

Triathlon and Related Multisport Event Guidance for U19s

Version 1



Triathlon and Related Multisport Event Guidance for U19s

Version History

Version 1 : Initial version released on 12 October 2020

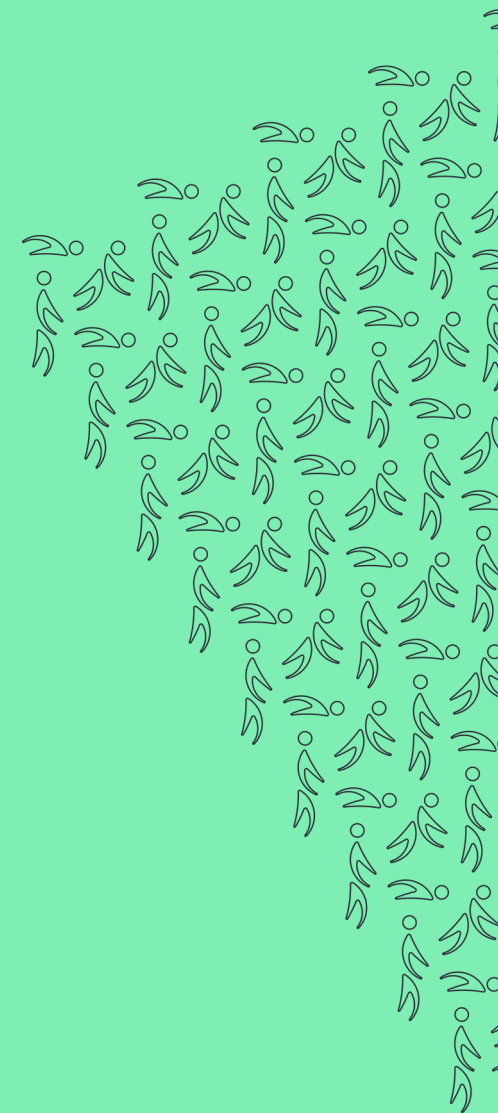
Reference Documents

The following documents should be referenced in addition to this document:

- [Event Organiser's Manual \(EOM\)](#)
- [World Triathlon Competition Rules](#)
- World Triathlon Athlete Development Model ([Education Hub](#))

Working Party Members

Coaches Committee	Jul Clonen (BEL)
Coaches Committee	Philippe Fattori (FRA)
Medical Committee	Angela Gairifo (POR)
Medical Committee	Claude Marble (FRA)
Technical Committee	David Markham (CAN)
Technical Committee	Béla Varga (HUN)
Mexican NF	Eligio Cervantes (MEX)
World Triathlon Sport Director	Gergely Markus (HUN)
World Triathlon Development	James Jolly (GBR)
World Triathlon Development	Zita Csovelyak (HUN)



Contents

Introduction	4	Safety and Welfare considerations	17
Event Distances	5	Penalties	19
17-19-year-old athletes	7	Swim Specific Considerations	21
Individualisation	8	Maximum duration in Open Water	23
Age-groupings	9	Bike Considerations	26
Gender Split	10	Run Considerations	28
Relay	11	Contact	29
Participative and Competitive Pathways	12		
Younger Children (under 8)	14		
Outside Assistance	16		

Introduction

This is a guidance document on key aspects involved with organising races and associated areas of concern for athletes under the age of 19. They are based on existing race distance information gathered from the following National Federations (NFs): Australia, Belgium, Great Britain, Canada, Hungary, Italy, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, and Spain. In addition, a Working Party with members drawn from a wide range of functions, continents and NFs within World Triathlon was formed to finalise these guidelines.

As a guidance document, it is not an addition to the World Triathlon Competition Rules and is not a mandatory directive that must be followed. Different NFs can choose to use their existing rules or adopt this guidance in part or in whole.

Different NFs will have different contextual and cultural implications, which may mean that there are good reasons to have different race distances. It is also recognised that some NFs may have invested time and resources into event organisation based around their existing rules, and even if they did want to migrate to the suggested distances, they may have good reason to postpone any changes for several years.

For all the above reasons these remain guidelines, however it is hoped that NFs who are relatively new to Triathlon and have limited resources or experience, may choose to adopt the specific details below, with the aim of developing the sport wider across the globe.

