

British Triathlon Coaching Guidelines

Site: [British Triathlon Coaching](#)

Course: Coaching Qualifications

Book: Coaching Guidelines (All)

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This is a PDF version of the coaching guidelines from the Learning Hub. Please be aware some of the links will only work in the hub and you may find some formatting issues.

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1. Introduction

This document is an electronic version of the British Triathlon Coaching Guidelines, covering safety, remit, roles, insurance & best practice. The guidelines are reviewed and updated each year.

We have moved the guidelines to the learning hub in 2018 so all coaches can easily access these guidelines and also search for specific items. **The search function can be found by scrolling to the bottom of the page.**

How to use these guidelines

We don't recommend reading this section end to end in one sitting, an approach for coaches could be similar to the plan, deliver, review model for coaching.

Planning - focus on the safety and welfare aspects,

Delivery - ratios and discipline specific sections

Review - look at the challenges- what do you want to do in the future? Use the search facility for guidance.

Alternatively, you may simply refer back to these guidelines when looking at new activities or reviewing current delivery.

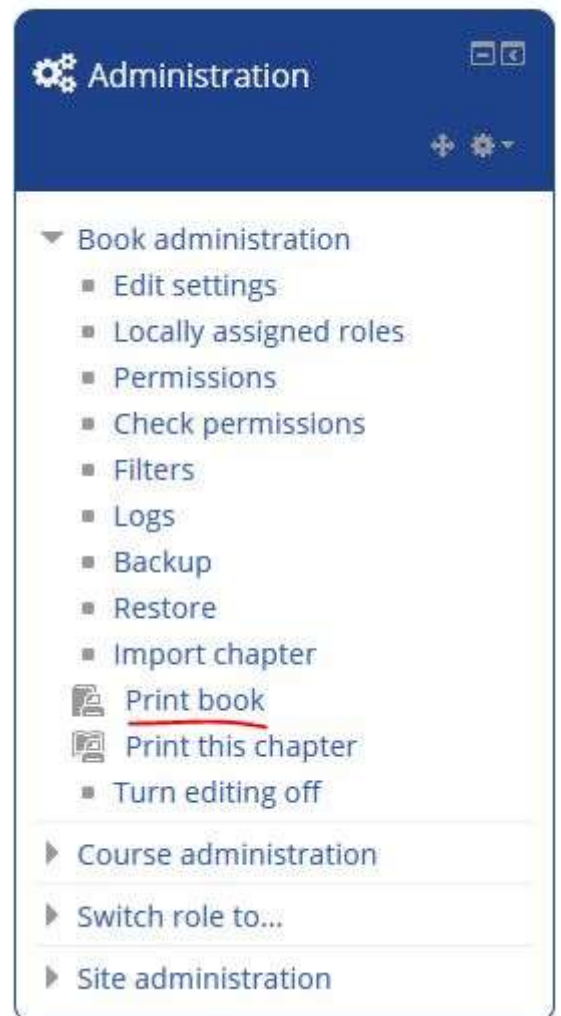
Other formats

A PDF version will be available for all via the [coaching pages](#) on the main website.

If you wish to print the full guidelines, we would recommend accessing the PDF as we have edited out any format issues.

You can also print/ save directly yourself, if you just want a single chapter. Instructions can be found [here](#).

Note: The content is designed to be web-based so you may find some formatting issues in your printed copy.



Aim and Remit

These guidelines have been developed to promote good practice and coaching that is safe, effective, enjoyable and appropriately challenging for all triathletes being coached. The aim is to provide coaches with sufficient knowledge and guidance to be able to coach safely in triathlon specific training venues and know the appropriate questions to ask to ensure a venue is operated correctly.

The guidance provided to triathlon coaches covers health and safety issues that should be considered when coaching triathlon-based group sessions or prescribing training programmes. They also assist organisations¹ and coaches in the formulation of relevant health and safety policies.

It should be noted that these guidelines have been created for UK coaching under the governance of British Triathlon. Any coach operating outside the UK must ensure they understand local and legal implications of doing so.

British Triathlon Coach Education provides the skills and guidance of how to operate in specific venues, not the safe management of those venues. This document is **NOT** aimed at venue management and organisers of venues and is **NOT** intended as a guide for setting up and managing venues.

¹Organisations in this context include clubs, Local Authority leisure facilities and schools.

