



# 2026 Elite License Qualification Criteria

## Elite License General Information

PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION CAREFULLY:

### A. Overview & Eligibility

- These criteria, including any updates, take effect on the effective date listed at the end of the document.
- All athletes applying for a USA Triathlon Elite License must be current USA Triathlon members in good standing and **eligible to represent the United States in international competition under USA Triathlon and World Triathlon eligibility rules**. Athletes recognized as elite by another National Federation may apply for the Foreign Elite License as outlined below. Athletes with U.S. Permanent Residency (Green Card) may qualify under USA Triathlon criteria. Exceptions to this policy may be granted by the USA Triathlon CEO or High-Performance General Manager.
- Athletes must be **16 years old by December 31, 2026**, to hold an elite license. Elite athletes between the ages of 16 and 19 may also compete in USA Triathlon Junior Development Series events and are eligible for all awards, ranking points, and prizes.
- All athletes MUST present proof of elite status at all USA Triathlon (USA Triathlon) sanctioned events; therefore, athletes must carry their license to all events. If an elite athlete loses his or her elite license card, they may print a temporary card on the [USA Triathlon membership website](#).

### B. Application Procedures

- All new elite applications, renewals, and eligibility extension applications must be submitted online through the [USA Triathlon membership system](#). To be considered, the application must contain links to qualifying race results, list out race results and the races they were achieved at, or otherwise provide the required proof of qualification needed for the criteria the athlete is applying. **USA Triathlon will not consider incomplete applications.**
- For the 2026 season, qualifying results achieved under the 2025 Elite License Qualification Criteria may be used to apply for an Elite License within 365 days of the race date, consistent with the criteria in effect at the time the result was achieved. Beginning with the 2027 season, USA Triathlon will publish an Elite License application deadline aligned with the start of the 2027 domestic elite racing calendar. Qualifying results from 2026 must be used to apply for an Elite License prior to that deadline.<sup>1</sup>

### C. Eligibility Duration & Extensions

- **Elite Eligibility Window:** Beginning in 2026 elite licenses will be issued on a rolling basis. An athlete's elite eligibility period begins on the date the Elite License is approved by USA Triathlon. Elite eligibility is valid for up to **two (2) years** from that date, provided the athlete maintains an active Elite License membership.
- **New Elite Applicants (Non-Elite Athletes):** Athletes who meet the elite qualification criteria and are granted an Elite License will retain elite eligibility for **two (2) years** from the date of initial approval.
- **Current Elite Athletes (Eligibility Extensions):** Athletes who wish to continue competing as an elite beyond their current eligibility period must requalify under the Elite License criteria in effect at the time of reapplication. Upon approval, submission of an eligible qualifying result during an active eligibility extends the athlete's elite eligibility by **one (1)**

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<sup>1</sup> Beginning with the 2027 season, USA Triathlon intends to publish an annual Elite License application deadline aligned with the start of the domestic elite racing calendar. Athletes will be required to apply for an Elite License prior to that deadline using qualifying results earned in the preceding season.



# 2026 Elite License Qualification Criteria

**additional two-year eligibility period, beginning the day after the current eligibility window expires**, regardless of when the renewal application is approved. Multiple qualifying results within one eligibility period do not stack additional eligibility periods.

- Once elite eligibility expires, an athlete may return to Age Group competition. Elite athletes may not compete in Age Group categories while holding an active Elite License.
- An eligibility extension for renewals of up to **two years may only** be granted to an active Elite athlete who becomes pregnant or receives active-duty military orders of significant length during their current two-year eligibility period, subject to the approval of the USA Triathlon Athletes' Advisory Council ("AAC"); a qualifying race result is not required for this type of extension.

## **D. Race Eligibility & Validity**

- If a qualifying triathlon becomes a run-bike-run (Duathlon), qualifying results may only be used for Duathlon elite licenses unless the AAC grants a specific exception for that race.
- Any criteria requiring a participant minimum will only include individual race finishers at that specific distance. No relay teams, non-finishers or those participating in another race will be included in participant numbers.
- Elite License holders racing Age-Group events compete under **Age-Group rules** (however they cannot race in Age Group categories and must instead race in the overall category). They are **not eligible** for Age-Group awards or inclusion in USA Triathlon National Rankings. They **may** appear in **overall results** and are eligible for **overall placement awards**, subject to the race organizer's published prize/award policy.