Additionally, global best practice has been highlighted where appropriate, but it is accepted that in some contexts it may not be possible to follow best practice for a range of valid reasons, such as insufficient financial resources. For NFs, the advice is to follow this where possible, with the intention of working towards it wherever possible.

The intention is that these guidelines allow for safe, enjoyable events that encourage life-long participation in sport.

This document is not an exhaustive list of everything required to organise and deliver a children's race but aims to highlight some key differences and additional considerations from rules for adults or add clarification where required.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us at:
development@triathlon.org

Event Distances

The following table shows the maximum guideline race distances:

Age	TRIATHLON		
	Swim	Bike	Run
8	100m	2km	800m
9	200m	6km	1km
10	400m	8km	2km
11	500m	13km	3.5km
12	750m	20km	5km
13			
14			
15			
16			
17			

Age	DUATHLON		
	Run	Bike	Run
8	800m	2km	400m
9	1km	6km	500m
10	2km	8km	1km
11	3km	13km	1.5km
12	5km	20km	2.5km
13			
14			
15			
16			
17			

Age	AQUATHLON		
	Run	Swim	Run
8	400m	100m	400m
9	500m	200m	500m
10	1km	400m	1km
11	1.5km	500m	1.5km
12	2.5km	750m	2.5km
13			
14			
15			
16			
17			

Key notes

- This table shows the recommended maximum distances for each age category. Novice, early season, and introductory races can and probably should be much shorter to encourage participation and enjoyment for a wide range of children.
- For races which are held off-road (i.e. non tarmac surface for the bike and possibly more hilly for runs on mixed terrain) it is sensible to reduce race distances by 30-40% approximately in each discipline, to account for the increased difficulty and greater elapsed time in these types of events.

- NFs can modify event distances, but they should read the rest of this document first, and consider the key issues raised.
- In some countries it makes sense to only have two segments in some Aquathlon events, several NFs have only a swim then run. This is usually due to cold water (below 22 oC) and sometimes very warm air temperature, when there can be a danger from cold water shock of jumping into the water after a run, hence the need to start with the swim. In such cases the total run distance can be combined, for example a 16-year old would complete a 750m swim followed by a 5km run.
- Competition age bands in the table consider the age of the athlete as the

age at the end of the competition year, generally this would be 31st December. For southern hemisphere countries whose key race season may proceed from November–April or may be synchronised with the school academic year, they may choose another appropriate date which means that athletes will stay in the same category for a race season. The issue here will be with older age categories when athletes may start to consider international racing and there would be two different systems as World Triathlon uses 31st December as its cut-off. So, for simplicity it makes sense to stick to this date or have a different age band for younger domestic events and then switch to the International date for older juniors.

The system must work for the specific NF and is therefore left to their discretion.

- The above distances are intended to be the race distance that an athlete of any age should compete at, e.g. for local, regional, or national competitions. These distances should be the focus of training and competition. Part of the rationale behind this is that it is believed (see Athlete Development Model) that keeping race distances shorter during these age groups will have the best long term development outcome for athletes, and a better outcome than encouraging them to race longer distances at this age.

17-19-year-old athletes

For the oldest 17- to 19-year old groups it is still recommended to focus on and compete at Sprint distances most of the time. Focussing on 'shorter' distances is in the athletes best long-term interests from both a health and performance perspective. However, the Competition Rules do allow any athlete reaching the age of 18 to complete at any distance within the sport. Whilst this is allowed it is recommended to limit the length of races and number of longer races for these age groups. Here we are focussing on athletes who are on a talent development pathway, i.e. aiming to be part of a national squad currently or soon. For young adults who are doing the sport to keep fit or for general enjoyment and have other key aspects in their lives following the competition rules is acceptable.

19-year old athletes may be well served by limiting racing to standard distance events and only 4 races per year. For 18-year olds limiting to 2 standard distance races per year may be a sensible approach. A 17-year old athlete, while not allowed to compete at an official standard distance race, may be well served by undertaking a single 'practice' race at standard distance late in the season to start to experience the demands of that format. This approach allows athletes to build competitive experience at longer races as a stepping stone to a senior career, whilst maintaining their focus on developing technical skills and speed at shorter race distances. As they mature and become more robust, working their way through junior and U-23 categories they can start to migrate to standard distances races.