Health & Safety Executive Guidance (HSE)

The law regarding health and safety is intended to be clear and unambiguous, but because of the nature of sport where different coaches and organisations are in different positions (voluntary, self-employed, employed, facility managers, etc.) there is not a standard answer that fits all cases. However, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) provides some useful guidance for sports clubs and coached sessions:

- [Guidance for sports clubs](#)
- [FAQs](#)

Their guidance states that health and safety implementation should be **reasonably practicable**. This means balancing the level of risk against the measures needed to control the real risk in terms of money, time or trouble. Health and safety is not intended to be bureaucratic and a time-consuming paper-based exercise. That said, coaches have a duty of care towards their participants, spectators and the general public in and around their coaching sessions.

The HSE does state that some accidents in a sporting context (e.g. injuries sustained on the field of play) may be governed by a duty of care and common (civil) law may apply.

Until sufficient case law exists it is impossible to state what is and isn't **legally** acceptable. However, this document is written as a guide to what is currently considered best practice by British Triathlon to provide best practice duty of care to athletes, spectators, coaches and the general public.

Using These Guidelines

Triathlon coaching has a broad remit with three sports and delivered in a range of environments. The guidelines have been created to support coaches and help them make the decisions and actions to ensure their coaching is safe and effective.

Each coach or organisation that conducts triathlon related activities with groups or provides an individual training programme prescription should produce their own health and safety and risk assessment policies taking these guidelines into account, together with any other specific requirements from their own managers, governors or local authorities, such as rules on educational

visits, staffing, the use of minibuses, etc. Policies should be in writing and all people assisting with the coaching activity must be fully aware of these and how to implement them if necessary.

The nature of coaching and coaching environments is such that often a subjective opinion will need to be adopted, where a considered balanced view of best practice guidance (this document) and common sense is required. Coaches and session organisers should always hold the safety and welfare of participants and others affected by the session in the forefront of their minds when making decisions about session provision.

It should be noted that qualified coaches who do not adhere to the *Coaching Guidelines*, may be through their action/ inaction be in breach of the [Coaches' Code of Ethics and Conduct](#).

This document should be read in conjunction with wider [British Triathlon policies](#) which can be located through the British Triathlon Website or the Learning Hub. These include:

- [Code of ethics and conduct](#).
- Guidance on safeguarding and welfare on [BTF Website](#).
- Guidance on safeguarding and welfare in [Learning Hub](#).
- [Rule book](#).

Insurance

The British Triathlon Federation provides coaching cover for all coaches who have been trained and qualified by British Triathlon, in most instances this is done by holding a home nation coach membership.

For British Triathlon coaching qualifications to be valid, insurance must be obtained and up-to-date. All coaches (including those in training) must obtain coaching insurance either through the home country membership or an insurance policy that is equal to or greater than the British Triathlon insurance policy for coaching.

The cover is conditional on a coach following established guidelines for British Triathlon coaches. Guidelines are established within this document, and the necessary points will be raised inside the course resource for each level.

Insurance is also conditional to the level of qualification and training the coach has received and will only be covered to operate within the remit of their training and qualification.

For further details of Insurance Policy, please see the [British Triathlon Membership pages](#) and the [British Triathlon Insurance site](#).

Commercial Coaching

Any coach receiving payment for their services should check the insurance conditions to ensure they are covered. Any coach receiving regular payment (other than basic expenses) will require the Coach Plus membership.

Coaching Other Activities

A coach will only be covered for the activities they have been trained to deliver. Insurance cover for activities will depend on the coach package they hold. The new Coach Plus category has been extended to cover wider activities. Please refer to the [coaching membership guidance notes](#).



Validity

These guidelines are subject to regular review and are updated yearly. Coaches will be informed of the update via the coaching newsletter. A coach should ensure they review this document on a regular basis.

If you have any problems understanding or applying these guidelines to your coaching, please contact your Home Nation Coach Education Department.

Summary of Changes Released September 2016 to 2018

The following is a list of the key changes to these guidelines. The guidelines were moved to a learning hub format in September 2018.

These have been implemented through direct feedback from coaches, home nation input, input from health & safety consultants, agreement with the British Triathlon coaching team and been subject to confirmation from the insurance provider.



