

AUSCYCLING

Athlete Development Framework

Olympic

INTRODUCTION

AusCycling Values

Our values underpin our success.

Stronger Together

Unity drives our impact. At AusCycling, we support, respect, and listen to each other, valuing every contribution across pillars, disciplines, and roles. Our diversity is our strength, and together, we achieve more.

Win Well

Success is richer when earned with integrity. We pursue our goals with determination, uphold our principles, and prioritise the wellbeing of our athletes and staff. We celebrate with humility, learn from losses, and remain accountable to ourselves and each other.

People First

At AusCycling, we prioritise respect, growth, and wellbeing. We celebrate wins, learn from mistakes, and support the whole person—balancing work, family, and self-care. Our goal is to leave as better professionals and better people.

Be Bold

We embrace the opportunity to shape a new future for cycling in Australia. Brave and innovative, we challenge traditions, take risks, and welcome diverse perspectives. Honouring our past, we forge a bold path toward new ambitions and ways of growing the sport.

VISION

To allow every athlete to reach their full potential on and off the bike.

MISSION

To give every athlete, coach, parent and stakeholder a clear guide for growth through every stage of the performance pathway.



What is the ADF?

The AusCycling Athlete Development Framework (ADF) is the roadmap for developing cyclists across all six of AusCycling's Olympic disciplines: BMX Racing, BMX Freestyle, Mountain Bike Cross-Country (XCO), Road, Track Sprint, and Track Endurance. It sets out what great development looks like at each stage of an athlete's journey, what great coaching and support looks like alongside it, from when a young rider hits the track or drops into a park, all the way through to competing and winning on the world stage.

The ADF is not a single training program or a rigid prescription. It is a development philosophy and a common language, a set of expectations and principles that aligns athletes, coaches, clubs, state institutes, and national programs so that everyone is working in the same direction, regardless of discipline or geography.

The AusCycling ADF proposes a staged progression from general to specialised sport development. AusCycling also recognises that talent development can be variable and influenced by individual factors and may require flexibility on entry age and progression rates

Why it exists

The ADF is built on the understanding that the best athletes are physically capable, technically skilled, tactically smart, mentally resilient, and well-rounded people who genuinely love what they do. Great coaches sequence an athlete's development to build the physical, technical, and psychological foundations at every stage, creating environments where athletes are developed at the right pace. The aim is to set them up not just for the next race, but for a lifetime in the sport.

For coaches, the framework provides a structured reference to ensure that the demands placed on athletes in training, racing, and life are developmentally appropriate. The ADF supports conversations between athletes and coaches, clear planning at club and program level, and consistent development pathways across the country.



Who it's for

The ADF is written for different audiences that matter equally.

- **For athletes:** Each stage of the framework includes a narrative written directly to you. It tells you what this phase of your development is about, what you should be working on technically, physically, and mentally, and what the coaching and support environment around you should look like. The language is direct as you deserve to understand your own development, not just be told what to do.

- **For coaches:** The ADF is your guide to what appropriate development looks like at each stage. It tells you what skills to prioritise, what physical demands are suitable, what the athlete's mindset and character should be growing towards, and what your role is as the athlete progresses. It also clarifies how coaching responsibility evolves: from club and development coaches at the earliest stages, through to accredited AusCycling coaches, state institute staff, and ultimately the national performance program. At every level, the framework gives you the context to make better decisions for the athletes in your care.

- **For parents and clubs:** The ADF is a guide to understanding what your child / rider needs most at each stage of their cycling journey so you can support them in the right way, at the right time. It also provides information to assist you in asking the right questions to the right people, all with the aim of assisting with the athlete journey.

What it covers

Across all disciplines, the ADF addresses five interconnected areas of development. These apply equally to athletes living the experience and to coaches designing and delivering it:

Technical and Tactical Skills

The discipline-specific skills athletes need at each stage, from core fundamentals through to high-pressure race execution. For coaches, this means understanding which skills are appropriate to introduce and when, how to sequence skill development progressively, and how to set up training environments that develop both technical proficiency and tactical intelligence.