Additionally, for these age groups, many National Federations now insist upon a medical health check. As well as a general check-up, where possible this could include a ECG Cardiac Screening. Young, fit and otherwise healthy people can be at serious risk from sudden death risk from undiagnosed cardiac conditions. Having an ECG test that is reviewed by a cardiac specialist can identify and prevent this issue.

In the past there have been instances of young athletes completing their first standard distance race at a WTS Series event and even the Olympics. It would be preferable if they got to race at the distance before a high-profile event, even if they are very much still a development athlete at this stage.

Individualisation

When considering which athletes this is most appropriate for the concept of individualisation is key. Different children will reach a level where they are ready to test themselves over longer distances. Factors to consider include but are not limited to:

- Biological, Development and Training age, rather than just chronological age.
- Training and race experience.
- Injury history: are they free of injury now, but also have they generally been injury free?

NFs, coaches and parents should seek further guidance from the World Triathlon Athlete Development Model. If there is any doubt if an athlete is ready for longer distances then safety should come first and the progression to longer distance should be delayed.

National Federations have access to this content, and there is a series of freely available webinars discussing key concepts on the World Triathlon Education Hub.



Age-groupings

Under 16-year-old competitors are split into two-year age groups, with each group racing over different distances. The intention is that those under 16 would race in these age groups, so for example all 12 and 13-year-olds in an event would compete against each other and be in the same category in terms of race results. The reason for this is two-fold:

- It is easier to arrange event start waves of sufficient size. Note that in a large field, event organisers can arrange waves however they see fit depending upon local conditions, but wherever possible those in the same age group should compete together.

- It allows each child to spend time in the younger half of an age-group as well as the older-half. For those of a competitive nature, it is useful to compete when they are unlikely to win on some occasions. This means that early physical developers do not always win and increases the chance of learning useful life skills of how to cope with disappointment in addition to perceived success.

From a logistical perspective it may make sense to allow different age groups to race at the same time in the same wave, but then produce separate results for each age category.

Gender Split

For those under 10-years-old, it might also be possible for both genders to compete together. The aim is to foster the idea of gender equality at an early age. Under the age of 10 the physical differences between the genders is less pronounced and females may out-perform males. Above 10-years-old the physical differences will start to make competition unfair, maybe discouraging for some and therefore gender specific events should be introduced. Each NF should consider their own context and there may be local cultural situations which require this area to be carefully considered and a different approach may be adopted.

Relay

Including Relay events throughout all age-groups is a great way maintaining gender equity and awareness. It also builds and fosters a more inclusive environment. Race distances for relay events are generally shorter than individual events when considering an individual athlete's race distance, or each athlete will complete only one segment (swim, bike or run) each. NFs and race organisers are free to decide upon race distances, however, the distance covered by any individual athlete should not exceed the maximum distance prescribed for individual events.

Additionally, from a logistics perspective organising a course so that the route takes advantage of laps that work out easily from portions of both individual events and Mixed Relay events makes sense. This becomes more difficult if trying to include a range of different children's age groups.



Participative and Competitive Pathways

This document by its very nature is focussing on events, and therefore a competitive race is intrinsically implied. However, the approach taken to competition by event organisers, coaches, parents, spectators, and children alike can vary greatly.

In this document we distinguish between younger children, participative and competitive streams in the following way:

Participative

The focus is on enjoyment first and completing the event. The aim is to build life-long enjoyment of sport in general and triathlon more specifically. At early ages it is hard to know which children may stay with triathlon and who may pursue other sports. The idea is to give them positive memories that keep the sport in their hearts. A key issue here is that different children enjoy different aspects; some enjoy competition and the ability to excel, whilst many others enjoy other aspects such as social side or learning new skills. All children should be supported in their own version of enjoyment.

However, a key issue is that many adults involved in sport can tend to focus on the

performance and winning. This may come from their own beliefs or what they believe the values of the children are.

