



NEW RACER INFORMATION GUIDE FOR DOWNHILL (DH)

Get ready to experience the thrill of gravity-fueled racing!

Welcome to the exhilarating world of downhill mountain bike racing! Cycling BC's New Racer Information Guide provides essential information for new racers, covering everything from preparation, race day execution, to post-race reflection.

Preparing for your first event can be an overwhelming experience, but fear not! This guide was developed to help answer the questions you may have about what to expect during your first race. We're here to help you have the most fun, learn, and progress each time you roll up to the start line.

SafeSport



Cycling BC is dedicated to fostering a sporting environment that is safe and free from harassment, abuse, and discrimination. To uphold this commitment, it has implemented several policies that all Cycling BC members are expected to follow, including the [Cycling BC Member Code of Conduct](#), [the BC Universal Code of Conduct](#), and [the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport](#). Visit cyclingbc.net/about/safesport to learn more.

General Information: Licences & Categories

	UNION CYCLISTE INTERNATIONALE	2026	
		UCI ID: 123 456 789 01 Last Name: Doe First Name: John Nationality: Canadian Date Of Birth: 1998-01-01 Age: 25 Gender: M Cat. Tech: UCI Category: Elite Trade Team:	
Valid until: December 31, 2026			

Sample front of a UCI Race Licence

Federation ID: BC 45611 Cat. Nat: DME CME Cat. Prov: DME.S CME.3 Club/Team: Independent	The holder agrees to abide by the regulations of the UCI and of the national federations. He accepts antidoping and blood tests provided by the rules and the sole competence of the CAS. I acknowledge and agree that my personal information provided as part of my application shall be passed and held by the UCI. <i>Insurance is valid for residents of Canada who are covered under a federal/provincial health care plan.</i>
Cycling Canada +1 613 248 1353 www.cyclingbc.net	

Sample back of a UCI Race Licence

Race Licences: In British Columbia, sanctioned races require riders to possess a valid race licence. This licence confirms the rider's age group, current ability level or category, team affiliation, and other identifying information. It also assures organizers and commissaires that the rider is insured to participate in the event.

Cycling BC offers two types of race licences:

- Provincial Race Licence
- UCI Race Licence

Race Categories: Races in BC and beyond will use different ways to group participants into different categories. Some races will use exclusively age-based categories, others will be ability-based, and some will use a mix of both.

A racer's age (calculated as of Dec 31 of the current year) determines their age category, while their experience and skill level, based on past race results, will determine their ability category.

BC Cup downhill racers are categorized by age and gender, and are then further divided by ability category:

Age Group	Ability Category		
Youth (U15, U17, U19)	Sport	Expert	
Elite (Adult 19-34)	Sport	Expert	Elite
Masters (35+)**	Sport	Expert	

In adult categories, the Sport and Expert categories are often combined at races unless the sizes of the fields justify separating them.

**** Riders aged 35 and over** may choose to ride in Elite instead of Masters, if they prefer. However, they must select Elite instead of Masters at the time of purchasing their annual UCI Race Licence, and they must ride in their selected category for the entire season. The selection can't be changed until the following year.

Category Upgrades: Age category is automatically adjusted each year to reflect the racer's age. In BC, changes to ability categories can only be made by Cycling BC. Athletes must submit a category upgrade request along with evidence of their previous race results. For instance, a rider can advance from the Sport category to the Expert category by earning points from their race results. For more information about category upgrades, please visit cyclingbc.net.

Which licence do I need?

A **Provincial Race** licence is sufficient for participating in Cycling BC sanctioned races within BC.



A **UCI Race licence** is required to compete in specific categories at internationally sanctioned (UCI) and nationally sanctioned (Cycling Canada) races, including Canada Cups and National Championships.

Most BC Cup races also double as Canada Cup races and are sanctioned by the UCI and Cycling Canada, meaning that UCI or Canada Cup points are awarded to specific categories; thus a UCI Race licence is required to race in those categories.

A UCI Race Licence is required for the following categories at these events:

- UCI/Canada Cup races:
 - Women: U17, U19, Elite
 - Men: U17 Expert, U19 Expert, Elite
- National Championship races:
 - Women: U17, U19, Elite, Master
 - Men: U17 Expert, U19 Expert, Elite, Master

Pro-tip: Since there are several UCI/Canada Cup races hosted in BC, it's generally more convenient for participants to have a UCI Race Licence, ensuring they are covered for any race. It also provides the option to race outside of the province.

Single Event Licences



Some events may allow participants to buy a single-event licence to participate in their event; however, this will restrict the categories a rider can compete in. For example, a single-event licence will not allow a rider to compete at the highest ability level of their age category (e.g. Expert or Elite). Single-event licences are typically reserved for Open/Novice categories. There is also a limit to the number of single-event licences a rider can use in a year.

