

JUNIOR POLICY

RIDING OUT OF CATEGORY /
COMBINING AGE CATEGORIES



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1 INTRODUCTION

The development of skilled, safe and competitive junior cyclists (J19 and below) is a major focus for AusCycling. While success at the highest levels of the sport is celebrated, it is skill development and enjoyment that lays the necessary foundations for the lifelong enjoyment of the sport.

As a general rule, riders are to compete with other riders in the same age group and, where participant numbers are sufficient, in grades appropriate to their abilities. There are numerous reasons why the race length, duration and bicycle gearing are limited for junior events and AusCycling has formulated guidelines according to current research, best practice, and with consideration to the guidelines of other world-leading sporting organisations, such as the Australian Institute of Sport.

AusCycling recognises that young people differ from adults in a number of important physiological and psychological areas. These include:

- Shorter attention spans
- Less developed energy systems
- Less effective body cooling mechanisms
- Poor ability to monitor their own fatigue levels
- Heightened risk of dehydration
- Higher susceptibility to heat and cold distress
- Higher susceptibility to injuries to the growth plate of bones caused by high contact forces or repetitive loading

At some stages through a junior rider's development they may need to be challenged, and at other stages given the time to consolidate skills, strategies, and physical development. As a rider develops, they should expect to progress through several phases including:

- Being reactive and struggling to remain with the competition in their category (developing tenacity and resilience).
- Becoming more comfortable riding mid pack but struggling to podium (learning to win).
- Reaching the podium (developing consistency).

Each of these phases offer challenges and learning opportunities and junior riders should expect to move through each of these phases multiple times as they progress (particularly as they move from one age category to the next). Ideally riders will have roughly equal exposure to each phase in the long term to develop the skills they need. For junior riders, particularly those in the U11 to U15 categories the emphasis should be wholly focused on fun, skill development, leg speed and learning to ride fast.

Endurance develops naturally as physical maturity progresses. Development should not be accelerated by prematurely advancing riders to bigger gears and/or longer races.

Occasionally the situation may arise in which clubs may want to allow junior riders to move up into the next age category, race a graded category, or combine age categories. Reasons may include:

- Races are graded (not aged based).
- Overall rider numbers are low making categories very small.
- The terrain or environmental factors suit mixed racing.
- A rider is significantly and regularly unchallenged by the competition level in their category



When reviewing situations where combining categories and/or allowing riders to race a higher age category, race organisers must consider the impact/benefit and detriment to all riders, not just the rider they are considering moving. Some of the implications that need to be considered are:

- Impact in terms of sport development in general of removing the best rider from a field
- Potential for burnout, overtraining and injury
- Unrealistic performance expectations
- Removing riders from their social group

This policy should be read in conjunction with the AusCycling Technical Regulations (general and discipline specific). The policy applies to all junior riders at all AusCycling races (no matter the level or discipline).

1.1 OVERARCHING REQUIREMENTS

1.1.1 State/Territory Level and Above

(National Cup/Series, National Championships, State/Territory Championships, Gold, Platinum)

All riders must compete in their specified age category (with some exceptions for U23 and J19 Road).

1.1.2 Club and Interclub (Bronze) and State/Territory Level (Series, Open)

Where a decision has been made to combine categories and/or allow a rider to race a higher category, the rider is still bound by any limitations specific to their current age category. These are discipline specific requirements and may include limitations such as race duration, race length, equipment, and gear rollout. If these limitations cannot be facilitated in the higher category, cannot be permitted to race up.

Further specific details on discipline specific limitations are summarised in the following pages.



2 TRACK, ROAD & GRAVEL

In club level competition U9, U11, U13 and U15 categories riders may be permitted to ride in events in older age categories provided the distances ridden are not greater than those listed for the competitor's age category. For graded criteriums, with junior riders, the maximum road race distance may be used. Gear restrictions as per their age division always apply.

Age Cat	Age Span	Max Road Race Distance	Max Stage Race	Max Trial Distance	Max Gravel Race Distance / Time	Criterium Duration	General Notes and Considerations
U8	5-7	Modified club race activities					Training and club activities should be conducted as a mixed group. No results will be recorded.
U9	8	8km	8km	4km	6km / 30 mins	10 mins + 3 laps	Ability graded and mixed gender racing should be encouraged, but gearing, equipment and distance limitations still apply, consistent with Technical regulations.
U11	9-10	8km	8km	4km	6km / 30 mins	10 mins + 3 laps	Ability graded and mixed gender racing should be encouraged, but gearing, equipment and distance limitations still apply, consistent with Technical regulations.
U13	11-12	20km	20km	8km	16km / 1 hr	15 mins + 3 laps	Ability graded and mixed gender racing should be encouraged, but gearing, equipment and distance limitations still apply, consistent with Technical regulations.
U15	13-14	40km	30km	10km	35km / 1.5 hrs	20 mins + 3 laps	Ability graded and mixed gender racing should be encouraged, but gearing, equipment and distance limitations still apply, consistent with Technical regulations.
U17	15-16	70km	50km	15km	50km / 2 hrs	25 mins + 3 laps	Second year U17 riders are permitted to compete in J19 road race events from 1 October, using J19 gearing, at the state/territory and club level. No exemption will be approved for an over distance race.
J19	17-18	140km (M) 80km (F)	120km (M) 80km (F)	25km (M) 15km (F)	70km / 2.5 hrs	30 mins + 3 laps	When events are listed for J19 riders to compete with the elite category and the distances advertised are longer than those listed for the J19 category application to compete in the longer distance event must be made to AusCycling via events@auscycling.org.au