Therefore, the emphasis of rewards should be toward finishing at this stage. Cheering fellow competitors on is to be especially encouraged. Parents and coaches should be encouraged to offer praise for effort and enjoyment, and refrain from chastising poor performance, or even focussing on winning until they are much older, if at all.

Competitive

Moving into this type of racing is only applicable when the children are ready, having sufficient experience/ training, and are psychologically ready for this kind of environment.

The focus here shifts to performing at your best, and local, regional, national, and eventually international competitions may get introduced as athletes progress to older age groups. The aim here is to build awareness and experience in a truly competitive environment and prepare those who wish to race at older age groups and potentially elite level.

Both participative and competitive strands can continue for older age groups. Not all young children want to be elite athletes, and many enjoy the health, social and well-being aspects of the sport. Both strands have equal value and should be respected. For event organisers and coaches, it can be a hard task to ensure everyone understands these differing perspectives. A default position should perhaps be to communicate with athletes in a supportive/encouraging manner.



Younger Children (under 8)

As with most aspects of sport there is a trade-off. A valid concern is asking too much from younger children and allowing them to get injured or burned out. The converse argument is that currently in many cultures, healthy outdoor opportunities for children are significantly reduced and organised events are now the main way for them to get exposure to the outdoors. In addition to the participative concept mentioned above, when considering younger children, we have included event distances for the very young, as a guideline. Note these have been kept separate from the main table in order to distinguish them and further highlight the very definite and specific need for these 'events' to focus on fun, participation and enjoyment, and steer away from the 'race' element. These should be considered

maximum distances and often shorter events will be preferable. A good test for a race organiser is to have participants who declare 'they want to do it again', rather than having anyone struggling to finish and having to be coaxed round by adults (which in youth sport can be a more common experience).

	TRIATHLON		
Age	Swim	Bike	Run
4	25m	500m	100m
5	50m	1km	200m
6	100m	2km	400m
7	200m	4km	800m

	DUATHLON		
	Run	Bike	Run
4	100m	500m	100m
5	200m	1km	200m
6	400m	2km	400m
7	800m	4km	800m

	AQUATHLON		
	Run	Swim	Run
4	100m	25m	100m
5	200m	50m	200m
6	400m	100m	400m
7	800m	200m	800m

At these younger ages (often pre-school) events may not look so much like a traditional triathlon, but may be more fun and games based:

- Parents could help the children, e.g. even be in the water with them to help non-swimmers, or to give confidence for poor swimmers.
- The event could include elements that are fun, e.g. take your favourite toy around the course.
- Place a focus on skills, or challenges, e.g. navigate a balance bike around a maze.
- Consider prizes for all, or no prizes. Reward and encouragement focussed on enjoyment, and effort instead of rewarding outcomes, such as 'winning'.

As children progress into the first stages of school, these ideas can be enhanced and developed, and incorporating relay events can help build social inclusion and connection. The focus should remain on building fundamental movement skills and enjoyment.



Outside Assistance

For the swim section those younger athletes (e.g. under 6 or who have not acquired sufficient swim skills yet) can be allowed a parent in the water to help them complete the distance by either aiding confidence or to aid with floatation, parents should not provide physical assistance with forward momentum. Additionally, floatation devices should be considered and allowed for these younger age groups.

Organising swims for young children where they can stand on the bottom is helpful in early triathlon experiences. This may require use of recreational shallow pools. Allowing children to gain momentum from pushing off from the bottom of the pool should also be allowed. It is not the quickest way to proceed but will aid confidence.

The biggest issue for many young children is being able to find their bike in the Transition Area or access their bike from a racking system. It is a sensible idea for the event organiser to provide official helpers to help children get their bike out of racking and put it away where required. This will most likely not be needed after the age of 10 and should only be available in the participative strand of events.



Safety and Welfare considerations

Event organisers should provide a safe and secure environment to allow the children to compete without fear. The following sections should be read in conjunction with the World Triathlon Event Organiser's Manual. Areas to pay specific attention to include, but are not limited to:

Lifeguards and Water Safety Crew

Lifeguards around a pool setting or water safety crew and equipment for open water.

First Aid

Provision of trained first aiders and medical personnel around the venue to meet or exceed the minimum standards for event sanctioning based on local recommendations from health professionals and insurance providers. Also consult any local rules or legislation and follow the highest standards from these two sources, i.e. opt for the support which provides the safest situation for all.

