

# SCOTTISHATHLETICS HILL RUNNING COMMISSION GUIDELINES FOR JUNIOR HILL RACES

## 1. Introduction

1.1. There are many benefits in giving junior athletes the opportunity to sample all branches of athletics. This will allow them to discover the events they are best suited to physically and the type of races that give them the most enjoyment. Hill running has in the past tended to offer fewer competitive opportunities for juniors than the other disciplines of athletics. Where junior races have been provided, they have varied in the age groups and ability catered for and have not always had any real connection with mainstream Scottish hill running. If the sport is to continue to flourish, it needs to continue to have new young runners coming in to hill running. Young athletes are most likely to be attracted in to Scottish hill running as seniors if there are direct links between junior races and the mainstream senior sport. However, if junior athletes are to be given a suitable sample of hill running, it is important that the courses should be appropriately planned. It is also important that there should be consistency between events so that junior hill runners can turn up confident that there will be suitable courses and that they will be catered for appropriately. It is hoped that these guidelines will help to achieve this.

## 2. Rules for Junior Hill Races

2.1. Although the recommendations in the rest of this document only have the status of guidelines, it is mandatory that the UK Athletics rules are followed in any **scottishathletics** permitted hill race. Rule 410 applies particularly to junior hill races and reads as follows:

*Race organisers must stipulate age limits for their events but the following limits for younger runners must be observed:*

- a) The minimum age limit for competition is 6 years on the day of the race.*
- b) The maximum distances for younger runners shall be:*

<i>Ages on 1<sup>st</sup> January in year of competition</i>	<i>Maximum distance</i>
<i>Under 8 years</i>	<i>1 km</i>
<i>Under 10 years</i>	<i>2 km</i>
<i>Under 12 Years</i>	<i>3 km</i>
<i>Under 14 Years</i>	<i>5 km</i>
<i>Under 16 Years</i>	<i>6 km</i>
<i>Under 18 Years</i>	<i>10 km</i>

## 3. Ascent and Descent

3.1. The main factor that distinguishes hill racing from the other endurance athletics disciplines is the significant ascent and descent involved. It is, therefore, important that this element should be provided in all hill race courses, including those designed for juniors. However, junior courses should not place excessive physical demands on the participants. Melantee and Glamaig are examples of excellent senior races which, although short enough to qualify as U14 and U16 junior courses respectively under a literal interpretation of UK Athletics Rule 410, are far too steep and demanding to be suitable for these age groups.

3.2. The recommended guideline for junior courses is that the total amount of ascent for up and down courses should be between 5% and 7.5% of the length. For example, a course 2 km long should have between 100 m and 150 m of ascent whilst one 5 km long should have between 250 m and 375 m of ascent. The ascent and descent should generally be spread throughout the course so that the distinctive hill running character predominates. Courses with a long flat run in to the hill will not generally be suitable for junior hill races. If they have the recommended amount of ascent for their length they are likely to be excessively steep on the hill section. If they do not, they will be predominantly road races in character rather than hill races.

#### **4. Terrain**

4.1. It is recommended that junior courses should normally have marked routes and should follow paths or reasonably straightforward terrain. Rugged terrain with boulder fields, crags or excessively steep slopes should be avoided.

#### **5. Course Combinations**

5.1. It will rarely be practicable or appropriate to provide a full range of separate courses for all junior age groups. So long as the maximum lengths set out in UKA rule 410 are not exceeded, courses can provide suitable competition for a combination of age groups. In deciding how to combine age groups, it is worth bearing in mind that boys and girls differ in how their strength to weight ratio develops through their teens. It may, therefore, be appropriate to provide shorter courses for girls than for boys in the U16 and U18 age groups.

5.2. Two sets of course combinations are suggested in these guidelines. One is suggested for events particularly aimed at juniors, for instance the Scottish Junior Championships and the Junior Home International Trial. The other is suggested for organisers of senior races wishing to provide a real hill running experience for juniors without excessive additional course marking.

5.3. The suggested course combinations for up and down races aimed particularly at juniors are as follows:

Age Groups	Length (approx)	Ascent (approx)
U12B, U12G, U10B, U10G	2 km	100 m
U14B, U14G	4 km	200 m
U16G	5 km	250 m
U16B, U18G	6 km	350 m
U18B	8 km	500 m

5.4 The suggested course combinations for junior up and down races held in conjunction with senior races is as follows:

Age Groups	Length (approx)	Ascent (approx)
U12B, U12G, U10B, U10G	2 km	100 m
U14B, U14G, U16B, U16G, U18B, U18G	5 km (max)	300 m

It should be noted that this arrangement is designed to cater for the full range of age groups with the minimum number of courses and inevitably results in some compromises. This particularly applies to the course for U14 to U18 which will be at the long end of the acceptable range for the U14 competitors and on the short side for the U18 boys. Inexperienced or weak U14 competitors should be advised that they may prefer to run the U12 course. Strong U18 competitors may prefer to run the senior course and so long as it does not exceed the 10km maximum specified in UKA rule 410 there is no reason why they should not do so.

5.5 All advance information and details supplied to publishers of fixture calendars should state the length and climb for each course provided and the age groups appropriate to each course. For the example in paragraph 5.4 above, this would take the following form:

Long Junior: 5.0 km, 300 m U18B, U18G, U16B, U16G, U14B, U14G  
Short Junior: 2.0 km, 100 m U12B, U12G, U10B, U10G

## 6. Layout of Courses

6.1 It is recommended that junior courses should be clearly marked on the ground and that maps of the courses should be made available to participants. The amount of marking can be minimised if courses share as many common elements as possible. With a simple out and back course design, it may be possible to use the same basic route for all courses with turning points at different locations as required. It is quite common for senior courses to start and finish with a flat section of a mile or so to and from the hill. If junior courses are to be combined with this type of senior course, it may be necessary to arrange a separate start and finish point closer to the bottom of the hill.

## **7. Organisation on the Day**

7.1 It is strongly recommended that marshals should be provided at any points where courses diverge or turn. If this were not practicable, then the course markings would need to be very clear indeed at these points. Runners on different courses should be given race numbers that can be clearly distinguished by the marshals so that they can be directed onto the correct route.

7.2 In planning the timetable, it will be necessary to avoid the possibility of any races meeting runners travelling in the opposite direction close to the start before they have had time to spread out. So long as the start times are arranged suitably, it should always be possible to avoid this. In some cases it may be appropriate to have a mass start for all courses; in others staggered starts will be more appropriate. Either can be perfectly acceptable. However, the timetable should be made available beforehand and adhered to as closely as possible so that runners can time their warm up routines properly.

7.3 It is recommended that there should be a robust system in place for checking that all runners who have started each race are recorded as having finished or retired so that a search can be initiated if necessary and so that unnecessary searches are not instigated.

7.4 If the junior start and finish is remote from the assembly area, consideration should be given to providing some form of shelter or facility for keeping clothes dry if adverse weather is likely.

7.5 Junior courses will normally follow marked routes and will not normally involve spending long periods on exposed open hills. In view of this, it will not normally be necessary to specify that maps, compasses, food and body cover must be carried. However, juniors can be more vulnerable to hypothermia in bad conditions than older athletes. Where junior courses are largely on exposed mountain terrain, organisers should include a warning in the advance information that full body cover may be required in the event of inclement weather.

7.5 It is recommended that small prizes should be provided at least for the first girl and first boy in each age group.