Support Environment and Life Skills

The coaches, programs, and facilities appropriate at each stage, alongside the practical life skills (nutrition, recovery, travel, financial literacy, education, and professional communication) that athletes need to become independent, capable people. Coaches play an important role in identifying when athletes need support beyond the technical and facilitating access to the right people.

Physical Development

How athletes train their bodies across each age and stage, including training volume, intensity, strength and conditioning, and the critical importance of working with, not against, the athlete's physical maturity. Coaches are responsible for monitoring load carefully at every stage and ensuring training is always appropriately calibrated to the individual athlete.

Racing and Competition

The appropriate levels, volumes, and types of competition for each stage, and how athletes and coaches should approach each race or event. Competitions at the early stages are learning environments: as athletes progress, they become performance environments. Understanding this distinction and not treating early races as high-stakes outcomes is one of the most important things a coach can do.

Character, Mindset, and Winning Well

The mental and behavioral qualities that separate good athletes from great ones: focus, resilience, coachability, composure under pressure, and the ability to compete with integrity. For coaches, this means deliberately creating environments that actively coach and reinforce these qualities. Winning Well means pursuing results with integrity and care, competing hard, competing fair, and making sure that what you do on the bike makes you a better person off it.

AusCycling Rider Development Principles

The AusCycling Rider Development Principles provide clarity on what matters most in the U15, U17 and U19 development years, and why. They capture the core tenets of how world-class cyclists progress from the skills to be mastered, the environments that shape growth, and the experiences that accelerate potential. The Rider Development Principles apply to all cycling disciplines and are woven throughout the AusCycling Athlete Development Framework.

The philosophy behind the ADF

Across every discipline and every coaching level, the ADF is anchored in a set of shared beliefs:

Fun and love of the sport come first

At the early stages especially, the most important outcome is that young athletes fall in love with cycling and want to enjoy racing. Coaches have a direct responsibility for shaping this environment.

Sample early, Specialise Later

The ADF actively encourages cross-discipline participation and sport sampling at younger ages. Road strengthens the track athlete, MTB builds fitness and skills in all endurance athletes, BMX Race introduces intensity and riding skills to all riders. Specialisation comes in time once the foundational movement skills and love of sport are firmly in place and coaches should actively support and encourage this.

Development is holistic

The ADF deliberately addresses the whole person, their mindset, habits, education, and relationships with coaches, support staff and teammates.

Progress is earned, not rushed

Each stage has its own emphasis and its own appropriate demands. Athletes should move to the next stage when they are developmentally ready. This is one of the most important roles the ADF plays, giving coaches and programs the guardrails to sequence development appropriately.

The coach-athlete relationship is built on trust and honest communication

Across every stage, the narratives emphasise coachability, athletes taking feedback on board and applying it. Coaches, in turn, are responsible for creating the conditions in which that is possible: providing high-quality, specific, and timely feedback; and building relationships in which athletes feel safe to make mistakes andask questions.

Coaches develop too

The ADF is a living framework. As athletes grow through the stages, coaches should also be growing, deepening their discipline knowledge, expanding their understanding of athlete development, and reflecting honestly on their own practice. The framework is as much a professional development tool for coaches as it is a guide for athletes and parents.





How the ADF is structured

The ADF is organised by discipline and then by age and stage category. Each category includes:

- A narrative written to the athlete describing what this stage is about and what they should be working on across all five development areas.
- Reference sections that expand on each domain (technical skills, physical development, character and mindset, coaching support, and competition) in greater detail for athletes, coaches and parents.

The stages progress from the earliest development ages (typically U15) through junior and U19 levels, to U23 and Elite. Not every discipline follows an identical pathway. The trajectory of a BMX Freestyle athlete looks different to a Track Endurance athlete however the underlying developmental philosophy is consistent across all of them.

How to read it

The framework is delivered through two connected documents: a full pathway matrix for each discipline, and a one-page summary for each stage within it. Here is how to read each one.

The Pathway Matrix (one per discipline)

A single sheet that maps an entire discipline and every stage across the top, every area of development down the side.

