

The hows and whys of qualifying for BTF GB age-group team....

ETU = European Championships

You need to finish in the top 4 in your age group at your qualifying race and within 120% of the fastest person in your age group OR submit a qualifying time from a valid race (depending on type of championships - see below).

ITU = World Championships

You need to finish in the top 4 in your age group at your qualifying race and within 115% of the fastest person in your age group OR submit a qualifying time from a valid race (depending on type of championships - see below).

Note with all types of races: *you cannot defer your place or switch to another type of race (although at a multisport festival they may allow a switch between similar types if the teams are not full, don't expect it in standard or sprint)— you are qualifying for that race in that year. If you are injured you cannot defer, this is not a normal race - you have to qualify for a type of race, in that year. If people were allowed to defer due to injury then half the team would probably be deferring each year!*

What BTF say:

The Great Britain Age-Group competition offers all Home Nation members a unique opportunity to compete at International Level in triathlon, duathlon, aquathlon, winter and cross triathlon.

If you make the team, you can be proud to represent Great Britain and enjoy the experience of racing at an International Triathlon Union (ITU) World Championship or European Triathlon Union (ETU) European Championship.*

The reality:

It's a great achievement and lots of fun to qualify as part of the team. However, at the end of the day it is just another race where you are wearing GB kit and you've paid far far more than you would normally consider sensible, just so that you can wear that kit! The harder it is to qualify, the greater the sense of achievement.

On race day you will feel incredibly proud to don your kit and line up with those other athletes and take part in your race. It's a fabulous experience.

**You can now add Aquabike to the list above (70.3 distance swim and bike).*

How to Qualify:

Step 1: Join your Home Nation Association - In order to qualify you will need to hold a valid Home Nation race licence from either Triathlon England, Triathlon Scotland or Welsh Triathlon.

Note: You MUST take your race licence or proof of BTF membership with you to your qualifying race. Don't forget it, if you do, they may make you race as a non-qualifying athlete (I saw this happen at Eton this year).

Step 2: Choose a Championship

Check out our Championship registration page to find the race you'd like to qualify for. The qualification criteria for each event is specified within this section of the website.

<https://www.britishtriathlon.org/gb-teams/age-group/age-group-qualification>

Step 3: Register

Once you have chosen the Championship in which you would like to qualify for, click on the blue registration button. You will be asked to log in so you will need your Home Nation membership number and password to hand. Follow the instructions and pay the £10 registration fee to enable you to register your intent to qualify for the Championships.

Please note: you must register before the deadline outlined on the registration page. To ensure that your registration has been processed correctly scroll down to the bottom of the page to confirm your name has been added to the registered athletes list. You will also receive a confirmation email.

Reality: *You normally can register intent to qualify up to 5pm on the Friday before your first qualifying race. Don't forget though - if you're even a few minutes late registering it will not count. Many an athlete (including me) have forgotten and had to race knowing that it won't count towards qualification.*

Step 4: Submit a race result or enter a qualification race

Depending on the distance of the event you are qualifying for, the way in which you qualify will differ.

Sprint and Standard Championships:

There are a set of specified qualification races for each Championship event. You are required to qualify via one of these races, a list of which can be found here.

Middle, Long, Cross, Winter and Aquathlon Championships:

For these events you are required to submit your best past race performance that meets the criteria outline on the registration page. You will need to supply information regarding your finishing time, the winning time of the athlete in your age-group and also a link to the race result website to complete your submission.

Reality: *It is easier (although still not easy) to try to qualify for a championship which requires submission of a time rather than a qualifying race. With the qualifying races you will have a maximum of three qualifying races and these take place across the UK - you may only want to travel locally and therefore have just one chance to qualify. If that qualifying race/races are 'off' days for you, you have a mechanical or you have a seriously fast athlete racing you on the day, you may find it hard to meet the qualifying percentage, no matter how fast you are or how hard you have trained. On the other hand, if you choose a championship where you submit a time, you can select any race from your season with the caveat that the race meets the right qualifying criteria and that you are within the qualifying time guides for your age-group. Also, some of these time-qualifying races have fewer athletes attempting qualification, so you may find it easier to get a place.*

Step 5: Selection

If you have qualified, then this will be confirmed via email. We endeavour to do this within two weeks of the registration deadline specified for the events. Once you have qualified a Q will appear next to your name on the athlete registration list.

