



# First Time Guide to Criterium Racing

## What to Know Beforehand

- The Canberra Cycling Club is run by volunteers, including crits. We expect all members to volunteer once every 1-2 years.
- A Criterium or crit is a short road race, typically on a road circuit of between 800m to 3 kilometres.
- Crits are short, fast races, often involving technical (lots of corners!) courses with close competition.
- They usually have no set distance, but instead the race is run over a set time and then a number of laps. For example, A Grade at CCC race for about 30 minutes and then two laps, while C, D and E grades race for less time, but still with 2 laps after the time. Having a timer as part of your cycle computer is therefore useful.
- We have a rotating calendar - each grade starts at a different time each week.
- Like all sports cycle racing has rules. 95% of cycling rules have a safety intention. Do not race until you have read and understand the rules that apply to the race you plan on entering. Check out CCC race rules [HERE](#).
- Water bottles, take one on your bike, and one for afterwards. As the races are short there's rarely a need for more than one bottle, and also there's no need to eat during a crit. There is water at SFP.
- A legal bicycle. Crits in Australia require that you use a road-race legal bicycle. Road bike handlebars are mandatory, and the ends of the bars must be plugged. You can't ride TT disc or bladed wheels or TT-style aero-bars.
- Lights, mirrors, frame pumps etc., take them off before you race. Apart from them being heavy they can fall off and cause an accident.
- Your helmet must be Australian Standards approved.
- Gloves aren't mandatory, but in the event of a crash they can save your palms from some nasty wounds.
- Wear cycling clothes if you have them. They are designed to make riding faster and more comfortable. If you don't have any, that's fine too!

- Many riders wear club or team kit, their local bike shop kit, or plain jerseys. In open races the rules are tighter about what you can wear, but for club and regional races you can wear anything really.
- Entry fee. This is usually \$15. All entries are via <https://boss.as/canberra>.
- All new riders will start in E grade.
- No matter how strong you think you are, or how strong you actually are, you need to learn how to race and develop race skills. It is not easy taking a corner at 40kmh a few cm behind somebody and with a person rubbing each of your shoulders.
- If you have raced before please complete the grading form during online registration and we will allocate you to into an appropriate grade.

## Entry

- All entries are via the relevant week's EntryBoss listing.
- You must have a Race All Discipline licence to race. If you are new you can take out a 1-day licence, a 7-day licence, or a 4-week trial.
- All memberships and licences via the AusCycling Membership page. <https://auscycling.org.au/become-a-member>
- Make sure you select CCC as your club
- You must create a profile in EntryBoss and correctly enter your details, including your AusCycling membership number.
- It is your responsibility to correctly enter your details. Each Wednesday at 210pm (after entries close) we run an automatic licence verification process and any riders whose membership is expired, suspended etc will be 'scratched' (removed) from the race.
- We recommended that riders enter well before entry cutoff. If we spot an issue with your licence we will try to contact you using the details you provide in EntryBoss to notify you about any licence issues and give you a chance to fix them before the cutoff.
- Tip - don't enter at the last minute!
- Online entries close at 2pm each Wednesday. No late entries or at the race entries.

## When You Arrive

- Firstly, be on time. Price, location, start times, race duration and anything you need to know for CCC crits can be found [HERE](#).
- Try to be at the course around 30-45 minutes early. As soon as you get there, find the rego desk and tell them it's your first race.
- If you are a CCC member we will issue you 2x cloth numbers (one is a spare) and a frame plate that is yours to keep.
- If you are not a CCC member you can use a temporary number that must be returned after each race.

- Take your jersey off and pin one number to the back of your jersey, low down so that the bottom of the number is a few cm above the bottom of your jersey. Either in the centre or off slightly to the right. Attach the frame plate to your seatpost. The volunteers on the desk will help you if required.
- Then, go for a warm-up, but not on the course. You can warm up on the section of track to the north of the course, or in the surrounding streets.
- Make sure that with around 5 minutes before race time you're back at the track and warmed up well - crits take off pretty quickly sometimes, and if you're not warm you'll blow up in the first 10 minutes.

## Race Time!

- Riders are marshalled on the ramp between the rego desk and the central gate onto the crit track.
- Get into the bunch and try to be reasonably close to the front. Listen to the race briefing. When the officials start the race make sure you start your timer on your computer.
- Races always roll away neutral, then start on the whistle. This means that the field will ride around the course a bit slower than racing speed, and no one will try to attack (ride away off the front) until the whistle is blown by a race official. This is to let the field have a look at the course and in the case of lower grade races, let the field get used to each other and being in a racing bunch.

## After the Race

- Treat the race officials with respect. They're volunteers and without them, you're not racing. Thank them after the race.
- At CCC crits after the race is over complete another half lap to warm down and then move into the finish chute in the middle of the track.
- Our volunteers will confirm placings (open and women's grades, sprint primes).
- If you've placed or won a prime wait for instructions, and your prize and podium photo.
- Be a good sport and congratulate your fellow riders on a good win, a good ride etc.
- If your race didn't go as well as you'd hoped keep your emotions under control and remember there are children and families present and watching. What behaviour do you want to display?
- As you cross back to the side of the track beware of other grades that may have started racing after you finished.
- If you collected a temporary number return it to the registration desk.
- Thank the volunteers who have given their time so you can race

## What Tactics to Follow?

- Once the race starts, you'll need to understand a bit about how road racing works.

- Generally, riders will race to their strengths, which means that people who can ride at high speeds for a long time but can't sprint well will want to break away from the bunch, and riders who can't ride fast and long but who can sprint will want a bunch finish so that they can sprint clear after drafting the bunch. If you remember this, you'll see what different things different riders will try and do to set the race up for their win.
- And then, there is bunch fodder riders, who don't really have a plan and who do things for no logical reason. They're the ones who take off in very early attacks and get reeled in over and over again. Watch what happens, see who seems strong, and remember one racing golden rule - never do any work unless it's for your benefit or the benefit of a team mate.
- There's no prizes for who does the biggest turn on the front, but sometimes you may have to do a turn to help chase down a break. Sometimes other riders won't help, sometimes riders will shout at you to chase - always think before acting in a race, if someone shouts at you to chase down a break, ask yourself if you think it will benefit your race.
- Race tactics is the subject of whole books and experience is what counts, but if you remember the golden rule, you'll generally be ok. Try not to let gaps open up, stay near the front and stay out of the wind!

## Racing Etiquette and Rules

- Racing is not like a training bunch ride where everyone's doing turns and riding smoothly together, but it is usually a bunch ride, and you need to remember a few basics - always ride safely is the biggest one of all. Again the CCC Race Rules are all about safety, your safety and the safety of other riders.
- Racing's pretty simple, but in crits there's some interesting rules - for example if you have a mechanical problem - a puncture etc., you can usually take a lap out to fix it and then re-join the main bunch in your grade. You have to ride around to the race officials and inform them. You can't do this in the last few laps - but the officials should tell you that at the start.
- If you've been dropped by your bunch and lapped, you have to pull out with 3 laps to go and stay out of the way for the rest of the time.
- As you get closer to the finish, the pace usually increases, and riders will try late attacks and so on, don't panic at this point. If you have a plan, stick to it (at least for your first race!). And you do have a plan, right?
- If you're in a sprint for the finish, ride in a straight line, do not try and weave over the road to stop anyone overtaking you. It's illegal and very dangerous.
- Once you cross the finish line, ease off and roll around the course or follow the instructions of the officials.
- Although the Pros put both hands in the air when celebrating a win, don't do it. It's actually illegal in amateur racing to take both hands off the bars at any point during a race, and you run the risk of not only crashing but being disqualified!