



Athletics
Australia[®]

The FIT Model

Recommendations for Road 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, Athletics Australia has developed these guidelines and recommendations for training and competition 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), Athletics Australia makes the recommendations below in relation to participation and competition 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

Event/Event Range	Minimum Age Recommendation(s) for Participation and Competition
5km	Participation from 11 - 12 years onwards
10km	Participation from 13 - 14 years onwards
Half Marathon	Participation from 16 years onwards
Marathon	Participation from 18 years onwards
Ultra	Participation from 18 – 20 years + for Marathon to 100km ultras

Participation in these events for children could involve fun runs or parkrun events but training on a regular basis for longer road runs should be delayed until 15 - 16 years for 5km and 10km and 18+ for distances beyond 10km.