## **USA TRIATHLON RECOGNIZES SIX CLASSIFICATIONS WITHIN ITS ELITE LICENSE STRUCTURE<sup>2</sup>**

1. Elite Draft-Legal Triathlete License
2. Elite Non-Draft Triathlete License
3. Elite Duathlon License (considered as an elite in Duathlon, Age Group in triathlon)
4. Elite Cross Triathlon License (considered as an elite in Cross events, Age Group in road events)
5. Foreign Elite License
6. Special Considerations (Draft-Legal)

### **1. ELITE DRAFT-LEGAL TRIATHLETE LICENSE:**

The Draft-Legal Elite License is intended for athletes who compete in World Triathlon or USA Triathlon-sanctioned elite draft-legal events.<sup>3</sup> Holding this license is a prerequisite for nomination for the World Triathlon Elite, U23, and Junior World Championships, as well as for entry into World Triathlon Championship Series (WTCS) and World Cup events.<sup>4</sup> Athletes holding this license are also eligible to compete in all elite Multisport events.<sup>5</sup>

- ***COLLEGIATE ELITE LICENSE DESIGNATION (Draft-Legal only):***

The Collegiate Elite License Designation may be selected by current or prospective varsity triathletes who wish to compete in elite events sanctioned by USA Triathlon without jeopardizing their NCAA eligibility. These athletes are **not**

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<sup>2</sup> Paratriathlon Elite Licenses fall under a separate criteria which can be viewed at <https://www.usatriathlon.org/our-community/elite-development>

<sup>3</sup>This does not include high-level draft-legal events such as collegiate competitions, which may include elite license holders but are classified as Age Group events.

<sup>4</sup> **For Draft-Legal Athletes:** Age Group athletes in good standing with USA Triathlon will be eligible to compete in Continental Cups, subject to standard USA Triathlon and World Triathlon qualification criteria.

<sup>5</sup> Including Aquathlon, Duathlon/Cross Duathlon, Cross Triathlon, and Winter Triathlon.



# 2026 Elite License Qualification Criteria

**eligible** for prize money but may participate in races where prize purses are offered. Collegiate athletes should consult their university's compliance office or the NCAA for the most current rules regarding amateur eligibility and prize money acceptance.

## 2. ELITE NON-DRAFT TRIATHLETE LICENSE:

The Non-Draft Elite License is intended for athletes who specialize in draft-illegal triathlons across all distances. Athletes who wish to compete exclusively in the professional fields at IRONMAN, Challenge, T100, or other non-draft Sprint, Olympic, middle, and long-distance elite events must hold an active Non-Draft Elite License. This license recognizes athletes who have demonstrated the ability to compete at a professional level through consistent, high-performance results in eligible domestic and/or international non-draft events. Athletes holding this license are **not eligible** to compete in USA Triathlon sanctioned elite draft-legal events and will be classified as Age Group athletes in those competitions. Holders of the Non-Draft Elite License are eligible to compete in all elite Multisport events.

3. **ELITE DUATHLETE LICENSE:** The Elite Duathlete License is intended for athletes who wish to compete in the elite field of USA Triathlon or World Triathlon sanctioned duathlon events of any distance. Athletes holding this license are considered Age Group athletes in all triathlon events.

4. **ELITE CROSS LICENSE:** The Elite Cross License is for athletes who wish to compete in the elite field at USA Triathlon- or World Triathlon-sanctioned cross (off-road) triathlon events. Athletes holding this license are considered Age Group athletes in all road-based triathlon or multisport events.

## 5. FOREIGN ELITE LICENSE:

The Foreign Elite License is **required** for non-U.S. athletes competing in USA Triathlon-sanctioned elite events — both Draft-Legal and Non-Draft — including World Triathlon, IRONMAN, and T100 races held in the United States. Foreign athletes must present proof of elite status from their home National Federation to be granted this license. The license expires on **December 31** of the year it is issued and must be renewed annually to maintain eligibility.

## 6. SPECIAL CONSIDERATION:

Exceptions to these criteria may be granted at the discretion of at least one (1) USA Triathlon High Performance staff member and a minimum of two (2) members of the AAC. Special Consideration Elite Licenses will usually only be evaluated for athletes actively participating in the **Draft-Legal Triathlon development pipeline**. Requests without a clear history of elite-level performance will generally not be advanced to the AAC.