Parental (coaches) Code of Conduct

Parents can have a massive positive or negative impact upon the experience of children and others involved in events. Consider setting up a parental/spectator code of conduct before the event and sharing it with parents/spectators/coaches. The code of conduct can be sent to all coaches and parents beforehand, and also posted around the venue during the event. In some sports, penalties or disqualification can be imposed on the athlete and/or parents/coaches due to the poor behaviour of parents or coaches. Some things to consider in a Parental Code of conduct:

- Children get a wide range of benefits from participating in sport, including exercise, making friends, learning new skills. The focus does not need to be on winning.
- Take time to understand what your child wants from the sport, and support their goals, not what you think they should do.
- Focus on what the child wants from the sport, not what the adult thinks is best for them. e.g. If a child has a performance mentality that can be supported but it should come wholly from the child themselves rather than a parent or coach pushing them to have that mentality.
- Use supportive language, praising effort rather than results. Encourage other children too. Be supportive even if things do not go well in the event.
- Do not make judgements about the quality of their performance, especially on the day of the event.
- Understand the mistakes and limitations of our young athletes, valuing effort and dedication more than the result.
- Avoid rewards for results. It is better to reward the consistency and the effort in training and practice, independent of the result.
- Accept the Technical Official's judgement and help explain to younger athletes the reason for any issues that it is just part of learning the sport, and next time will be better.
- Encourage your child to play fair and stick within the rules of the sport.
- Use social media responsibly when communicating about the sport, the event or anyone involved in it.
- Listen to your child if they do not want to do something.
- When taking photographs or videos of your child during an event, make sure to respect the privacy of other participants.

Penalties

For the **participative strand** of racing the approach taken to penalties should be somewhat more relaxed, the aim is to increase participation and enjoyment. A penalty or even a stern warning from a Technical Official can and has put children off the sport, something which we all wish to avoid. For participative events, an approach that favours education, explaining where the athlete has gone wrong and asking them to correct their error is the favoured approach (i.e. stop and go). This should be done in a friendly, supportive, and educational manner.

Also consider that issuing penalties for younger children can be a significant issue for them, feeling like being told off at school. So, whilst the below categories suggest penalties could be given. Event organisers

should think carefully before using them, especially for those under 12 years old. The expectation would be they would only be used in the older ages in this group, and infrequently, mostly as a way of educating them about the rules and accepting decisions when they go against you. These are concepts which are more understandable for those of school age.

For **competitive events** instead of the standard time penalties reduced time penalties are introduced due to the events being much shorter as follows:

Age	Time Penalties	Disqualification possible?	*Drafting Time Penalty
Under 12	10 seconds	Yes	1 minute
12-13	10 seconds	Yes	1 minute
14-15	10 seconds	Yes	1 minute
16-18	As Adult as per race distance		
Adult Sprint	10 seconds	Yes	1 minute
Adult Standard	15 seconds	Yes	2 minutes

In development events, disqualification and penalties should be the last resort. Technical Officials should where possible take an educative approach with athletes and try and educate in a proactive way to prevent issues occurring. Technical Officials should keep in mind type of race and athletes taking part.

It is recommended to produce a 1-page document with Key Rules that should be shared with athletes beforehand, both in race information packs and posted around the event and covered in the race briefing.

* Recommendation : Consider draft-legal races as these are easier to organise and officiate, and at younger ages athletes rarely benefit from drafting performance gains, due to slower speeds. However, event organisers need to ensure from a safety perspective that the athletes will be safe to ride in close proximity, ensuring bike skills training has taken place or a basic skills test beforehand could be useful approaches. Additionally, ensuring that the course layout design is appropriate for a draft legal course given the abilities of the athletes.



