

A Guide to Your First BMX Race

Some helpful tips for those interested in BMX racing



Preamble

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

Below is a bit of an outline of what you will need and what to look out for your first BMX 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 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 any club. All of our clubs' volunteers are wonderful approachable people 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.

Getting Started

If you are brand new to BMX, there are few things you will need to know and a number of steps to take before you or your little racer can start racing.

What is a BMX Race?

In simple terms a BMX race can be described as "sprint cycling over a specially prepared dirt racetrack". Races are run on tracks that are usually 300-400 meters long and consist of a series of jumps and bumps with banked corners known as "berms". Riders race each other over one lap with a maximum of eight riders in each race. They race against riders of their own age or ability group.



Is there a minimum or maximum age?

The minimum age to take part in full BMX racing is 5 years old. In the cycling world your cycling age is always the age you are on December 31st, so even if someone is 4 years old in July if they turn 5 by December 31st they would race as a 5-year-old.

There is no maximum age for BMX.

How do I get started?

The first thing you will want to do is find a club or track. All of our ABA affiliated clubs are listed at <http://www.albertabicycle.ab.ca/affiliated-clubs>.

If you choose not to join one of our local tracks there will be increased fees in order to access any of the tracks and additional fees to race at an AB Cup race. You may also not be able to access some services like coaching clinics or special race nights.

All tracks have bikes you can use to start your journey and try out the sport of BMX. Tracks and the ABA also offer *One-time try outs* so you can try the sport before you commit to a license.

Once you have found the local club you want to join, you will need to purchase your ABA license.

What license do you need?

ABA licenses are purchased through www.zone4.ca. There are two types of licenses BMX members can purchase. Licenses act as your insurance so you are covered by a sport accident and liability policy.

General Membership- A general membership gives a rider access to their home track. They can take part in clinics, practice nights and district racing as per their track regulations. General member's do not move up from the beginner, or novice, category and are not able to race in the AB Cup Provincial Series

UCI BMX Race Licenses- A UCI license, is an International Race License. With this license you can race at other tracks, move up through categories, take part in the AB Cup Series, National Championships and even race in some other countries. Race licenses are based on your age and all racers start in the Novice category.

All licenses are digital licenses, you will get a copy of your licensed emailed to you, up to a week after you purchase your license. Until then, most tracks will take your receipt as proof of purchase.

I'm licensed, now what?

Once you have joined a club and have purchased your license, you are ready to enjoy the sport of BMX! Your local track will assist you with the best practices regarding equipment, but in short you will need a BMX bike, a full-face helmet, gloves, long pants, and a long shirt. There are lots of opportunities to purchase used equipment. You will also be given a plate number from your track operator; this is either the last 3 digits from your license UCID number or last 3 digits of your birthdate.



DISTRICT LEVEL RACING (1st level of BMX)

This is the first level of racing that you will encounter when you start BMX. You will be competing against other local racers throughout the season and your points will be tallied up at the end of the year to determine your final year-end ranking.

Your club will help you understand the particulars of racing, so make sure you attend the beginner clinics so you are comfortable understanding the regulations. All of the regulations are posted on our website www.albertabicycle.ab.ca/regulations

This is also where you can start collecting wins, depending on your gender, age and level, you require a set number of wins to move from Novice to Intermediate to Expert. All the information regarding upgrading can be found at <http://www.albertabicycle.ab.ca/upgrading>

Don't sweat anything too much, each track has lots of volunteers, officials and coaches who will be there every step of the way. If you are unsure of anything- just ask!



PROVINCIAL LEVEL RACING

Alberta BMX is the race organizer in Alberta, it is a group made up of all the local tracks and other volunteers. They set the calendar, purchase the prizing, organizer registration and everything else that goes into holding an Alberta Cup Provincial Series Race.

The Alberta Provincial Series is where racers can test their skills against riders from all over the province and sometimes other provinces. You don't need to "qualify" for these races, and you don't need to be an expert level racer either. Classes are run just like district races, so Novice girls will race other Novice girls of the same age. They run as a series of 8 races throughout the province, plus the final race that is called "Grands" and held in early September.

You will need to register separately for a Provincial race, and you can save money by registering online. The registration link will be at www.albertabmx.com

Race Day

Now that you are licensed, tried some district racing, are registered, and have read over all the information for the race, (and triple checked license check/registration times) you are ready to head out to the race.

What to bring

Of course you will need your bike, helmet, jersey, and other race equipment, but here are some other things you will want to have with you.

Remember racing at a Provincial event is an all-day event. It is a great family atmosphere and there are always people to help you out, but to make your day more enjoyable you will with to have:

- Your digital e-license.
- Tools to repair any issues that may come up
- Water/Food for the day
- Chairs for the family and racers
- Cell phone to check results
- Pen/Paper/Tape to write down your moto number



At the race

Make sure you arrive early! First off when you arrive, you will need to check in at the registration centre. This is where you will show your license/ID and pick up your side plate and also fix any errors that might be on your registration

When the time of your race comes near, pay attention for announcements so you don't miss your moto. Each moto is numbered and motos will be posted just prior to when races start.

When your number is getting closer make your way over to the staging area. Remember to bring your bike, helmet, gloves etc.

Listen to the officials.

Make sure you cheer on your family and friends and eat and hydrate between motos.

Enjoy the day!