- Update on pool safety provision (2018);
- Update to include new level 2 diploma (2018);
- Clarification on swim teaching/ coaching (2018);
- Updating to include new coach membership information (May 2017);
- New Level 1 qualification remit (2016);
- Rewording of use of cycle facilities (Velodromes) (2016);
- Inclusion of Level 1 coaches to deliver on static cycles (2016);
- Overview of CPD for coaches.

Previous Key changes are as listed below:

- Clarity of application of guidelines in coaching;
- Additional guidance when coaching older adults;
- Coaching ratios adjusted, and scenarios given to clarify how to apply;
- Addition of indoor cycling in remit of Level 2 coach;
- Level 2 coaches delivering technical skills within coaching environment.

Home Nations

These Guidelines are designed to be used across all home nations and are created in partnership with Triathlon England, Triathlon Scotland and Welsh Triathlon.

However, each home nation may have some slight variances due to the needs of the sport in that nation. In the event of any specific questions you should contact your home nation coaching team:

[Triathlon England](#)

[Welsh Triathlon](#)

[Triathlon Scotland](#)

2. Planning for Safety

As a simple summary, based on HSE guidance the following should always be in place for ALL coached sessions:

- **Risk Assessment:** Check that equipment and venue are safe and suitable for participants and activities planned.
- **Participant Screening:** Check that activities are appropriate to capabilities and health and fitness of participants.
- **Emergency Action Plan:** Have a plan of what to do in case of an emergency, which includes ensuring a means of raising an alarm, adequate access for emergency services, means of evacuation and register of attendees in case of evacuation.
- **First Aid Provision:** Access to adequately trained first aider.
- **Communication strategy:** Ensure everyone involved in the planning and delivery of the session knows the emergency procedures.
- **Dynamic Risk Assessment:** Effective risk assessment is not just about planning in advance but also managing dynamically while sessions are in progress.
- **Record Accidents:** Have a process for improving the system based on experience.

Further information From HSE: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/entertainment/leisure/common-issues.htm>

The following pages are relevant to all coaches, irrespective of level of qualification or whether they are coaching groups or individuals.

Producing a Risk Assessment

HSE Definition:

“A risk assessment is not about creating huge amounts of paperwork, but rather about identifying sensible measures to control the risks in your club. The law does not expect you to remove all risks, but to protect people by putting in place measures to control those risks. You are probably already taking steps to protect your employees and others who may be affected by your club activities, but your risk assessment will tell you whether you should be doing more.”

A risk assessment should be carried out for every venue used during coaching sessions and should be re-assessed if a different discipline is being carried out, as the risks may differ. The purpose of a risk assessment is to identify hazards that could cause harm, assess the impact of outcomes that may arise from those hazards being realised and decide on appropriate reasonable measures to eliminate, or control the hazards based on their likelihood. The content of the coaching session must be planned with due consideration for the ability and age of the triathletes in the group, as well as the venue size and surface conditions.

In most instances, the Lead Coach will have thought about safety requirements and should document their findings through creation of a risk assessment. By documenting safety procedures, policies and practices, coaches are able to establish a health and safety audit trail. This will support the coach in

Risk Assessment Form

Venue:		Location:
Address:		Stocked at:
Group:		Location:
Date:		Location:
Time:		Loca:
Participants:	Number:	Locati:
	Age:	
	Ability:	
Lead coach name:		
Venue documents read and understood (please use appropriate box):	Normal operating procedures: Yes No	Additional notes
	Health and safety policy: Yes No	

the event of an incident by demonstrating a responsible and proactive approach to managing safety. It will also provide a written template for the coaches of future sessions, particularly club training sessions where other coaches may organise the training.

When operating in a managed facility, the risk assessments should take account of and adhere to venue specific normal operating procedures (NOP). In the vast majority of cases, the coaches' risk assessment will be a 'slimmed' down version of the venue NOP and only cover aspects which are relevant to the coach, athletes and the coached session content.

Where an employer, manager of a facility or organiser's policy or actions cause an unsafe coaching environment then the coach should raise this issue with that individual and seek to resolve the issue prior to the session. If it cannot be resolved satisfactorily then the coach should consider cancelling the session on safety grounds.

Template risk assessment documents for a variety of 'standard' coaching venues are available through Coach Education provisions on the Learning Hub online resource. These examples should be considered only as a starting point and coaches should ensure they fully examine their own environment and put into place appropriate changes and updates.