For more information about Cycling BC membership licences, please visit cyclingbc.net

Race Prep: At Home

Preparation is essential for a successful race day. Here are several steps you can take at home before heading to the race to ensure you're fully equipped to perform at your best.

Bike and Race Preparations:

- The bike is in excellent working condition.
- Athlete race registration has been confirmed.
- Accommodations have been secured (note that some venues may offer camping sites that can be reserved in advance).
- Download, print, and review the Race Technical Guide, if it is available.



Gear Checklist:

- Race license and ID
- BC Services/CareCard
- Full-face helmet fitted with a peak and goggles with optional spare lens
- Rigid pads - knees, elbow, spine; Check the race's Technical Guide for specifics. UCI - Strongly recommends that riders wear the following protection: back, elbow, knee and shoulder protectors made of rigid materials; protection for the nape of the neck and the cervical vertebrae; padding on shins and thighs
- Riding shoes
- Full finger gloves
- Race kit - long-sleeved shirt with sleeves extending down to the rider's wrists, either close-fitting around the waist or must be tucked into the pants. Long pants, or short pants combined with suitable knee and shin protection are authorized. Must be one-piece construction and made of tear-resistant material.
- Practice kit (same rules as above)
- Extra tire
- Extra tube and/or sealant/inflator/cartridge
- Derailleur hanger
- Basic tools - Allen wrenches, pump, tire levers, etc.
- Running shoes and clothing for track walk
- Casual shoes and clothes
- Garbage bags (for dirty kits)
- Water and snacks

Race Prep: On-site



Pre-Race Preparation and Packet Pickup:

- Locate packet pickup area; complete registration and plate pickup as soon as possible.
- Bring your race licence (card or digital) and ID to packet pickup.
- Minors should be accompanied by a parent or guardian to sign any waivers.
- A coach, teammate, parent, or guardian can pick up a rider's packet if they present both sides of the rider's licence.
- Confirm registration, category, and practice times.
- Purchase lift tickets, as needed.
- Set up bike maintenance area, organize kits and equipment for the weekend.
- Attend the teams/riders meeting; info about race schedule, any changes to race course and rules will be addressed.
- Find where race info and communiques get posted.
- Confirm training schedule for your category.
- Ride! Pay attention to how the dirt, roots, and rock is different than what you're accustomed to at home. Consider how it may be different as weather changes.



The Track Walk:

Track walk is an opportunity to assess course conditions and line options before practice begins. Anticipate that the track may change based on weather and ridership numbers.

- Track walk is typically scheduled before practice begins. Please check the race's technical guide for the schedule.
- You can only walk the track at the posted time. You will need a lift ticket for the track walk.
- Keep it simple! No need to memorize every inch of the track. Instead, focus on the handful of sections where there are several line options, and determine which one suits you best.
- Consider the weather forecast: will the incoming weather increase or decrease traction? Will the incoming weather make certain lines harder or easier?
- Don't get too caught up in making final decisions of your race line choices during track walk. Track walk is more about anticipating where the "main line" might go once practice begins, and if/where you might choose to deviate from it.



Practice Sessions

This is a sample schedule for a day of practice. It is not comprehensive, and there will always be individual preferences, but it's a good starting point.

Practice Session 1 | Sample Schedule:

(Times will differ):

08:00 | Breakfast

09:00 | Bike check - tire pressure, bolts, axles

10:00 | Practice (time how long it takes to get to the start area)

12:30 | Lunch and bike check

15:45 | Junior Expert/Elite practice

18:00 | Dinner

19:15 | Teams/Riders' meeting (this is usually scheduled on the day before practice starts)

20:00 | Dynamic and static stretch, hydrate, relax

21:30 | In bed, lights out

The first practice session is more about getting a sense of how the dirt, rock, and roots behave.

There is no rush to commit to an entire run.

Be patient - no need to ride too fast, too soon.

Learn the dirt. No need for top-to-bottom runs - take lots of breaks.

The priority for today's practice is to ride enough that you feel comfortable on most sections of the track. No need to ride fast, instead focus on riding accurately (e.g. brake early, set up wide for corners, and prioritize exit speed).

You may still have a few areas where you haven't chosen a line. This is totally fine.

Practice Session 2 | The schedule can be similar to the first session.

The priority is to make (near) final decisions about line choices for the entire track. As you ride, focus on riding accuracy, and once you're feeling comfortable with your line choices you may choose to ride them a little bit faster if you can still do so with accuracy. Ride key sections with accuracy and safety in mind, while increasing your speed—this is your “race pace”. If you find yourself losing accuracy, you need to back off to a more consistent speed.

Most races will require you to do two mandatory practice runs, recorded by the start commissaire during the designated training times, to be allowed to start on race day.

Race Day



Race Day Practice

This short practice is simply a confirmation of what you already know. No need to make last-minute changes to line choice unless they're glaringly obvious. Instead, focus on executing your accurate run from top to bottom. You may choose to do a complete lap, but saving energy for the race must be a consideration.

