

A Guide to Your First Race

**Helpful Tips for Anyone Preparing for
Their First Race**



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Introduction

Welcome and congratulations on registering for your first race! This is an exciting time for you as you train and prepare for your upcoming event. We, at Ontario Cycling, want to make sure that you are equipped with all the necessary information for you to have the best experience possible!

Throughout this guide, you'll find some suggestions and tips ranging from choosing your first race and what type of membership you will need, to where and how to pin your bib numbers and what you should eat. Please note that every race is different, but we hope that this guide is a helpful starting point to help you feel a little bit more equipped prior to your first race. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to reach out to the Ontario Cycling Events Team (events.team@ontariocycling.org) or to the specific event organizer.

Choosing your Race

The first step is to decide which race you want to participate in. At Ontario Cycling, we sanction a variety of events from Gran Fondos, Charity Rides, Weekly Series, Regional events, Ontario Cups and Provincial Championships. They take place all over the province so feel free to make it a destination event! You can view all the events on the calendar on our website. There are also many disciplines you can choose from such as Track, Road, Gravel, Mountain Bike, Cyclo-Cross and BMX.

Technical Guide

A technical guide (tech guide for short) is a race document created by the race organizer. It has all the information you need regarding the event such as date, time, location, registration fees/deadlines, category offerings, maps, types of races, race day schedule, parking, first aid and race-specific rules, etc.

Not all Ontario Cycling sanctioned events require a tech guide so you may have to look on the race website for information. All Ontario Cups (OCups) and Provincial Championships will have tech guides that are reviewed by Ontario Cycling staff and the President of the Commissaire Panel (the head official for the event).



Photo Credit: Robert Roaldi

Registering for your Race

Ontario Cycling Memberships

Ontario Cycling provides several options when it comes to memberships that can be used at events. The type of event (and sometimes the category) will primarily dictate which membership is the best to purchase. The great thing about the Ontario Cycling Membership, is that once you choose your level, it's all-inclusive for all cycling disciplines. For example, if you wish to try a road race and a mountain bike race, you only need to buy your Ontario Cycling Membership once.

Below is a summary of all the membership options an individual has to be able to participate in a sanctioned event. Contact Ontario Cycling if you have any questions about what type of membership is best for you! If you would like to purchase your membership, please visit our website here!

Non-Member Permit

Non-Member Permits are a good choice if you are new to racing and are just wanting to try an event out. This permit allows someone without a membership to participate in a single event.

- Purchase at the time of registration for \$10.00 (Adults - 19+) or \$5.00 (Youth - 19 and under).
- A maximum of 3 can be purchased by an individual each year.
- Those who decide they want to join as a member after purchasing a non-member permit can apply the cost of their first permit to any OC membership for that season (Challenge or higher).
- Non-Member permits are not available at every event, so please confirm before the event with the organizer or the event Technical Guide whether this is an option.
- Note: Non-Member Permits do not include Accidental Death & Dismemberment (AD & D) or medical insurance.

Challenge Membership

A Challenge membership is a great for first time racers and for those participating at a local weekly series, interclub or regional event. It can also be used in select non-championship categories at Ontario Cups and Provincial Championship events (See Event-specific Technical Guide for more information).

- Purchased online through OC's membership registration provider, CCN Bikes.
- Only applicable for events in Ontario sanctioned by Ontario Cycling.
- Good for any racing discipline.
- Can be used at Youth Development Series Events.
- Holders have access to member insurance benefits while participating in OC sanctioned events or club activities.

Compete Membership

A Compete membership is ideal for those individuals who race in championship categories at Ontario Cups and Provincial Championship events. It can also be used at all events ideal for Challenge and Community members as well.

- Purchased online through OC's membership registration provider, CCN Bikes.
- Only applicable for events in Ontario sanctioned by Ontario Cycling.
- Good for any racing discipline.
- Can be used at Youth Development Series Events.
- Holders have access to member insurance benefits while participating in OC sanctioned events or club activities.

UCI License

A UCI License is a good choice if you wish to race in any events hosted or sanctioned by Ontario Cycling, events outside the province of Ontario, or at national/international sanctioned events within the province. UCI License holders will be able to compete in any sanctioned event anywhere in the world, subject to certain conditions.

- Purchased online through OC's membership registration provider CCN Bikes.
- Holders have access to member insurance benefits while participating in UCI, National or Provincial sanctioned events or club activities.
- Good for any racing discipline.
- Purchased online through OC's membership registration provider CCN Bikes.
- Holders have access to member insurance benefits while participating in UCI, National or Provincial sanctioned events or club activities.

Once your membership has been issued, you will receive a digital card (PDF Format) emailed to you. It is also available in your CCN Bikes account to download. Print or save this card to your smartphone and be ready to show it at any event when signing in. If you would like a physical copy, this can be printed and mailed to you at an additional cost.