Swim Specific Considerations



Pool Based Events

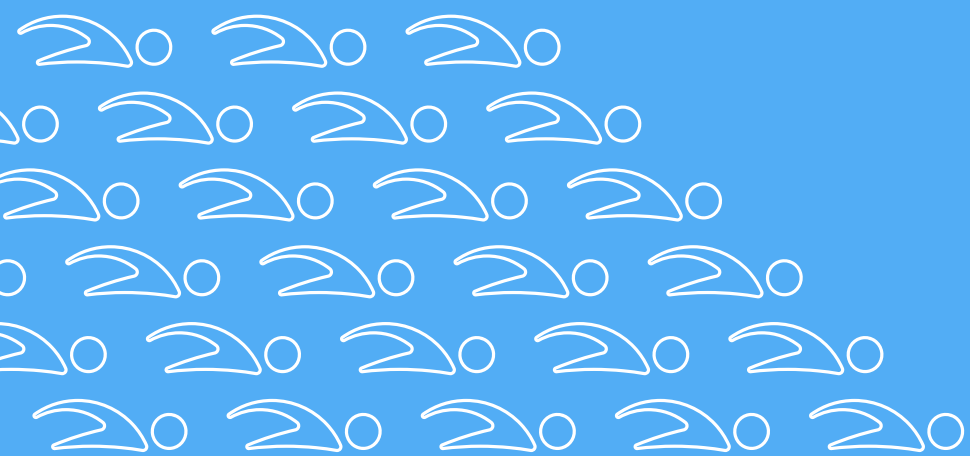
Pool based events are a safe and effective way to introduce any age athlete to the sport. Water quality is usually checked by the management of the pool, but this should be checked before organising events. They are an attractive option to novice athletes, as most are familiar with swimming pools, especially compared with open water. Pools also allow for easy control of water temperature and weather conditions (if indoors).

Support and Aids

For the very youngest age groups (under 8 years-old), allowing swimming with buoyancy aids should be considered. For those under 6 years-old parental support, e.g. the parent competes the pool element with the child can be an incredibly positive way to encourage children to take part and make it more accessible.

Lane Organisation

Generally, it is sensible to have a limited number of athletes in a lane, from a safety perspective. It is important to define and communicate the flow within a lane to all competitors and to monitor this from a safety perspective. They should keep on their own side of their lane throughout, this avoids collisions. For the shortest distance, it may be more sensible given pool design, to use widths of the pool, which allows shallow water throughout.



Open Water Events

Open water is an exciting and challenging environment for all individuals. As with adults, children may be more fearful of open water or actively pursue it because of the enjoyment it provides. Open water should generally be a progression after reaching a level of competency in the pool. However, it is accepted that for some NFs open water may be the only option. The key here is to manage the safety of swimming regardless of whether it is pool or open water based.

Water Quality

Water quality is critical and can be a significant safety concern. Refer to Water Quality section 10.2 / 10.3 of World Triathlon Competition Rules.

Note in addition to other water quality tests, tests for Bilharzia should also be considered in appropriate regions.

Warm Water Temperature

As with adults, competitive swimming should not take place over 32°C and should be limited to 10/20 minutes in the water over 31°C depending upon the distance as per adult competition rules. Wetsuits should not be allowed over 22°C.

Cold Water Temperature

Some children often suggest 'they don't feel the cold' and initially will seem able to swim in cold water when some adults would not appear as comfortable. However, children and younger athletes tend to have a greater body surface to body mass ratio and therefore will cool down quicker in cold water. They may also be less mentally aware of getting cold. As with adults, experience and ability should be assessed before any swims. A significant risk for anybody is cold water shock. Childhood exuberance can make them much more likely to jump straight into deeper cold water. Therefore, they should always be asked to acclimatise in safe/standing depth water before diving in.

Maximum duration in Open Water

The Table A from WT Competition Rules shows an adjusted water temperature value if the water temperature is at or lower than 22°C and the air temperature is at or below 15°C.

Use the above table to work out the adjusted water temperature. Then compare this value with the age category of the children to see the maximum permitted time for them to remain in the open water, or open-air unheated pool (Table B).