2.1 EQUIPMENT RESTRICTIONS

Gear (rollout) apply to all age groups from U9 to J19 in competitions and any training sessions. It should be noted that these restrictions also apply even when riding in combined or graded racing or training sessions.

Age Group	Rollout Distance
U9 – U13	5.5m
U15	6.0m
U17	7.0m
J19	7.93m



1.1.3 Wheel Restrictions (U9 – U17)

- Road: Depth restriction 32mm, Minimum 16 spokes
- Track: Minimum 16 spokes

2.2 CLUB RACING – CRITERIUM (ROAD IN REGIONAL AREAS) AND TRACK:

1.1.4 Progression through Junior Grades (U9 – U17 inclusive)

- Starting grade and progression is first assessed and determined by both a combination of age, speed and bunch riding ability.
- Where there are insufficient numbers for multiple grades riders should still be separated based on a grid but may be run on the course at the same time.
- The decisions regarding progression between junior grades will be at the discretion of the Club Junior Coordinator or Club Coach.
- Under 11 riders will be limited to Junior B grade.
- The rationale for this, is that only U15 and older riders can progress to adult grades, meaning a rider who progresses to junior A too early (e.g. as an U11) will spend more than two (2) years in Junior A without further progression.
- All junior riders must have demonstrated ability through club junior racing on the road or track (not in other disciplines or sports) before they progress to senior racing. An exemption may be provided by a club where a Development Coach (of the discipline being raced) approves their exemption with the Club Handicapper.

1.1.5 Progression from Club Junior Grades to Senior graded racing

- Only U15 and older riders should be considered to ride in senior grades.
- As a very general guide, a junior should be able to average (approx. 36kph) in order to progress to C or D grade. Note this is not a “personal best” all-out effort. It requires an ability to maintain a cadence of at least 105rpm in a gear of 6m for U15 and 7m for J17 riders.
- Progression from Junior Grades is at the discretion of the Club Handicapper, in consultation with a coach (minimum Development Coach who is not the coach of the rider). Senior grading of the rider will be determined by a combination of skill, speed and experience.
- If the lowest grade is being used as an introductory grade, then U15 riders should not ride here as it is for developing adult riders. New J17 riders demonstrating adequate skills can race this lowest grade. For example, an experienced and nationally competitive U15 may progress from junior grades to senior grade (e.g., C Grade), while a relatively inexperienced U17 (who has demonstrated that they are too strong for Junior categories and has the necessary bunch riding skills) may progress to the lowest senior grade (e.g., D Grade).

1.1.6 Junior Riders Progression (Upgrades) in Senior Graded Racing

- Any points or upgrade system must not apply to U15 or U17. U15 and U17 riders must demonstrate an ability to ride safely in a bunch and consistently be in the main bunch for the whole race. Winning is NOT a requirement for progression due to the difference in gearing that can influence final sprint speed.
- Only U17 riders should be considered for B grade (not A Grade) J19 riders may be considered for A Grade. This may be exempted in regional and remote clubs with limited grades for U17.



3 MOUNTAIN BIKE (MTB)

Riders must always race within their age category. In circumstances where field sizes are small race organisers may combine categories or run multiple categories at the same time to simulate larger fields and promote development. When this occurs riders must not exceed maximum race durations for their current age category.

Age Cat	Age Span	Max Race Duration (XCO)	Max Race Duration Endurance (XCM)*	Max Race Duration Gravity Enduro **	General Notes and Considerations
U11	9-10	15 mins	n/a	n/a	Mixed gender categories should be encouraged.
U13	11-12	25 mins	1 hour	2 hours	Mixed gender categories should be encouraged.
U15	13-14	45 mins	2 hours	3 hours	
U17	15-16	1 hour	3 hours	4 hours	
J19	17-18	1.25 hours	4 hours	5 hours	
U23	19-22	1.25 - 1.5 hours	n/a	n/a	Separate U23 category is only applicable to XCO. Where there is a separate U23 category, riders may apply to AusCycling for dispensation to ride up in Elite when UCI points are available.