Reality: *normally each country (host country usually gets an extra 5 places per age group) is allocated 20 places per age-group. Each age group being 5 years: 20-24, 25-29 and so on. The top 20 athletes may choose not to take up their places so you can sometimes get a 'rolldown' place and these are offered in order to the next highest placed athlete and so on until all 20 places are filled or all qualifying athletes have been given places.*

If you are on the rolldown list you can sometimes have very little time to take up the offer of a place, you may only get 48 hours to make a decision and pay the entry fee and then just a few weeks to book accommodation, transport, bike transport, etc. Be certain that you can get to the event and stay the required number of nights before you pay your registration fee - be organised.

Note: *it can be over the two weeks if BTF are busy. Remember that many people involved in BTF are volunteers and the paid workers are over-worked. However, keep an eye on the lists and if others are showing qualification percentages or 'Q's and you think you should be but aren't, then do let BTF know immediately.*

And...if you're busy checking the results from your qualifying race remember that athletes may be moving up from the age-group above in the following year, so their results may affect your result. Remember that you may be changing age-groups too - you don't have to worry about it, as BTF manage the results and which age-group you are in but you should be aware of it when checking your race results at qualifiers.

Step 6: Pay

Event entry

Once you have qualified you will receive a notification email with information on the next steps to take regarding payment of entry fees.

Flights and accommodation

You will need to book your flights and accommodation independently. However, as our official Travel and Accommodation supplier, Nirvana Europe offer travel packages designed to meet the needs of GB Age-Group athletes. We will provide you with the relevant information regarding packages in the lead up to the Championship event.

Reality:

If you qualify to represent team GB age-group team, you have to pay for everything. Once you decide that you want to go down the qualification route start saving. You can do the trip on two budgets: Full-price using the team travel agent, Nirvana. You pay top prices but what you do get are rooms in the team hotels, nice extras like free wifi, bikes in rooms, fridges for your own food, if there are problems they are fixed quickly, transfers from airport to hotel. Cheaper option is organising your own travel, accommodation etc. However, the cheaper option may mean not being near the centre of the action, not experiencing all the action and team spirit you will get if in the centre of it. With the full-price option the team hotels are always a stone-throw from transition and registration. You'll be able to walk everywhere and be close to swim, bike, run familiarisations. Another option is to pick and choose the Nirvana 'bit'. So, twice I have organised my own flights but booked the hotels and transfers with Nirvana. Both times the hotels were adjacent to transition and the athletes met every night in the local restaurants and as a result the atmosphere was fantastic.

Other things to think about:

1. Why are you entering?

- *If it's just because you want to take part, wear the kit and don't care about the team element, then any race will be great to take part in and you won't mind if you're not in the hotel.*
- *If you want the GB team element then don't choose a multisport festival as they seem to be a bit spread out and lack the atmosphere of the 'classic' Sprint and Standard distance championships.*

- *If you want to see the elites racing at the same event then again choose the Sprint/ Standard championships ITU. The elites do not do ETU in great numbers, countries tend to send their developing squads to ETU.*
- *If you don't like the idea of racing drafting style then do not choose ITU sprint, stick to ETU sprint or another distance/format (although see note 2 below).*
- *ETU tends to be very GB dominant, rather like a British Championships with a handful of other athletes thrown in. It's partly because GB is so strong at grassroots triathlon. It's still a good, fun event but you will be racing mainly the faster GB-ers.*

