



Inclusion

Masters Swimming Australia Overview

Introduction

Masters Swimming Australia is the national sports organisation/governing body for Masters Swimming, which is a not-for-profit organisation for adult swimmers aged 18 and above. Coaching adult swimmers is in many ways identical to coaching adolescent or age-group swimmers, but you will need to keep in mind some specific points when planning a Masters program. This section discusses these points and offers some possible solutions to situations you may encounter.

Who is Masters Swimming Australia?

It is a non-government, not for profit organisation, constituted in 1975. Masters Swimming Australia Inc. used to be referred to as "AUSSI", which is an acronym for "Australian Union of Senior Swimmers International". This acronym was dropped from the name in October 2009. The organisation does not receive funding from any government source; however, some Branches are eligible for and receive funding from State Governments.

Our Mission Statement

To provide at club, branch, and national level an environment that encourages all adults, regardless of ability, to swim regularly, to compete to promote fitness and improve their general wellbeing.

Our vision

Enrich and Inspire Adults to Swim for Life

Our motto

FITNESS, FRIENDSHIP and FUN

What does Masters Swimming Australia offer?

Masters Swimming Australia caters for those who can only just swim through to the experienced swimmer, emphasising participation in a fun and friendly environment which encourages and facilitates adult involvement in swimming. Only 30% of members compete in swim meets, so you don't have to be a champion swimmer to join!

Who can join?

Membership is open to all people who have turned 18 or are older in the calendar year of joining.

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Inclusive coaching

Masters swimming coaches should always try to find ways of including rather than excluding swimmers. The qualities and skills required to be an inclusive coach are the same as those required of a coach who is working with swimmers without disabilities. Whether the swimmer has a specific impairment, a medical condition that might impact on their training program, or is simply developing their skills and fitness at a different rate to others in the group, responding to such situations is part of making sure that everyone has the chance to maximise their potential.

The fundamentals of inclusive coaching are thus based on good coaching practice. After that, it is up to the coach to find out about the individual needs of each swimmer, and to get to know and understand training and competition requirements unique to each person. It is important for coaches to recognise that they already possess many of the qualities and skills required to work successfully with swimmers who have disabilities.

Including swimmers with disabilities

About 20% of the population have some form of a disability, so you are likely to have swimmers with a disability in your squad at some stage. People with a disability have a disadvantage in accessing sporting opportunities compared to people without a disability. The main barrier to participation in physical activity is most likely not specific impairments or conditions, but attitudinal, economic and environmental barriers. The coach plays a significant role in overcoming disadvantage by removing or minimising these barriers and providing an inclusive environment.

It is not essential that coaches have knowledge about disabilities. More importantly, it is essential that coaches have a thorough knowledge of the sport they are coaching. Information that concerns a swimmer's impairment and the resultant effect on their performance, is the kind of background knowledge that any coach should acquire by talking to their swimmer. Use any disability specific knowledge you obtain through study as background information only, as no two swimmers with the same impairment are identical.

Rather than focussing on individual impairments and planning sessions as a response to this, coaches should concentrate on a variety of modifications to activities to make these more accessible to a range of abilities.

TREE principle

While there are some considerations concerning rules, equipment and sometimes technique,

coaches do not need to treat swimmers with a disability differently from any other swimmer in the squad. The different stages of learning and the basic techniques of skill teaching apply equally for swimmers with disabilities. A coach can ensure an inclusive approach by applying the TREE principle. To better include all swimmers, coaches can make changes to:

- **Teaching/coaching style**
- **Rules and regulations**
- **Equipment**
- **Environments**

Good coaches modify to include differences in skill and the TREE principle is an easy way to remember this. In applying the TREE principle, make sure that the integrity of the activity is maintained. Only change that part of the activity that needs to be changed and only when it needs to be changed. It is important not to adapt and modify an activity to the point that the basic aims of the original activity are lost.

Teaching/coaching style

Coaches need to be adaptive and creative, thinking laterally in relation to how best to apply their sport-specific knowledge to the functional ability of the athlete. However, this should not be done in isolation. Use the athlete as a resource of information on themselves, finding out what they can do and encouraging joint decisions on how to modify specific tasks to best suit their skill level.

You may need to modify your communication style to take into account the specific needs of masters swimmers. For example, writing the program on the whiteboard on the pool deck may not cater for the swimmers with vision impairment. You may also need to hang a large print waterproof copy of the program off the side of the pool. Give clear verbal instructions and regularly question swimmers' understanding of these. Modifying your coaching style in this way helps all swimmers in the squad.

Rules and regulations

Masters Swimming Australia is a very inclusive sport, as shown by the number of modifications made to the FINA Masters Swimming Rules, along with the Medical Disability Certificate. Coaches need to make sure that any squad regulations, such as squad qualification policies, are not worded in a way that would exclude a swimmer based on disability. Coaches can also modify rules and regulations in training to better include all swimmers in activities. For example, rather than describing a set as 'dive start sprints', the sprint set can be either 'dive start' or 'push start' to provide an alternative for swimmers who have trouble in exiting the water or are unable to perform a dive start.

Equipment

Swimming training aids such as kickboards, pull buoys and fins can be very effective tools for modifying activities to include differences in skill and provide competitive balance. This is good practice whether there is a swimmer with a disability in your squad. You can use training aids to help a swimmer in performing an activity, e.g., a swimmer with muscular atrophy of the legs can use fins to perform repetitions on the same times as the rest of the swimmers in the lane. You can also modify the

use of the training aid, e.g., use a kickboard at a right angle to increase resistance and slow down the stronger kickers in a lane, and give them a harder workout. In some cases, it is necessary to modify training aids to meet the individual needs of the swimmer e.g., for swimmers with an amputation.

Environments

You can alter the training environment in many ways to better include all swimmers in a training session. Using a shallow pool, for instance, or finishing most repetitions and/or sets at the shallow end, can benefit a swimmer recovering from a heart transplant by making sure they get a true rest period standing up, rather than an active rest period spent treading water. Similarly, using a 25m pool rather than a 50m pool allows for more effective programming of 25m and 75m repetitions in training, with more rest periods for swimmers who fatigue more easily, as may be the case with a swimmer with cerebral palsy or a swimmer just returned to training after a long break.

Summary

Physical performance declines with age, but regular exercise such as swimming can slow this process. This unit has given you some information on physiology and ageing to help you plan training sessions for adult swimmers. You have reviewed the way ageing affects the circulatory, respiratory, muscular, skeletal, and metabolic systems of the body, and the effects of physiological decline in these systems on the components of fitness (endurance, power, strength, speed, and flexibility). We looked at the way energy is created and used in the body by aerobic and anaerobic means, and what kind of training exercises use these energy systems. The section on stretching emphasised the importance of flexibility for adult athletes and described three basic kinds of stretches. Finally, we looked at how coaches can use good coaching practices to create an inclusive training environment that caters for the unique needs of different swimmers, including those who have a disability.