*XC Endurance includes XCM, multi lap endurance events up to and including 24hr races. Time is the total time spent riding during the event. It is recommended that race organisers facilitate U13, U15 and U17 categories by encouraging team relay style racing in longer endurance events.

**Gravity Enduro (GE) time is total time for the event including timed and liaison stages.

3.1 EQUIPMENT

In Downhill (DH), all riders who are eligible to compete in U13, U15 and U17 categories, the following equipment is mandatory at all times while on track regardless of registered category:

- Full-finger gloves must be worn
- Full length jersey – jersey must cover elbows at all times
- Knee pads and elbow pads must be worn

3.2 PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS AND EXAMPLES:

1. A club XCO race has five (5) riders entered in U11 and three (3) in U13. To better facilitate racing and development the race director combines the categories and runs one 15min race. Race duration must not exceed the lower age category limit.
2. A club XCM race has three (3) U13, five (5) U15 and four (4) U17 riders entered. The race organiser puts all three (3) categories together on the start in three (3) rows (U17 followed by U15 then U13). All three (3) categories are started together. Riders are flagged at the finish line after an appropriate number of laps for their age category. Race duration must not exceed the specified max for each individual category. Riders benefit from a larger field and have faster riders to challenge but don't exceed the max race time for their age.



3. A club XCO race has fifteen (15) J19 riders entered which includes several highly developed riders. To better facilitate racing and development the race organiser grids the J19 category on the line and starts their race one (1) min behind the Elite category. The J19 category races two (2) laps less than elite to ensure their race time does not exceed the max duration. Highly developed J19 riders have Elite riders to chase and challenge while not exceeding max race time and reducing the size of the J19 field.



4 CYCLO-CROSS (CX)

Riders must always race within their age category. In circumstances where field sizes are small race organisers may combine categories or run multiple categories at the same time to simulate larger fields and promote development. When this occurs riders must not exceed maximum race durations for their current age category.

Age Cat	Age Span	Max Race Duration (XCO)	General Notes and Considerations
U11	9-10	15 mins	Mixed gender categories should be encouraged.
U13	11-12	20 mins	Mixed gender categories should be encouraged.
U15	13-14	25 mins	
U17	15-16	35 mins	
J19	17-18	45 mins	
U23	19-22	55 mins (M) 50 mins (F)	Where there is a separate U23 category, riders may apply to AusCycling for dispensation to ride up in Elite when UCI points are available.

4.1 PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS AND EXAMPLES:

1. A club CX race has four (4) riders entered in U11 and two (2) in U13. To better facilitate racing and development the race director combines the categories and runs one 15min race. Race duration must not exceed the lower age category limit.
2. A club CX race has ten (10) female riders entered in total across the U17, J19 and Elite fields. The race organiser puts all three (3) categories together on the start in three (3) rows (Elite followed by J19 then U17). All three (3) categories are started together. Riders are flagged at the finish line after an appropriate number of laps for their age category. Race duration must not exceed the specified max for each individual category. Riders benefit from a larger field and have faster riders to challenge but don't exceed the max race time for their age.
3. A club CX race has ten (10) J19 riders entered which includes several highly developed riders. To better facilitate racing and development the race organiser grids the J19 category on the line and starts their race 1 min behind the Elite category. The J19 category is flagged early to ensure their race time does not exceed the max duration. Highly developed J19 riders have Elite riders to chase and challenge while not exceeding max race time and reducing the size of the J19 field.



5 BMX

BMX racing is a unique discipline that offers challenge categories from 5 years old up to U17.

5.1 RACING SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS:

- For BMX racing if a rider wishes to ride above their age category they may only enter up two (2) categories above (not below) their year of birth racing category up to the pinnacle age of 24.
- At club racing categories may be graded at the discretion of the host club.
- Participation/Novice categories cannot ride up at any event. Clubs may choose to run ability categories at club racing.
- Superclass has been broken into 2 categories, Junior Superclass (14-16) and Superclass (16+). Riders wishing to enter the Superclass category at AusCycling sanctioned events where an 8m/SX hill or pro straight is available, will be required to show certification prior to the commencement of racing. Junior Superclass does not navigate pro straights or 8m/SX hills in racing.
- Clip pedals are only permitted for rider's year of birth 13 and above. This does not include riders riding up from an U13 category.

5.2 TRAINING SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS:

- Riders 13 years and older (as at December 31) are permitted to develop on 8m/SX hills or Pro straights under supervision from a Development Instructor or above.
- Riders 13 years and older (as at December 31) are permitted to train on 8m/SX hills or Pro straights provided they show Advanced Rider Certification prior to the commencement of training (this includes gate nights)
- Clip pedals may be used in training sessions by riders under the age of 13 under the supervision of an accredited coach.
- It is highly recommended that riders do not advance to clip pedals until competent with basic skill fundamentals using platform pedals (flats).