whenever needed.

Following the online learning, the first development day focuses on practical coaching methods, technique observation, and how to plan progressive training sessions.

The second development day involves delivering a 15-minute coached session in either swimming, cycling, or running to fellow learners and BTF tutors. Feedback is then provided to help refine coaching skills and delivery.

After completing the development days, candidates are required to plan and deliver a six-week progressive coaching programme. Having chosen cycling for my assessed session on the development day, I opted to focus on swimming for my six-week programme, as it offered plenty of opportunities to incorporate drills and technique development. During this period, I also had to film and upload 15 minutes of coaching footage for assessment purposes — which was far less daunting than it initially sounded!

The final assessment consists of delivering a one-hour coached running session, with an additional 15 minutes of recorded footage submitted for evaluation.

According to the British Triathlon course information, the qualification requires approximately 17.5 hours of tutor-led learning through webinars and development days, alongside around 26.5 hours of self-directed study and assessment tasks.

As the course began in late December, I took advantage of the Christmas holiday period to complete much of the online learning. The development days were both held on Sundays, which helped minimise disruption to my regular routine.

What did you get out of the course (your sport, your coaching, life...), and would you recommend it to others?

While I thoroughly enjoyed the triathlon-specific content and found myself applying some of the learning to my own training, the biggest benefit was learning how to coach effectively and bring out the best in the people you work with.

The communication, observation, planning, and leadership skills developed throughout the course are not only valuable in coaching but are also highly transferable to everyday life, whether at work, at home, or within the wider community.

Working towards becoming a Group Coach has been a rewarding experience, and I'm looking forward to continuing to support and develop the next generation of triathletes.