

Virtual or Online Land Based Coaching

In this current situation and the unprecedented challenges, we are all facing; it is up to the coaches and swimming community to find ways to keep our members engaged, active and training whilst respecting government guidance around social distancing.

The obvious way to stay connected is through technology to deliver the activities from the coach to the athletes, via either live connection, recorded content or social media. Coaches and athletes are getting creative and trying to stay in shape from home while pools around the world are closed amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Below are guidelines coaches or club officials should address and consider before they are undertaking online or virtual coaching with their athletes and or clubs.

In sport, we have become very good at enacting safety protocols to protect athletes – a movement that has really accelerated over the last decade. The idea of remote learning in sports, however, is still very new and does not yet have the benefit of those same years of experience to develop protocols.

The guidelines are good practices for coaches undertaking similar activities to mitigate the risks both to athletes physically, and clubs and coaches from possible liabilities.

Clubs and Coaches should ensure they are familiar with the terms of their respective insurance cover.

Coaches should have Professional Indemnity and Public Liability Insurance and it is noted that:

- Coaches working as employees within an affiliated club are covered under the national program
- Coaches as contractors need their own policy

In addition, all coaches **must** ensure that their **Swimming Australia Coach Accreditation** is up to date. The process for reaccreditation can be found [here](#). ASCTA membership must also be maintained [here](#).

Coaches should only be coaching / providing advice to the level they are qualified to do so. If the junior trainee coach is not qualified to coach then they shouldn't be providing any advice for instance i.e. stroke correction, diving techniques etc. Basically, if they are not qualified then they should not be providing coaching advice.

Before any online training is commenced, coaches should ensure they have gain written consent from parents and or guardians, explained what the purpose of the training is, when it will be done, on what platform and how often the athletes will be contacted.

Remote Dryland Best Practice

Level of the Coach

Coaches should only deliver activity for which they are trained. In all of the instances below, coaches should apply good coaching practice. They should risk assess the activity, ensuring that it is appropriate for the developmental stage of participants and also take into account the fact that they will not be in close proximity to the athletes or directly supervising them in the same way as a face-to-face environment.

Coaches with a recognised land training or strength and conditioning qualification

These coaches can deliver land training activity online as long as they risk assess the activity appropriately, ensure as far as possible safe practice on behalf of the participant and work within the level for which they are trained.

Care should always be taken to ensure the activity is safe for the athlete.

Coaches with a recognised aquatic qualification (but not a land-training qualification)

Non-pool activity is going to be the main form of training for most participants at this time. If the coach has been educated to deliver pre and post pool dryland activity then they can use this in their online training, ensuring that they deliver appropriate technique and ensuring that the volume and intensity is within healthy limit for the participant.

Coaches with no recognised qualification

These individuals should not be delivering online / virtual content.

Activity outside of the scope of the qualification

If the coach wants to utilise techniques that are out of the scope of their qualification, then ideally, they would use a person with a relevant qualification to deliver this. If this is not possible, then they could refer the participant (or their parent if Under-18) to relevant and reputable content available elsewhere.

Safety

Safety of the participant must be paramount when delivering online / virtually as it can bring extra challenges that should be addressed.

The following guidelines should be followed:

The coach should consider all of the usual safety considerations for the training they intend to deliver.

Consider the environment that the athlete will be training in and ask the swimmer (over 18) or their parent/guardian (under 18) to check it and confirm that it is appropriate for the training they are going to undertake.

The following are examples of what should be considered:

- What is the floor like? Is it safe and will it stay so when wet?
- Is the area well ventilated?
- Do they have a mat?

- Can they exercise outside?
- Is there furniture they may bump into—can it be moved?
- Do they have enough space to exercise safely?
- Are there any trip hazards?
- NB: Any equipment used should be wiped clean before and after use
- A responsible adult should be in proximity of the athlete at all times to deal with any issues that arise and to stop the athlete training if there are any health / safety concerns.
- The swimmer / parent / guardian for U18s should confirm to the coach that the athlete is fit and healthy for the intended training or seek medical advice if in any doubt.
- Appropriate clothing should be worn including suitable footwear, no jewellery etc.
- There is a mechanism for the athlete to feedback to the coach any problems or issues with the session and have a session debrief if possible.
- The coach and athlete should stay hydrated.
- Ensure the athlete keeps pets and any other distractions away during exercise.

Safeguarding – SA Safe Sport Framework

Just as with any other form of coaching, implementing good safeguarding practice is extremely important to protect the coach and the participant.

All coaches must have completed the Swimming Australia Safe Sport Course and ensure their certificate is uploaded into Swim Central.

- Complete the course [here](#).
- Help with uploading documents to Swim Central [here](#).
- SA Safe Sport Framework [here](#)
- SA Code of Conduct [here](#)

All usual safeguarding considerations should be taken into account and its recommended the following guidelines are followed:

- Gain written consent from parents and explain what the purpose of the training is, when it will be done, on what platform etc.
- As per the safety guidance above, ensure that a responsible adult is in proximity to the athlete (if under 18).
- Use an online-shared platform – that way the coach will not necessarily need access to the children’s contact details and only use it for the training.
- Ensure appropriate privacy settings and that images of the athlete are not shared online.
- Do not make contact with athletes outside of the training unless with parental consent.
- Ensure that you and the athletes wear appropriate clothing at all times.