It is sensible and appropriate to create a risk assessment once for a given venue and share this document between all coaches delivering coached sessions. These documents should then be reviewed and updated following:

- Any incident or near miss (i.e. when an accident could have occurred, but by luck it didn't);
- Any updates from the venue, e.g. revision of venue NOP;
- On an annual basis as a minimum, which in turn should prompt a conversation with the venue to assess any changes.

Risk assessments should be reviewed/implemented prior to each session and should be assessed dynamically during a session.

Safety Provision

In some environments, such as indoor swimming pools and open water venues additional safety provision is required over and above the coaches present. See Swimming - [Pool Section 5](#) & [Open Water Section 6](#) for more detail. When producing a risk assessment assess whether the coach can adequately provide the function of safe supervision and coaching at the same time, in most cases separate safety cover will be required.

Equipment Checks

Part of any risk assessment should be to check that any equipment used is safe for the activities planned. Coaches can advise athletes to have appropriate equipment and clothing themselves, but should also perform some safety checks themselves. Common key items that need to be checked include but aren't limited to:

- Bike Helmets;
- Bikes "M-Check";
- Turbo or static training bikes are stable and appropriately set up, with working moving parts and check emergency braking devices where fixed flywheels are used.
- Pool equipment and swim training aids, such as backstroke flags, lane ropes, marker buoys.

Undertake Participant Screening

Coaches should seek to ensure that participants can undertake the session being delivered and are appropriately fit and well.



- Participants under the age of 18 must provide the coach with a Parental Coaching Consent Form. Any participant failing to submit a form signed by a parent or guardian should not be allowed to participate in the coached session.
- Coaches should collect and retain appropriate details regarding each participant being coached including name, address and emergency contact. This should preferably be through the use of a registration form or consent form for participants under the age of 18. The information should be stored securely and appropriately ensuring confidentiality of information is maintained, under the [General Data Protection Regulation \(GDPR\)](#).
- To facilitate safe participation, coaches should also know about any specific health requirements or medical conditions of the participants. Where possible this information should be sought in advance of the coaching session/training prescription through the completion of a registration form or a coaching consent form. However, it may be necessary to talk directly with the participant and/or parent/guardian before the session.
- As a triathlon coach you are not qualified to give advice on whether an athlete's medical condition prevents them from training. If a participant does not know, they should be referred to a doctor. In most cases a person will know what they should and shouldn't do, and the coach should simply be aware of this.
- Special attention should be given to those with underlying medical conditions, those who have had a significant time as sedentary, or those over 40 years of age, as these groups are the highest risk in terms of medical issues happening during or after training. Caution should be exercised until they have developed some experience within sessions. Common best practice includes, new athletes to only undertake 30-50% of main session initially, complete session/sets at a lower intensity, undertake one repetition then rest the next.
- A register of attendance must be completed for every coaching session. This may be used in case of evacuation to ensure all participants are accounted for. When coaching triathletes under 18 years old, each triathlete is to be signed out on the register by a parent/guardian in the presence of the coach. It is recommended these are retained for future reference in line club policy on data protection and record keeping.
- Some participants may present with a medical condition that in some cases may be linked to disability. If an individual has a condition where participation is in question, they must seek medical advice through their GP prior to participation, to ensure that the activity will not have a detrimental effect on their health or well-being.
- The coach reserves the right to ask for medical consent from a doctor or specialist if they believe the participant presents a condition that could put themselves or others at risk.

Practical Implementation

For one-off coaching sessions it is advisable to make use of [parental consent \ participant screening forms](#). A template screening form is available on the Learning Hub. In a club situation a more suitable approach may be to keep centralised membership records, which contain all the vital information, however this information should be readily accessible in case of emergency and should also be kept in a confidential and secure manner in line with GDPR.

For more information on collecting information click [here](#)

Emergency Action Plan (EAP)

An EAP detailing what actions the coach and participants will take to maintain participant safety and welfare in the case of an incident occurring should exist and be accessible to all coaches.

Managed facilities should have their own EAP and procedures which the coach should be familiar with. The coach should also have their own EAP, which will work in conjunction with the facility EAP, but in most cases will be a condensed version that covers all information relevant to the coach and athletes and will usually detail how to assist venue staff in ensuring safety.