- **Multisport Exceptions:**

Special requests to compete in the **Elite, U23, or Junior categories** at the **World Triathlon Multisport World Championships** or other World Triathlon Multisport events (including Duathlon, Aquathlon, Cross, and Winter Triathlon) may be considered on a case-by-case basis by two (2) USA Triathlon High Performance staff members. Approval permits entry into the designated elite category for that specific event but does not confer an Elite License for that discipline. Athletes requesting entry are expected to have already qualified for the U.S. Age Group Team in that discipline or to have consistently outperformed Age Group competitors at national or international events, demonstrating readiness for elite-level Multisport competition.



# 2026 Elite License Qualification Criteria

## Elite License Criteria

The qualification criteria below are subject to annual review. USA Triathlon annually may add, reclassify or remove qualifying events/criteria based on changes to field depth, race integrity, or course consistency.

### ELITE DRAFT-LEGAL TRIATHLETE LICENSE

**Athletes may qualify by meeting one (1) of the following criteria:**

#### General Criteria – all athletes eligible:

- A. Top 5 in a World Triathlon Continental Cup with at least three athletes starting who are ranked in the Top 125 of the [World Triathlon Rankings](#)<sup>6</sup>
- B. Top 10 in a World Triathlon Continental Championship (Elite field) with at least three athletes starting who are ranked in the Top 125 of the [World Triathlon Rankings](#)

#### U23/Junior/Collegiate Criteria:

- C. Finish Top 10 at any of the following:
  - World Triathlon U23 World Championships
  - World Triathlon Junior World Championship
  - Youth Olympic Games
- D. World Triathlon Continental Championships: Top 3 in the U23 categories, overall winner in the Junior category
- E. Overall Junior winner at any World Triathlon Junior Continental Cup
- F. Top 3 finish at USA Triathlon Junior Nationals (draft-legal) in the 16–19 age category
- G. Top 5 and within 5% of the winner's time at the Women's Collegiate National Championship (all divisions combined)
- H. Top 3 and within 5% of the winner's time at the USA Triathlon Collegiate Club Draft-Legal National Championship

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<sup>6</sup> Quality of Field factor is verified using the official start list and the World Triathlon Rankings published the Monday of race week (or the most recent list if no update is published that week).



# 2026 Elite License Qualification Criteria

## ELITE NON-DRAFT TRIATHLETE LICENSE

- Age Group athletes must compete on the same day and under similar course conditions as the elite field.<sup>7</sup>

### **A. World-Class Qualification (require one of the below)**

- Competed in one of the two most recent Olympic Games
- Started a World Triathlon Championship Series (WTCS) race within the 24 months preceding the Elite License application date.
- Started a T100 race (elite field) within 24 months preceding the Elite License application date

### **B. Championship Pathway**

Finish within **12% of the elite or overall winner's time (by gender)** at any of the following championship and/or prominent events:

- IRONMAN 140.6 World Championship (Kona)
- IRONMAN 70.3 World Championship (Nice)
- World Triathlon Long Distance Triathlon World Championships (Abu Dhabi)
- Challenge Roth
- Challenge The Championship
- [U.S IRONMAN Pro Series Events \(140.6 & 70.3\)](#)
  - IRONMAN 70.3 Oceanside
  - IRONMAN Texas North American Championship
  - IRONMAN 70.3 Pennsylvania Happy Valley North American Championship
  - IRONMAN Lake Placid
  - IRONMAN 70.3 Boise

### **C. Elite Performance Pathway**

Athletes may qualify for their elite license with **one result within 8% of the elite winner (by gender) at a USAT-sanctioned event within the United States** that offers a prize purse of **at least \$10,000 per gender (\$20,000 total)**.

### **D. Elite Development Qualifiers**

This pathway is designed for Age-Group athletes who do not currently hold an Elite License and wish to qualify through Age-Group racing.

An athlete may qualify for an Non-Draft Elite License by finishing within **4% of the overall winner (by gender)** at any of the following events:

- World Triathlon Age Group Olympic Distance World Championships - Pontevedra, ESP
- USA Triathlon Age Group Olympic Distance National Championship - Milwaukee, WI
- USA Triathlon Age Group Non-Draft Sprint Distance National Championship - Milwaukee, WI
- USA Triathlon Collegiate Club National Championship – (Olympic Distance) - Gulfport, MS
- USA Triathlon Long Course National Championship (Patriot Half) - East Freetown, MA
- USA Triathlon Ultra Distance National Championship (Peasantman Full Distance) – Penn Yan, NY

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<sup>7</sup>USA Triathlon recognizes that Elite and Age Group courses at the same event may differ. In such cases, USA Triathlon may, at its discretion, accept Age Group results for elite license qualification, provided the Age Group race occurred on the same day, covered the same distances, and was comparable in course profile and technical demands.