Getting Ready for Race Day

Now that you have a membership, are registered, and have reviewed the tech guide, the big day will be here in no time. Therefore, it is important to start planning and preparing as there are a few things you will want to remember before you set out.

Race Day Checklist

- ☐ Your kit (cycling clothing, helmet, shoes)
- ☐ Your bike (cleaned, in mechanical working order)
- ☐ Download your digital membership to your phone or bring a physical copy of the membership (if you are not using a non-member permit)
- ☐ Food/hydration for before, during, and after the race
- ☐ Change of clothes (warm/dry clothes for after the race)
- ☐ Tools, a pump, lube, inner tubes, and other common bike maintenance items.
- ☐ Safety pins for numbers (depending on style of race)
- ☐ Small first aid kit for minor bumps and scratches
- ☐ Water bottle and snacks
- ☐ Sunscreen
- ☐ Sunglasses
- ☐ Cycling computer
- ☐ Umbrella
- ☐ Chair



Note: Regularly check the posted tech guide before race day to make sure there have been no changes to location, pre-riding, or start times.

How to Fuel (Before and During)

Before the Race

When race day is finally here, you want to be sure you are efficiently and effectively fueling. Consuming lots of carbohydrates on race day is best. Carbohydrates are sugar molecules that your body breaks down into glucose, which is your body's main source of energy. Therefore, to ensure you have enough energy to last the entire race, you want to eat a lot of carbohydrates and quickly digestible foods, such as white bread, honey, bananas, and oatmeal, 1.5-2 hours before the race.

It is also important to be well-hydrated before the race. Drinking 5-7mL of fluid per kg of body weight throughout the 4-hour period before the race has been found to be effective and helps avoid that weighted down feeling some experience when hydrating before races.

Finally, 30-45 minutes before the race, eat something small and drink about 300mL of fluid to give your body the extra energy needed to start the race off strong.

During the Race

For races longer than 2 hours, it is important to consume carbohydrates about every 15 minutes during the race. Drinking your carbs is easiest and most convenient during a race, but remember, small sips are always better than chugging the entire bottle. It is also important to drink plenty of fluids during the race. Ensure you are replenishing your electrolytes by consuming sports drinks that contain 10-30mmol/L of sodium. Consuming drinks containing this amount of sodium will allow for optimal fluid absorption and prevent low sodium levels in the blood, which could negatively affect muscles and heartbeat.

Race Day is HERE!

Be sure to arrive early! You must first check in at the sign-in tent when you arrive. Your race number, any other race-related items (swag, timing chips, etc.), and your membership or ID must be shown here. Be sure to arrive early because lines can occasionally be long and sign-in closes 30 minutes before your race.

Depending on the type of event you are participating, you will need to either pin your numbers to your back and side (road, cyclocross, gravel), pin to both sides of your back (track), or zip tie your number plate to your bike (XC mountain bike). Make sure you provide yourself enough time to complete this, and double-check that you have the right placement in the tech guide or upon sign-in. We can usually find someone to help with number pinning, so be sure to ask if you need help if you are unsure.



There might be time for open training and pre-riding of the course, depending on the type of race. There are specific occasions when this is permitted to occur, yet it frequently occurs during mountain biking and cyclocross competitions. Ask a representative or someone at the sign-in desk if you have any questions regarding whether you can pre-ride the course. The proper timings will be stated in the tech guide.

Be sure to be aware of the race schedule and to keep an eye out on races running ahead or behind schedule. Officials will be dressed in light blue shirts or jacket. For outdoor events, they will let you know when to line up at the starting line. If you're unsure what to do, ask another cyclist. Depending on the sort of race, competitors may be called in order to the start line or it may be a free-for-all. When the race is about to begin, pay attention for any last-minute statements from the commissaires, and once it does, be careful to comply with any directions they may provide regarding laps, a shortened race, etc.

Significant! Make sure you check in at the finish line and notify the commissaires that did not finish the race (DNF) if you are unable to finish it for whatever reason. This is crucial—and required—so that the organizers, officials, and timers can verify that you are safe and not in danger or trapped somewhere.

After the Race

Congratulations! You made it over the finish line!

Nearly everyone who finishes their first race comments on how much harder it was than they anticipated! Therefore, be sure to allow yourself some time to cool down (spin slowly for a few minutes to lower your heart rate), and then partake in some of the post-race food and beverage. Join in on the tales of victory and sorrow with others if you're feeling up to it. One unique part of racing is talking about and reliving moments of the race with your fellow racers. While you wait patiently for the results to be posted, feel free to hang around and support your fellow cyclists if you are able.

If you managed to reach the podium, stay for the recognition, photos, and awards. And if not, that's ok – each time you compete, it's an opportunity to improve and build towards your racing goals!

Now it's time to check the Ontario Cycling for more events you can try – even other disciplines!



Photo Credit: Pedal Power Photography