For non-managed facilities the coach will need to cover actions to be taken in different types of incident, ranging from minor to life threatening. This plan should be in sufficient detail that it describes a step by step process in detail of what to do in an emergency:

- Major Injuries (potentially life threatening).
- Need for evacuation (e.g. fire, structural failure).
- Minor Injuries.

For outdoor venues some or all of the following may also be required:

- Missing persons.
- Adverse weather conditions.

The EAP should provide sufficient details to contact and direct emergency services to the venue and how emergency first aid will be provided.

First Aid Provision

The coach should ensure that they and attendees of sessions have access to appropriate first aid provision.

In a **managed facility** this is likely to fall under the remit of the facility staff (e.g. lifeguard or duty manager at a leisure centre), however this should not be presumed, and it is important to identify who this individual is.

In a **non-managed facility**, the coach will need to ensure access to a first aider and first aid equipment appropriate to the environment they are working in. The first aider can be a member of the group, helper, parent, facility/duty manager. The coach can also be the first aider; however, this is not a mandatory requirement. In either circumstance access to an appropriately stocked first aid kit is required. The coach does not need to be first aid qualified however if they frequently coach on their own in an unmanaged facility, then it is recommended that they have a first aid qualification as this will make ensuring a first aider is present is much easier.

If the coach is acting as first aider this is an additional reason why it is recommended that they do not take part in the coached session as a participant, as they may be part of an accident, and therefore unable to treat others.

Definition of a first aider: An individual who has attended a recognised course of training. This could be delivered by an organisation such as St Johns or may be delivered by employers in house (part of staff training).

For guidance on selecting a 1st aid training provider please visit the [HSE website](#).



Communication Strategy

Planning for risks and undertaking safety briefings for athletes and other coaches is clearly a crucial part of safety and welfare management. For those who are responsible for other coaches and the management of a club's health and safety provision it is important that they consider how to communicate and share information with all those involved with the coaching process, which may include other coaches, welfare officer, membership secretary.



It is advisable for all those who would be expected to be involved in case of emergency have a practice or drill of intended actions once a year as a minimum to ensure the process works.

Where coaches have learnt from an incident/occurrence at the club/event, where appropriate, they should share the lessons learnt with the British Triathlon organisation. This could help to avoid incidents at other clubs or events.

Dynamic Safety Management

Risk assessment always requires a degree of vigilance and dynamic management. Whoever is responsible for safety must always keep part of their focus on the safety in case situations change. A dynamic assessment of this may be required at the outset of sessions.

A safety briefing should be conducted prior to every coach-led session to ensure that participants and others involved in the coaching session have the relevant health, safety and emergency information regarding the session. Relevant health and safety information might include:

- An explanation of specific safety issues and hazards of the venue (i.e. identified during the risk assessment);
- An explanation of any specific safety or operational requirements associated with the session or specific activities in the session;
- The purpose of the session (i.e. the goal);
- How to safely perform the discipline specific techniques required for the session;
- A reminder of the session rules/code of conduct;
- Advise/reminder about the relevant safety and emergency procedures and how to obtain first aid if required;
- When coaching a session that includes participants under the age of 18, those participants are the coach's responsibility from when the session commences until the appropriate person collects them at the end of the session. Young participants are expected to remain in the session from beginning to end unless they have made prior arrangements to be picked up early. It is good practice to have a sign in and sign out sheets for sessions. To help with this process you might need to consider appropriate helpers such as parents and/or assistant coaches.

The coach should adopt positions when coaching where they take an appropriate balance between being able to observe and feedback to participants, whilst maintaining a safe environment. Where there is a conflict between these two elements, safety should take precedence.

If a participant has to leave early or is being collected by someone other than the parent/guardian, the parent/guardian must advise the coach of the details of the arrangement including who will be collecting the individual and when. The coach should also agree departure times and procedures with parents/guardians before the session commences. Generally this only applies to children leaving the session.

It is the responsibility of the coach to ensure that the group is adequately supervised. The coaching ratios outlined in this document provides a maximum ratio to ensure a safe coaching session. However, coaches must only coach the number of triathletes they feel confident and competent to deal with, within the recommendations. The coach: participant ratio should be sufficient to enable

meaningful help to be given to any participant who is having difficulties. Younger children, beginners and those with disabilities or special needs, for example, may require extra supervision.