Table A

		Air temperature (all values in °C)										
		15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5
Water temperature (all values in °C)	22	18.5	18.0	17.5	17.0	16.5	16.0	15.5	15.0	14.5	14.0	Cancel
	21	18.0	17.5	17.0	16.5	16.0	15.5	15.0	14.5	14.0	13.5	Cancel
	20	17.5	17.0	16.5	16.0	15.5	15.0	14.5	14.0	13.5	13.0	Cancel
	19	17.0	16.5	16.0	15.5	15.0	14.5	14.0	13.5	13.0	12.5	Cancel
	18	16.5	16.0	15.5	15.0	14.5	14.0	13.5	13.0	12.5	12.0	Cancel
	17	16.0	15.5	15.0	14.5	14.0	13.5	13.0	12.5	12.0	Cancel	Cancel
	16	15.5	15.0	14.5	14.0	13.5	13.0	12.5	12.0	Cancel	Cancel	Cancel
	15	15.0	14.5	14.0	13.5	13.0	12.5	12.0	Cancel	Cancel	Cancel	Cancel
	14	14.0	14.0	13.5	13.0	12.5	12.0	Cancel	Cancel	Cancel	Cancel	Cancel
13	13.0	13.0	13.0	12.5	12.0	Cancel	Cancel	Cancel	Cancel	Cancel	Cancel	

Table B

Open water maximum duration and wetsuit use						
Age category	8-9	10-11	12-13	14-15	16-17	18-19
Max. stay in water (mins)	4	10	15	20	20	40
Wetsuit mandatory below °C	n/a	n/a	n/a	18	18	18
No swim below °C	18	18	18	16	16	16



Read the following notes when considering using this table.

- From a coaching perspective the timescales mentioned in the above table should not be desirable or target times for athletes to spend in the water, but a maximum.
- The above times should allow a competent swimmer with open water experience (e.g. in training) to compete the standard event distance for their age category, if the event can proceed.
- These temperature guidelines could in effect enforce an event organiser to consider shortening the event distance, i.e. if the maximum time in the water for a given race distance is likely to be exceeded then the race distance should be shortened or ultimately cancelled.

Training and Preparation for Cold Water

A child's first exposure to open water should not be in a race. As with any aspect of triathlon it is sensible to prepare, and for open water this should ideally be done over at least a 3-4-week period progressing through the following stages to build experience and competence:

- Slowly submerging in the water so that the whole body up to the neck is submerged. Note to do this in standing depth water for safety.
- Aim to get breathing under control.
- Submerge face in the water, again getting breathing under control.
- Swim short distances, close to shore in standing depth water.
- Swim longer distances, incorporating navigating around buoys and swim courses.

Training should also focus on water conditions, in addition to temperature, for example waves, currents, entry/exit and navigating around a course.

In addition, the basics of open water training should be covered or considered, open-water navigation, sighting, drafting, turns, starts (beach and deep water) and exits.

Water Conditions

As well as temperature and water quality there are a wide range of aspects that can affect the conditions in which swimming is planned, all of which can have an adverse effect on the safety of the event and should be considered. Where there is a risk to safety from any of the following, or other local examples, event organisers should consider them carefully and if the risk cannot be mitigated find an alternative venue. Possible risks to consider:

- Waves and surf that is hard to swim in, or restricts visibility for safety crew.
- Tidal action, where current towards the shore or away from the shore affects the swimmers' ability to reach markers or return to shore. Aim to run events at a time when according to tide charts, the tide is plateauing at the peak or valley or movement, minimising the risk.
- Rip tides or currents that could carry participants away from shore or into dangerous areas.
- Wildlife issues, such as jellyfish, nesting birds, or even sharks, crocodiles etc.
- Landscape issues, such as submerged rocks, or proximity to rocky coast lines.

Water-based safety support

As for adults, safety support should be provided. Any swimmer should be no more than 25m from safety craft whilst in the water. Review the Event Organiser's Manual for further details and recommendations.

Wetsuit Design

There should be no maximum thickness of wetsuit material for those under 14, this is to allow children to keep warm in cold temperatures. However, care should be taken so as to not restrict movement or swim ability, which could be a hazard in its own right, or become too tiring to swim in, for this reason wetsuits over 5mm thickness are allowed but should probably be discouraged. Those aged 14 and above should comply with standard wetsuit rules. This however

could be relaxed for a novice first time style event to encourage those new to the sport to enter. Allowing greater thickness wetsuits can make it easier for younger athletes to source a wetsuit if required, as finding wetsuits suitable for under 12-year-olds can be difficult.