# 2026 Elite License Qualification Criteria

## Non-Draft Triathlon: USAT Race Score Performance

This pathway is available both to Age Group athletes seeking their first Elite License or former elites who have returned to Age Group racing and are seeking requalification to elite status.

- Age Group athletes who do not achieve qualifying results through the Head-to-Head Race Performance pathway may alternatively qualify by achieving **three (3) USAT Rankings Race Scores** at or above the following benchmarks at USAT-sanctioned events with **300 or more total finishers**. All three Race Scores must be earned **within the same calendar year at Age Group events**. Athletes can view their Race Scores through their [USAT Dashboard](#).

**Men:** 115.0 Race Score

**Women:** 105.0 Race Score

## ELITE DUATHLON LICENSE

- Age Group athletes must compete on the same day and under similar course conditions as the elite field **when an elite field is present**.

Athletes may qualify by meeting one (1) of the following criteria:

### **A. World Championships – Elite Field Standard**

- Finish within 10% of the winner's time (by gender) in the elite field at one of the following:
  - World Triathlon Duathlon World Championships
  - World Triathlon Long Distance or Middle-Distance Duathlon Championships

### **B. World Age Group Standard**

Finish within 5% of the overall Age Group overall winner's time (by gender) at:

- World Triathlon Age Group Duathlon World Championships (Sprint or Standard)
- World Triathlon Long Distance or Middle-Distance Duathlon Championships

### **C. USA Triathlon National Champion**

- Finish as the **overall winner (by gender)** at the USA Triathlon Multisport National Championships in the following events:
  - Draft-Legal Sprint Duathlon
  - Standard Duathlon

### **D. USA Triathlon Race Score (Age Group only)**

- Achieve a USAT Race Score of **110.0** for men and **95.0** for women or higher at **two USAT-sanctioned Duathlon events** with **100 or more** total (male and female) participants



# 2026 Elite License Qualification Criteria

## ELITE CROSS TRIATHLON LICENSE

- Age Group athletes must compete on the same day and under similar course conditions as the elite field **when an elite field is present.**<sup>8</sup>

**Athletes may qualify for the Elite Cross Triathlon License by meeting one of the following criteria:**

### **A. Championship Pathway**

Finish within **20% of the elite or overall winner's time (by gender)** at any of the following championship events:

- World Triathlon Cross Triathlon World Championship (Elite)
- XTERRA World Championship (Full-Distance Triathlon)
- XTERRA North American Championship
- XTERRA European Championship
- XTERRA Asia-Pacific Championship

### **B. Elite Performance Pathway**

- Hold an XTERRA World Performance Index (WPI) score of equal or greater than **195 (Women)** or **203 (Men)** at time of application.

### **C. USA Triathlon National Champion**

- Finish as the overall winner (by gender) at the USA Triathlon Cross Triathlon National Championship (Standard Distance)

### **D. USA Triathlon Rankings Race Scores (Age Group only)**

- Achieve a Race Score of **113.0 for men** and **96.50 for women** or higher at **two USAT-sanctioned Cross Triathlon events with 100 or more total (male and female) participants**

## Amendments to this Criteria

If unforeseen circumstances, changes in competition structure, or updates to competition formats or regulations render any provision of this Criteria impractical or inconsistent with its intended purpose, USA Triathlon reserves the right to amend the Elite License Criteria to ensure that its aims and integrity are maintained.

Any such amendment that affects competitive standards will be reviewed by the AAC prior to implementation. The updated version will be published on the USA Triathlon website and will supersede previous versions as of its stated effective date.

<b>April 10, 2026</b> <b>Effective Date</b>
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<sup>8</sup> USA Triathlon recognizes that Elite and Age Group courses at the same event may differ. In such cases, USA Triathlon may, at its discretion, accept Age Group results for elite license qualification, provided the Age Group race occurred on the same day, covered the same distances, and was comparable in course profile and technical demands.