- Confirm start time.
- Create a schedule allowing 30 minutes at the top before start time.

Race Run

(same for seeding run)

Before you leave for the start:

- Bike/equipment check
- Have your timing chip or know where to get it.
- Re-confirm your start time; check start list posted (on-site or online).
- Consider warming up - can be just about anything. Begin with general off-bike warm-up techniques, and get progressively more bike-specific.
- On your bike - warm up pedalling, flat corners, wheelies/manuals...play! Get a feel for the bike. Some riders may choose to do a warm-up lap on an easier trail if time permits.

At the Top

- Check in with commissaire or volunteers to confirm your attendance
- Pick up your timing chip if not already in your possession.
- Re-confirm your start time; check the start list posted (on-site or online).
- Find your space in line, note that plates are often not in order (use the other racers' plate numbers as your guide)
- Repeat a similar warm-up routine
- Stick to your race plan. Ride with accuracy!

On-course Incidents

Overtaking

Being Overtaken:

If the rider behind you is faster and catches up with you during the race, let them go by as soon as safely possible. Offer them the courtesy you would expect if the situation were reversed.

Overtaking Others:

If you catch the rider in front of you, announce your presence and let them know which side you are passing. Extend the courtesy you would expect if the situation were reversed.

Handling Accidents

Minor Falls:

If you fall and are not injured, move yourself and your bike quickly off the course to avoid impeding the riders behind you.

Crashes and Mechanical Issues:

If you crash or have a mechanical issue and can't finish the race, inform the closest marshals immediately. Provide your plate number so it can be relayed to the finish commissaires, ensuring everyone knows you are accounted for and no one needs to search for you. Make your way off-course to the finish line and report your DNF (Did Not Finish) to the finish line. Do not leave the race course or site without notifying the marshals and commissaires that you are not going to finish the race, and that you are okay.

Serious Injuries:

If you crash, are injured, and can't move, alert the closest marshals immediately. They will stop the riders behind you and call for first aid.

Course Regulations

Re-entering the Course:

If you go off-course (outside the tape), you need to re-enter the course at the spot where you exited. This may require backing up to reach that spot. Before re-entering the track, ensure that no one is coming. Failing to re-enter where you exited will result in disqualification from the race.

Reruns

Reruns are generally only permitted due to significant outside interference of your run.

- If you are stopped on course by a marshal during your run (red flag), make your way to the finish shoot and find the President of the Commissaire panel (PCP) to confirm your rerun. You will be sent back to the start, where a commissaire will let you know when you'll restart.
- Other rerun requests— if you feel that another rider impeded your run (another rider crashing, wildlife or spectators on the track, etc), you can present your case to the PCP in the finish shoot, who will investigate and decide if a re-run will be granted.



If you find yourself in a situation where you have to do a rerun, stay relaxed and focused, avoiding tension that can hinder your performance. Remember to breathe deeply and stay present in the moment.

Results



Once you complete your race, verify the results. You have 15 minutes after the results are posted on the official posting board to claim a review of your time. After that time, the results become official.

To claim a review, go to the finish area and ask to talk to the commissaire. Provide all details related to your claim. Your request will be investigated, and you will be informed of the outcome.

Awards/Podiums

- Check the schedule to find out when the award ceremony will take place.
- If you rank amongst the top 3 in your category, you are required to attend the award ceremonies.
- You must be wearing athletic clothing of your club/team kit (no street clothes) on the podium.
- Failure to attend the ceremony will result in the loss of prizing. “I have a ferry to catch”, “a long ride in front of me,” are not acceptable excuses to miss the awards presentation.



Post-race Reflection

These reflections are meant to help riders recognize how they can set themselves up for success at the next event. Analyze your race run, identifying areas where you performed well and areas where you can improve. Focus on specific skills or techniques to work on during future training sessions. The focus must always be on the process. You can't control everything, so consider doing a better job of managing what is within your control.

- Was equipment managed well?
- Was time managed well?
- Did you eat, sleep, and hydrate well?
- Did you stick to your race plan or deviate at the last second?

There is no such thing as the perfect run. Everybody makes mistakes when they compete. Remember, every race is a learning opportunity. Focus on the process, reflect on the outcome, and keep it fun!

Finally, celebrate your accomplishments and the effort you put into the race!



Additional Resources

- **Join a Club or Team:** Connect with other riders and participate in group rides and training sessions. Find a Cycling BC-affiliated club or team at cyclingbc.net/clubs/affiliates
- **Seek Guidance:** Find experienced and certified coaches for personalized advice and training tips by using Cycling BC's coach registry at cyclingbc.net/registry

Acknowledgements

This resource was initially created for Cycling BC by Joel Harwood of Blueprint Athlete Development and updated with contributions from the Cycling BC commissaire and DH community.