Course Organisation

For younger age groups, the event distances are short and therefore likely to stay near to the shore, and possibly in standing depth water.

For events over 200m it can be more sensible to have a loop for the swim, so that there are no close pinch points around buoys, which can occur in out and back style swims. There is trade-off here between providing enough safety cover and a positive event experience.

Bike Considerations

Refer to the Event Organiser's manual for general bike course recommendations.

Bike Terrain

The course should be designed in an age appropriate manner considering the average rider likely to be taking part in the event. There should be no major technical aspects, e.g. descents with sharp turns at the bottom, difficult off road terrain etc.

The distances listed for the bike segment from the age of 10-years-old and above assume that the bike will be ridden on a hard, stable surface such as tarmac or pavement. For events on grass or off-road, NFs should consider reducing the bike segment distance, depending upon the difficulty of the terrain.

Bike Types

For younger age groups, especially under 10-year olds, it makes sense to allow any type of bike that conforms with basic safety guidance. The aim here is to encourage enjoyment and participation. This can also be true for novice and introductory events, where engaging young people to get involved in the sport is the priority.

Suggestions could include removing kick stands if possible and ensuring bar ends are plugged (or taped up by technical officials).

For events for children aged 14 years and above, where the race is considered competitive and for children with more experience, it therefore makes more sense to be more specific on guidance or rules

for bikes for a specific event, these should be progressively more in line with World Triathlon Bike regulations the older athletes get and the higher prestige the event is. For example, a national championship for Youths should aim to conform to standard World Triathlon rules. However, children, parents and coaches should not feel the need to purchase higher specification bikes or specialised equipment (such as aero bars and clipless pedals) at these ages. This equipment and specialised bikes are expensive, the children often grow out of them quickly and they can present a greater risk of injury. The recommendation is to wait until the children are older and have developed a range of strengths and skills on the bike to warrant this kind of equipment.

Drafting

Draft-legal races present young athletes an opportunity to develop a wider range of skills, including bike handling and race tactics, which can add enjoyment and improve the skill base for the athlete who may want to compete in these races as they get older.

For younger athletes, drafting is not a performance factor as they most likely will not be traveling fast enough to get a significant benefit, especially if competing on grass. It is useful from a safety point of view however, and there is a coaching opportunity in preparation for events to teach children bike handling skills in group situations (e.g. looking ahead, reacting to other riders). This could be tied in with agility-based skills for younger children, even with the context of the event itself, e.g. ride around a maze.

Draft-legal races do bring more potential for collisions and injury and as such there is a trade-off here in trying to ensure the athletes taking part are sufficiently skilled to ride in groups. It therefore makes sense to make use of both draft free and draft legal races in children's races.

For the very youngest children (e.g. under 10s) where the number of athletes may be small and the events involve potentially only one lap, in some ways it makes sense to ignore drafting rules to make the sport easier to understand and more accessible. At this age we want children to have a positive experience.

For more capable children from around the age of 10-12, it should be possible to start to introduce drafting rules more formally and have draft-free and draft-legal races. It would be sensible to differentiate the types

of events and make it clear that there is a higher skill component to draft-legal races and even consider some kind of progression, so that a competitive draft-legal race isn't a child's first experience of triathlon. Best practice suggests undertaking some training/coaching with any children likely to be taking part in a draft legal race before they actually compete.

Drafting should be allowed under the age of 10.

Ideally, all cycling should be segregated from any roads with traffic, or the possibility of traffic.

Run Considerations

For the run discipline there are limited additional considerations, unlike swim and bike, where there are multiple equipment and venue specific factors. However, it makes sense to have safety personnel and drink stands around the run course, as per event organisers guide.

For running, the key considerations are concerned with impact injuries. The focus therefore is on running surfaces and footwear.

Regarding running surfaces, events should where possible, be held on more forgiving surfaces such as grass fields or off-road trails. Avoiding concrete/tarmac pavements and roads is advised especially for younger children to protect joints which are still under development.

Footwear should be neutral and intended as running footwear where possible. Barefoot running is a contentious point and would only be recommended for those where barefoot running is and has been part of their normal lifestyle.



Be your extraordinary

Contact

development@triathlon.org

