

# A Guide to Your First Race

Some helpful tips for those interested in  
trying (or returning to!) racing



# Preamble

Welcome to the ABA and our AB Cup race series. We are always excited when athletes give bike racing a go. Whether you are brand new to cycling or are a long-time member, we believe you will find a fit here at ABA with the variety of options that we have.

Below is a bit of an outline of what you will need and what to look out for at your first race. Alternatively, if you have raced in the past and are returning to racing after a break, this list will be a helpful refresher for all of the things that happen as part of a race. Note that the list and instructions below will not be exhaustive, and every race will be a little different, but we hope this makes navigating bicycle racing a little easier and a little less stressful.

Always feel free to reach out with questions to the ABA or the race organizer. All of our organizers are wonderful approachable volunteers who also had to go through the experience of attending their very first race, and they strive to make sure every racer has a great time, especially the new racers. Who knows? You might have so much fun, you'll convince a friend to try racing!



# Before the Race

The first step is to decide what race you want to start with. You may have a particular discipline of cycling in mind, or maybe you are looking for a more casual mid-week event. You may already know this but you can check out all our events at <http://www.albertabicycle.ab.ca/calendar>

The general disciplines of racing are based on type of bicycle and include Track, Road, Mountain Bike, and Cyclocross (and more!). Within some of these disciplines there are several types or styles of racing (e.g., road racing includes time trials, road races, and criteriums). If you're not sure what type of racing you're looking for, you can check out the brief overview of disciplines here: <http://www.albertabicycle.ab.ca/sports>, or peruse the event calendar and spend some time googling disciplines and watching some YouTube videos of bike races.

After deciding which race you want to participate in the first thing you should do is read the Tech Guide.



## Tech Guide

A tech guide (sometimes referred to as the Race Bible) is a document created by the race organizer. Every race that is sanctioned by the ABA is required to have a tech guide, and this document is reviewed by the ABA and the head commissaire (race official) prior to the race. In this document you will find all the important information about the race including:

- Location
- Registration cost and deadline
- Categories being offered
- Course route/map
- Race Day Schedule
- Registration/Package pickup schedule and location
- Parking
- First aid information/Safety information
- Race specific regulations
- Links to ABA regulations

Once you have read over the tech guide and are ready to commit to the race, you will need to register for the race.

## Race Registration

### ABA Licenses

There are several options when it comes to a license, and the type of license you should get depends both on the type of race you are registering for, and the number of and places you want to be able to race. As always, if you have any questions about what type of license is best for you, contact the ABA!

### Single Event License

Single event licenses are a good choice if you are just trying racing out and/or only plan to do a handful of events over the course of the entire year.

- Is a one-day license that you purchase at the time of registration for \$20.00
- Available only for Road Time Trials, XC Mountain Bike, Enduro Mountain Bike, Gravel, and Cyclocross races



- A maximum of 3 can be purchased by an individual each year

## Citizen License

A citizen license is a good choice if you want to try a number of different disciplines and/or plan to participate in more than a few events over the course of the entire year. Note that this type of license does have limits on where you may race (Alberta-specific) and restrictions on what category you may compete in.

- Is purchased online through the ABA
- Can be used only in the Province of Alberta
- Is good for any type of race except for BMX
- The individual must race in the lowest skill category offered
- Individuals cannot obtain upgrade points

## UCI License

A UCI license is for those that race many races over the course of the year and often race in multiple disciplines. This type of license allows you to attend local, national, and many international events.

- Is purchased online through the ABA
- Is good for any type of race
- The individual earns upgrade points
- Is good outside Alberta and outside Canada

Once you have your licensing and registration done you are all set to show up on race day!

# Race Day

You are all registered, have the tech guide memorized, and have trained and mentally prepared for the big day. There are a few things you will want to remember before you set out.

**Note:** It is always a good idea to check the posted tech guide again before race day to make sure there have been no changes to location, pre-riding, or start times.

## What to Bring



Of course you will need your kit (cycling clothing, helmet, shoes), bike, and water/food for before and after the race. A few other things to bring along are:

- Your digital license (if you are not using a single event license)
- Photo ID
- Change of clothes (warm clothes, dry clothes)
- Tools, a pump, lube and other common bike maintenance items
- Safety pins for numbers (depending on style of race)
- Small first aid kit for minor bumps and scratches



## At the Race

Make sure you arrive early! First off when you arrive, you will need to check in at the ABA tent or registration centre. This is where you will show your license/ID and pick up your race number and any other race items (swag, timing chips if available). Registration always closes 15 mins before your race starts so be sure to get there early as there can sometimes be a short lineup.

Depending on the style of racing you are doing, you will need to either zip tie your number plate on your bike (XC mountain bike) or pin your numbers on your back and side (road, cyclocross, gravel). Make sure you leave yourself enough time to do this, and make sure to check at sign in and/or the tech guide for the proper placement. If you are unsure make sure you ask for assistance - we can always find someone to help with number pinning.



Depending on the style of race, there may be time to practice and pre-ride the course. This is typical for mountain bike and cyclocross races, but there specified times when this is allowed to happen. The appropriate times will be listed in the tech guide, and if you are unsure about if/when you can pre-ride the course, ask an official or someone at the registration desk.



When the time of your race comes near, pay attention for announcements as the commissaires (race officials in blue shirts) will let you know when you can line up at the start line. Depending on the type of race, athletes may be called in order to the start line, or it may be a bit of a free-for-all – if you're not sure what to do, ask another cyclist. Just prior to the official start of the race, listen for any final announcements from the commissaires and once the race starts be sure to follow any instructions given by the commissaires regarding laps, shortening of the race etc.





*Important!* If for some reason you are unable to complete the race, be sure to check in at the finish line and let the commissaires know you did not finish (DNF). This is important (and mandatory!) so the officials and organizers know you aren't hurt or stranded somewhere, or were abducted by aliens.

*Congratulations! You did it! You completed your first race!*



## After the Race

Almost everyone that completes their first race remarks how much harder it was than they thought it would be! So, make sure to take some time to cool down (spin easy for a few minutes to bring your heart rate down), and then take in some of the post-race food and drink. One unique aspect of racing is talking about and reliving moments of the race with your fellow racers, so join in on the dramatic tails of triumph and misery with others if you're feeling up to it. If you are able, you should feel free to stick around and cheer on your fellow cyclists while you wait patiently for the results to be posted.

If you made it to the podium, be sure to stick around for the podium, pictures and prizes. If not, don't worry about it – you can start planning your strategy for the next race!