- Columns are the stages from U15 through to Elite, grouped under the three phases: Ignite, Progress and Perform.
- Rows are the pathway headings, grouped into categories such as athlete profile, performance environment and competition.
- Read across a row to see how one attribute develops from stage to stage.
- Read down a column for the complete picture of a single stage.

The Stage Summary (one per stage)

A one-page snapshot, written to the athlete, for a single stage of a single discipline.

- The header names the discipline and stage, with a short “what it’s all about” overview and an emphasis or area to prioritise.
- Five numbered sections cover the development areas; each ends with its own emphasis.
- Icons match the heading symbols used throughout the framework.
- A key-facts strip shows training load, race days and the level of competition.

The two documents share the same language and should be read together. The matrix shows the whole journey at a glance while the stage summary zooms in on where a athlete is right now.

The coaching journey within the ADF

Just as the ADF describes an athlete's journey, it also maps the evolution of coaching involvement and responsibility across stages:

U15

At the earliest stage (U15), athletes are supported by development coaches, club programs, and development academies. The coaching role here is primarily about creating safe, enjoyable environments; building fundamental skills; and instilling good habits. It is important to recognise the varying levels of physical maturation within this age group and adapt training prescription to suit developmental needs. The emphasis is on breadth, fun, and keeping athletes in the sport.

U17

Through the U17 stage, coaching becomes more structured and deliberate. Accredited coaches and development academy staff take on greater roles. Training has more purpose and structure. Coaches begin working on the mental side of performance more explicitly (goal setting, self-evaluation, managing adversity) alongside the technical and physical work. It is important to recognise the varying levels of physical maturation within this age group and adapt training prescription to suit developmental needs.

U19

At the U19 stage, athletes are working with accredited AusCycling coaches (private, club and/or state institute (SIS/SAS). The coach's role shifts toward co-designing individual programs, including the athlete's Individual Athlete Performance Plan (IAPP), and preparing athletes to operate with increasing independence. Recognition of the importance of education is important as athletes move towards growing international exposure. UCI points (eg Nations Cup points for Road, MTB for start positions) and international competition become relevant.

U23 and Elite

At the U23 and Elite stages, the national coaching program, SIS/SAS coaches, and performance support staff form an integrated team around the athlete. The coaching relationship is now a high-performance partnership. Athletes are capable of significant self-direction, and the coach's role is as much about strategic planning, performance analysis, and stakeholder management as it is about day-to-day technical development.



A note to Athletes, Coaches and Parents

A note to Athletes

The narratives throughout this framework are written directly to you. They are designed to be clear, honest, and practical, to give you a real picture of what each stage of your journey is about, not just a list of things to tick off.

Your development will not look exactly like anyone else's, and that is fine. What matters is that you are working in the right direction, with the right people around you, and with a genuine love of what you do. Be coachable, listen to the feedback you receive and apply it. As you progress, build ownership of your training and your habits. And never lose sight of why you started riding in the first place.

The best cyclists in the world were once where you are now. They got there by doing the basics brilliantly, showing up consistently, and building on every experience. That is what this framework is here to support.

A note to Coaches

The athlete narratives in this framework are written in the athlete's voice, but they are equally important reading for you. They tell you what your athletes should understand about their own development, which means they also tell you what you should be communicating, building, reinforcing at each stage and when they are ready to transition upwards in the pathway.

Use the ADF as a planning and reflection tool, developing the athlete technically, physically, mentally, and as a person in an environment where they sample sports and cycling disciplines and genuinely love their journey in cycling.

A note to Parents

The ADF is a guide to understanding what your child/young athlete needs most at each stage of their cycling journey so you can support them in the right way, at the right time. Use it to assist you in understanding the environment your child/young athlete is in, and how it addresses the elements recommended for their overall development on and off the bike. It should also assist you in the many decisions you have to make, and when you make them, for your child/young athlete.



AusCycling components underpining the ADF

CATEGORISATION

Categorisation and How Does It Fit In?

