



# AUSTRALIAN ATHLETICS

## THE FIT MODEL

Minimum Age Recommendations for Road  
(Running and Race Walking) Distance Events



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Research shows that athletics is a sport associated with high injury rates and in younger athletes this has been linked to higher training intensity and competition loads and for many eventual drop out from the sport. To ensure long term participation and enjoyment in the sport, Australian Athletics has developed these guidelines and recommendations for training and participation to minimise dropouts, particularly through injury and/or inappropriate competition loads.

Research or data in athletics specifying or quantifying when to start or how much competition is appropriate at various levels is very limited. However, based on research in multiple junior sports and athletics competition schedules and opportunities for children (under 10 years) and adolescents (10-19 years) in similar western sporting cultures (UK and Northern Ireland, USA, Canada), Australian Athletics makes the recommendations below in relation to participation for younger athletes in distance events.

For context, these recommendations should be read in conjunction with the following documents:

- The FIT Model - Training and Competition Guidelines for Children and Adolescents
- The FIT Model - Overview of Stages of Development

In considering the recommended ages below, please note the following:

- These recommended ages are intended to provide general guidance only. Any competition rules pertaining to a particular event distance determined by World Athletics, Australian Athletics or associated governing body takes precedence over these guidelines.
- Given the significant variation in physical and mental development amongst children and young adults of the same chronological age, the listed minimum ages may or may not be appropriate for every individual child/ adolescent.
- Just because a child or adolescent is capable of completing a particular distance doesn't necessarily mean they should participate or compete over that distance at a given age. We encourage coaches and parents to exercise caution, particularly over longer distances for growing bodies in the interests of a child's longer-term health, wellbeing, and development.
- Participation in the event distances below for children/adolescents could involve fun runs or parkrun events. Australian Athletics' recommendation is that specific



training on a regular basis for longer road runs should be delayed until 15 - 16 years for 5km, 17 -18 years for 10km and 18+ for distances beyond 10km.

<b>Event / Event Range</b>	<b>Minimum Age Recommendation(s) for Participation</b>
5km	Participation from 12 years onwards
10km	Participation from 16 years onwards
Half Marathon	Participation from 17 - 18 years onwards
Marathon	Participation from at least 18 years onwards
Ultra	Participation from 18 – 20 years + for Marathon to 100km ultras