While the coaching ratios provide a ratio to ensure an effective and safe coaching session, it is recommended that when coaching young athletes, a minimum of two responsible adults (with at least one person holding a valid coaching qualification at an appropriate level) are present at all times to ensure an adequate level of supervision. This means that in an emergency one adult can stay with the group while the other can go for help or deal with the emergency without having to consider supervision of the rest of the group. It can also address any concerns about one-to-one contact with young children.

In some instances, it will be necessary to arrange for additional help during a session. The coach might arrange for another qualified coach to attend the session or ask another responsible individual such as a club official or parent of one of the participants to assist in the session. It is important that anyone enlisted to help in a session is suitably qualified for the role and tasks they are required to undertake. It is good practice to have a clear and accurate record of everyone involved in the delivery of the session. This will ensure the coach is able to identify who attended a session should an issue be raised at a later date that requires this information. This person should be present at the safety briefing held prior to coaching sessions.

It is strongly recommended by the British Triathlon Federation that a coach **should not** take part in the session as a participant, unless this is unavoidable. ***Coaching requires observation and feedback and a continual awareness of the bigger picture in terms of dynamic risk assessment, all these elements are significantly compromised by the coach taking part in a session.***

Recording Accidents and Injuries

It is essential to record any accidents or injuries that occurred during a session. When documenting the occurrence of an injury or illness the coach should:

- Briefly note it in the relevant box on the session plan;
- Record the full details on an Accident and Illness Record Form or in an accident record book;
- Notify managed facility Duty Manager as they may need to document the injury also.

Recording these details will help to identify any trends or re-occurring accidents as well as areas that could be addressed to improve safety. This record will be vital in the unlikely event of legal action. A copy of the accident report form should be submitted to the relevant person (e.g. Venue Duty Manager, Club Head Coach or Welfare officer). The coach should always keep a copy for his or her own records.

Triathletes completing individual prescribed training programmes (Level 2 diploma & Level 3 coaches only) should record accidents, injuries or illnesses that occur during training on their training diary and inform the coach at the earliest opportunity. The coach should always keep a copy for their own records.

Coaches should deal with each accident, injury or illness appropriately, which will normally involve a recommendation to cease training or to reduce the training load until the triathlete has recovered from their injury. Where appropriate the coach should encourage the triathlete to seek medical advice.

In the **event of serious injury or incident** (i.e. something that requires prolonged medical treatment, or there was an incident that could have led to a life-threatening situation) you should also contact the coaching team at British Triathlon or your Home Nation, who will give advice on how to report an incident formally.

You can also do this through our [insurance company](#).

Sporting injuries are NOT Reportable under [RIDDOR](#) (Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013) if the injury arose out of the normal participation of the activity (e.g. a bike crash, or collision between swimmers). Injuries should be reported if they were due to defective equipment or failings in the organisation and management of an event.

Medical Attention

It is important to note that it is **not** the responsibility of the coach to diagnose or treat any participant with injury or illness. However, they should direct participants to seek appropriate medical attention at the earliest possible opportunity.

Guidance on stopping a coaching activity

This can be a challenging area for coaches, you can see a person is struggling to complete a rep or skill set, you suggest stopping but they advise they are fine and want to continue.

You may also get athletes complaining of injuries or illness, and then advise they are fit to train.

It could be that the weather or other factors make a session unsafe, and a coach is under pressure to run a session.

A coach needs to know when to say 'stop' or tell an athlete when not to train. The risk to triathletes is generally low, unlike sports that involve contact or high-force activities. In most cases they will just fail to get anything from a session, but if allowed to continue it could lead to injury or illness.

We have detailed a real example from a club coach to show how you can deal with this situation:

A club athlete was complaining of chest pains, they were told by the coach to stop and see a GP but wanted to continue anyway. They were prevented from attending sessions until they had seen a GP. It was 'sold' to the athlete in the end by the coach 'if you drop dead – it's my reputation that is also affected, so you need consider the consequences for everyone'.

The result in this case was to modify club membership T&Cs and ensure there was a condition that coaches could stop members training if they thought it was in the member's or others' best interest.

Often individual athletes are prepared to take a risk, but it's the effect on others, e.g. black out whilst riding in a group causing cyclists to crash or road traffic accident, that can be used to persuade athletes to think about outcomes of their actions.

