

TRI LACES

There are few things more satisfying than nailing a slick transition. To get ahead of the game, a speed lacing system is crucial. **Nik Cook** tests five fiddle-free tri laces...

LOCK LACES

£5.99 www.1000mile.co.uk

The fitting of Lock Laces is a simple affair, with clear step-by-step illustrated instructions on the packaging that guide you through the process. Once fitted and cut to length there's some scope for tightening the fit, but not for loosening, so care is needed not to go too tight. If you do over tighten, putting them on in race conditions can be a struggle – especially with cold hands, as our tester found out at the Whinlatter Duathlon. Get it right, though, and they go on a treat, providing an extremely solid and secure fit with absolutely no slippage. They're extremely durable, the second cheapest on test and should easily see you through a full season. One minor quibble is that the cord tip can bounce around annoyingly if you leave it too long.

VERDICT

A proven, solid performer that won't let you down and should last a whole season

220 Triathlon

77 %

FLATLINES ACTIVE-FIT

£4.99 www.flatlines.co.uk

Resembling rubbery tagliatelle, our first attempt at fitting the Flatlines was a bit of a disaster, as our tester snapped the laces. A much gentler touch is required than with the other systems and, though the second attempt was successful, this does raise durability concerns. The cut rubber ends are tricky to thread through eyelets; the instructions on the packaging are clear, but getting a decent amount of tension into the system is a real struggle. However, once in place, they're extremely unobtrusive and getting your shoes on is easy. Out running, though, the tensioning issue rears its ugly head again and we just couldn't get the shoes to feel snug enough. There's no slippage through the side buckle locking system, but things feel loose as soon as you start running. With practice and patience you probably could get the fit right but, with other systems available, life's just too short.

VERDICT

It's tricky to get the tensioning right with these fiddly, fragile and flaccid laces

220 Triathlon

59 %



XTENEX AUTO BLOCKING

£8.99 www.xtenex.fr

Gracing the shoes of Jan Frodeno, you'd expect the highest-priced Xtenex laces to perform well. And they do. Though we probably wouldn't have chosen the fluorescent orange colour, the simple photo instructions made fitting them a breeze (there's also a helpful video on the website). The biggest pluses of the Xtenex are the lack of buckles or toggles and the ability to minutely fine-tune the fit. Without having to commit to knotting or cutting them prior to heading out, you can get things just right before race day. So there's no reason why you can't strike the perfect tensioning balance between loose enough to be fast on, but tight enough to stay on. Once you've got the fit spot-on, you've a number of options of what to do with the tips. Even if you opt for cutting and tying, there's still scope for micro adjustments.

VERDICT
Infinitely adjustable, these laces are your chance to match Jan Frodeno in T2

220 Triathlon **90 %**

HILLY ELASTIC LACES

£6.00 www.hillyclothing.co.uk

Hilly's laces are very similar in both design and durability to the Lock Laces, although the Hilly's do fall short with their locking bobble, which isn't as secure and is far more bulky. Fitting them is easy enough if you're familiar with this type of system, but there are no instructions on the packaging or the Hilly website. In a race scenario, as long as you don't go too tight when fitting, getting your shoes on is easy. Depending on how exactly you fit them, there's also some scope for loosening or tightening. Over the course of a 5-10km run leg the locking bobble will just about hold (you'd want to check between races), but we wouldn't recommend them for anything longer. Coming in at virtually the same price, for this type of system we'd go for the Lock Laces every time.

VERDICT
Not a bad option, but you can get much better laces for a similar price

220 Triathlon **71 %**

GREEPER

£8.50 www.greeper.com



Using a traditional polyester lace rather than an elasticated design, these are designed in Britain and endorsed by Chrissie Wellington (a Greeper version actually includes her "Live it, Love it" motto and smiley logo). Greeper laces use a completely different system to the other brands. The fitting instructions on the packaging are clear and, once you get your head round the top-down procedure, it's quick and easy to do. Putting on and tightening is a two-stage process that, although costing you a couple of seconds, ensures your shoes aren't too tight to get on. Plus they'll stay on once you're good to go. The fit achieved is second to none, and this comfy and more traditional fit will be appreciated, especially by long-course racers. Durability is on a par with regular laces and £1 of the sale goes to the Jane Tomlinson Appeal.

VERDICT
These aren't the fastest on test, but the comfort's worth the seconds lost

220 Triathlon **88 %**