2. *Draft-legal vs non-drafting*

- *Since 2016, ITU sprint triathlon and duathlon has been draft-legal. This means that you can (and to be successful, you should) ride in close proximity to other riders and work with them as a group.*
- *In Glasgow this year there was talk about ETU also changing to draft-legal so I have checked this with BTF, this is what they said 'It seems that the ETU are also planning on changing their sprint events to draft legal too. It is likely that our qualifiers next year will therefore be a mixture of drafting and non-drafting events to reflect this change.' So from next year you can expect that ETU may become draft-legal.*
- *Draft-legal races have to be on closed roads so it does limit which races can be selected as qualifiers, expect Nottingham, Eton, Cardiff and Redcar among others.*
- *Draft-legal racing is faster, more exciting and arguably demands more skill than non-drafting racing. In order to do well in these races you do need to be good at all three disciplines whereas in other distances you will often find that athletes are strong over two disciplines and not so strong on the third one.*
- *In drafting, if you are not out of the water early from the swim you will not be with the faster bike groups, if you are not fast enough on the bike to catch up with a ride group or to stay with a fast group you will find it hard to make up the time on the run - I haven't met a slow runner in draft-legal racing yet (I'm probably the slowest!).*
- *There is nothing to be scared about with draft-legal providing that you trying for it, communicate well and respect the discipline. The thing is to be aware of others in your pack. Communicate with other riders: show them through your actions; use your hand signals; use your voice; explain what you think the ride should do; shout if necessary.*

3. *The GBR kit:*

- *You MUST race in the official kit. You only need the trisuit, all other kit offerings are nice to have but not essential. However, it's really nice to have at least a team t-shirt or polo shirt for the opening ceremony. If you're at a big championships take something small with GB on it to swap with another nation's athlete at the closing ceremony - some of the other nations have some great kit and they love to swap (a swim cap or running hat are ideal).*
- *Don't wear your trisuit at 'normal' local races, you'll just look like a wannabe and it's like having a target on your back saying 'catch me'.*
- *Once you've qualified you will get the opportunity to order your kit. Please bear in mind that there are so many races now taking part each season that races happening prior to yours will get priority (and rightly so), so please don't place your order when you know that Blade (the kit people) are busy processing races before yours. If necessary ask Blade if it's a good time to order for your race or not. This year people were facing not being able to race at Glasgow due to kit shortages. This shouldn't happen but it does, so please order responsibly.*
- *DO wear your team t-shirt at the airport when travelling to your race - you'll chat to other athletes which is what the experience is all about (I've made friendships for life through age-grouping).*

4. *Getting your bike to your race:*

- *The easiest thing to do is to book the club bike box and take your bike on the plane and then get Nirvana booked to transfer you and your bike to your hotel. Depending on who you fly with the bike may be classed as your hold luggage and travel free or as a free extra. With smaller airlines you may need to pay £50-£60. A transfer with Nirvana is usually circa £50.*

(put new tyres on your bike before you head off to your big race)

5. *Taking your important kit abroad:*

- *ALWAYS pack your helmet bike and run shoes, trisuit and pedals in your hand luggage (just in case your hold luggage goes missing). You can usually borrow/hire a bike, wetsuit but those other items you cannot take chances with.*
- *If you always have a certain pre-race bowl of cereal or always need your daily beetroot juice...take it with you.*

6. *Know what you are trying to qualify for, understand how to qualify, be hot on the rules (they won't turn a blind eye at an ETU or ITU champs).....all the information is on the British Triathlon website, so please read the general information but also click on the race you are considering qualifying for and read the information about that race - everything you need to know is there. For anything else please ask one of the athletes in the club who have qualified for and raced ETU/ITU.*

IMPORTANT NOTES:

- Remember to check the registration page to find out the relevant deadline for registration. If you do not register by the deadline you will not be able to qualify.
- You can qualify for multiple Championships; however, the ITU states that they must be at least 48 hours apart.
- If a qualification event acts as a qualifier for more than one Championship, then you must register your intent to qualify for each of the Championship events separately. You will only be considered for selection to the Championships you have registered your intent for.
- Please keep your email address up to date within your membership account and add @britishtriathlon.org to your trusted senders list to ensure you're kept up to date.
- If you qualify for a team you will be invited to join the team Facebook page - I would recommend this as you'll get to know people before you go to the event, hear about social stuff, drinks, meets & greets, important race info, etc.