Stopping the session for all, when one person won't adhere to the coach guidance, can create a positive outcome through peer pressure.

Examples of sessions that must be stopped due to safety factors:

- Open water swim sessions could be affected by a variety of factors e.g. water quality, other users, wildlife, and weather.
- Bike sessions (road based) increase in normal users, road surface, weather.

The coach ideally should be aware of any additional factors (e.g. change in weather) before the session starts and make the call to cancel/stop the session. A coach should never be pressured to run a session where they feel safety is compromised.

If participants chose to ignore advice and wish to swim/bike/run in a public area at their own risk, the coach should still not deliver the session and advise the coached session is cancelled and make a record. If this is an area hired for coaching, the coach should not allow any activity to take place.

3. Remit of Coaching Qualifications

When working with triathletes, it is the responsibility of the coach to be aware of their level of training and of the qualification that they have obtained, in conjunction with their level of experience at a given level or in a given environment. For any British Triathlon coaching qualification to be valid, the coach must hold insurance cover equal to or more than that offered by Home Nations membership. Further details on coaching Insurance can be found in the [British Triathlon website](#).

Coaches should ensure that they are qualified to operate at the level and in the environment where they are coaching. When working in a discipline specific environment, coaches are restricted to coaching in the environment as outlined by their coaching qualification.

British Triathlon regards **a group to be defined as a minimum of 3 or more participants**.

If coaches are unsure about their coaching environments, then they should contact their Home Nation Coaching Department at the earliest opportunity for clarification.

Table 1: Qualification & Role Descriptors for British Triathlon Coaches

Coaching Qualification	Coaches Role	Qualification Description / Notes
Level 1 (Awarded before October 2016)	Prepare for, deliver and review pre-prepared coaching sessions incorporating basic triathlon techniques. (Assist more qualified coaches delivering aspects of their coaching sessions normally under direct supervision). Coaching groups only.	Level 1 triathlon coaches are first and foremost <u>assistant</u> coaches to more senior coaches. However, where a more senior coach is not present then Level 1 coaches are able to independently conduct pre-prepared swimming, cycling and running activity sessions either by using Level 1 coaching cards, OR appropriate sessions prepared/reviewed by an appropriately qualified triathlon coach (i.e. Level 2 or Level 3). Level 1 coaches can only deliver 1 in 4 coached sessions independently from a Level 2 or 3 triathlon coach. (I.e. three sessions out of four must be directly supervised by a more qualified coach). Level 1 coaches can coach independently for up to 4 months from certification. This may be relevant in circumstances when a new club is being established or replacing a coach. Scottish Level 1 coaches should confirm remit directly with Triathlon Scotland.
NEW Level 1 (From October 2016)	Prepare, deliver and review pre-prepared coaching sessions incorporating basic triathlon techniques. Coaching groups only.	The Level 1 qualification was revised in 2016 and will allow a coach to lead and deliver (pre-planned) sessions or prepare basic sessions on their own (reviewed by higher level coach) in a range of club environments (without the need to be directly supervised). Coaches must be at least 16 years of age. Coaches over 18 once qualified can work independently; those under 18 must have supervision.
Level 2	Plan, deliver and evaluate coaching sessions incorporating basic and	Level 2 triathlon coaches are trained & qualified to plan & deliver a series of structured and progressive

	intermediate triathlon techniques. Coaching groups only ¹ .	sessions incorporating basic and intermediate skills techniques, independently of a higher-level coach.
Level 2 Diploma (From 2018)	Plan, deliver and review individual coaching programmes.	A new qualification for 2018. This will allow certified Diploma coaches to deliver 1:1 coaching in addition to their level 2 remit.
Level 3	Plan, implement, analyse and revise annual coaching programs for individual triathletes through individualised training prescription. Plan, deliver and review coaching sessions incorporating advanced discipline specific skills, techniques and tactics. Coaching groups and individuals ¹ .	Level 3 triathlon coaches are qualified to prescribe training programmes to individuals. Level 3 coaches are also able to coach the full range of discipline specific skills, techniques and tactics, as outlined in the coach education course technical syllabus. Training prescription should be based on the triathletes' current and potential performance, needs and aspirations, to achieve specific training/competition goals.

¹See [section on coaching individuals](#).