The AusCycling Athlete Categorisation Standards and Process policy has been developed in alignment with the Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) National Athlete Categorisation Framework. AusCycling uses Athlete Categorisation to identify, track and prioritise athletes at each stage of the Performance Pathway, building a pipeline of talent to support Australian Cycling Teams in consistently winning medals at major international events (Olympic Games, Paralympic Games, World Championships and Commonwealth Games). Athletes who achieve categorisation may receive support through the SIS/SAS network (State Institute of Sport/State Academy of Sport) and/or AusCycling Centre of Excellence. The level of support offered for each discipline varies across the SIS/SAS network, depending on capacity.

Levels of categorisation include:

Emerging
Typically, U19 athletes, applied over a two-year window.

Developing
Typically, a two-year window beginning when an athlete progresses from Emerging/U19

Podium Potential
Typically, a three-year window beginning when an athlete progresses from Developing.

Podium Ready
Determined by results at the most recent Benchmark Event (Olympic Games, Paralympic Games, World Championships or Commonwealth Games).

Podium
Determined by podium outcomes at the most recent Benchmark Event (Olympic Games, Paralympic Games, World Championships or Commonwealth Games).

Representative
Athlete demonstrating a performance trajectory aligned with WITTW standards for LA2028 Olympic/ Paralympic selection; or in last 24 months has represented Australia at identified benchmark events in LA2028 Olympic/Paralympic disciplines and indicating capability to be performance-critical to a medal outcome or securing quota qualification.

*Road, Track Sprint and BMX Freestyle may follow different timelines to the above. Exemptions may be considered by the Categorisation Panel on a case-by-case basis.

*Pre-Categorisation: 2nd year U17 athletes trending towards Emerging standards may be offered training opportunities with categorised cohort

Click to view Athlete Catgorisation Standards and Process

AusCycling components underpining the ADF

PERFORMANCE PATHWAY



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RIDER DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES

The AusCycling Rider Development Principles provide clarity on what matters most in the U15, U17 and U19 development years, and why. They capture the core tenets of how world-class cyclists progress from the skills to be mastered, the environments that shape growth, and the experiences that accelerate potential. The Rider Development Principles apply to all cycling disciplines and are woven throughout the AusCycling Athlete Development Framework.



Additional information

Rider Development Principles

Rider Development Principles video

GENERAL

AC	AusCycling
AW&E	Athlete Wellbeing and Engagement
BMXFS	BMX Freestyle
CG	Commonwealth Games
CoE	Centre of Excellence
HPC	High Performance Centre
IAPPs	Individual Athlete Performance Plans
IPS	Ideal Performance State
L&D	Learning and Development
MTB	Mountain Bike
NCh	National Championships
OG	Olympic Games
PG	Paralympic Games
RAS	Regional Academy of Sport
RTP	Registered Testing Pool
S&C	Strength and Conditioning
SIA	Sport Integrity Australia
SIS	State Institute of Sport
SAS	State Academy of Sport
UCI	Union Cycliste Internationale
WCh	World Championships
WT/WWT	World Tour/Womens World Tour
WWITTW	What Would It Take To Win

DISCIPLINE-SPECIFIC

Road

DS	Director Sportif
TT	Time Trial
WT	World Tour
WWT	Women's World Tour

Track Endurance

IP	Individual Pursuit
TP	Team Pursuit Track Sprint
TS	Team Sprint
RAC	Rolling Accelerations

MTB XCO

CX	Cyclo-Cross

BMX Race

SX	Super Cross

BMX Freestyle

DL	Double Leg
SL	Single Leg

Symbols

A simple, consistent icon for each of the categories, that is represented in the discipline specific Matrix and Playbook.

- TECHNICAL + TACTICAL SKILLS
- PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES
- CHARACTER
- SPORT SAMPLING
- COACHING ENVIRONMENT
- PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT REQUIREMENTS
- SKILL DEVELOPMENT REQUIREMENTS
- WINNING WELL
- PERFORMANCE SUPPORT KNOWLEDGE & SKILLS
- PERFORMANCE MONITORING
- UCI POINT REQUIREMENTS
- KEY LEVELS OF RACING
- RACE CAPABILITIES
- NUMBER OF ANNUAL RACE / COMPETITION DAYS
- CROSSDISCIPLINE ELEMENTS
- FACILITY ACCESS
- DAILY PERFORMANCE ENVIRONMENT