¹ On a session where a coach has planned a group activity, but less than 3 people turn up, the coach should decide if the session will be effective based on the numbers and either revise or postpone the session. Where less than 3 people regularly attend a coached session, the coach should suspend and review the delivery of the session. A coach who continues to deliver sessions to less than 3 participants will find themselves coaching outside their remit.

Insurance During Qualification

Trainee coaches will be insured to deliver sessions/training programmes as required to complete their qualification, during their qualification period. Please refer to the qualification criteria or course tutors for further information.

Currently the cover is only in place for coaches to deliver sessions which contribute to the qualification they are undertaking; full coaching remit only applies once certification is confirmed.

Level 1

No coaching outside the course is required, any coaching practise must be done under direct supervision of a qualified level 2/ 3 coach.

Level 2

Trainee coaches are required to coach 6 sessions for their practical coaching experience.

Level 2 diploma

To work with one athlete over a 12-week period.

Level 3

Due to changes in Level 3 assessment criteria candidates should check in with their home nation or course tutors to confirm requirements.

4. Coaching Ratios and Age Guidelines

These coaching ratios have been established to provide the coach with a maximum ratio to ensure a **safe** and **effective** coaching session. The coaching ratios cover two separate influences, the level required to be safe and also the level required to provide a good level of coaching to athletes. They should be considered in conjunction with other safety ratios and guidance such as lifeguard cover.

Furthermore, these are recommendations, and coaches at the respective coaching level should only coach the number of participants they feel comfortable with. This may also vary depending on the level of age, competency of the group, the coaching environment and the weather conditions.

Table 2 Recommended coach: participant ratio

Session delivered	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Pool Based Swimming Sessions. E.g. managed local authority pool.	1:8	1:16	1:24
Open Water Swim Sessions.	Assistant role only when directly supervised by senior coach	1:14 ¹	1:20
Cycling (small traffic free area) e.g. playground, grass field, car park closed to vehicles.	1:8	1:16	1:20
Cycling (closed road circuits).	1:8	1:16	1:20
Cycling (indoor fixed bike session) e.g. turbo session in sports hall.	1:8 ³	1:16	1:24
Cycling (public highway).	Not Covered	1:8 ²	1:8 ²
Running sessions.	1:12	1:20	1:24
Strength and conditioning. ⁴	Assistant role only	1:16	1:20

¹ Level 2 coaches who commenced their Level 2 course before October 2011 are not qualified to deliver open water sessions unless they have completed an additional open water coaching module. This could be a 1-day BTF open water CPD or the ASA open water qualification.

The number of participants will depend on a range of factors including: safety cover, the environment, level of experience of participants, the coaches' experience and additional training. **Refer to [section 6 on Open Water](#).**

²At Level 2, coaching on a public highway is permissible, however careful risk assessment and planning is needed due to the nature of the environment, where not all factors are under the control of the coach. The demands of the environment naturally mean that there will always be a trade-off of taking account of safety issues or being able to adequately provide coaching input. Refer to the [cycling environment sections](#) for more information

³ Level 1 coaches should complete the [Safe Static Cycling Module](#) and deliver according to their wider qualification status.

⁴Coaches must have completed the [Strength and Conditioning Module](#).

Example Scenarios of Ratios

Swimming Pool – 3 lanes 24 participants

A pool session covered by a Level 2 and Level 1 coach, with 3 lanes. Level 2 is responsible for 2 lanes and Level 1 for one lane. Provided life guard ratios (usually 1:25) are not exceeded then the session can be considered safe, especially if the Level 2 coach takes 16 athletes and the Level 1 takes 8 athletes. If on occasion the Level 2 coach is replaced by another Level 1 coach this could still be safe, as the lifeguard manages the majority of the safety aspects. The coaches should focus on ensuring safety, and then may provide some coaching. Their ability to manage a high-quality session may not be as high as if the Level 2 were present, however it is safe and allows the session to continue.



Swimming Pool – Whole pool, 30+ participants

Safe options would include two Level 2 coaches, or a Level 2 and two or more Level 1 coaches. However, most pools have a lifeguard ratio of 1:25, so a second life guard may be required for safety purposes. Consider the balance of experience of the coaches. An experienced Level 2 should be confident in this situation, but a newly qualified Level 2 who is leading a session with for two Level 1 coaches and 30-40 swimmers may find it harder to manage the safety aspects and two other coaches whilst also delivering sessions themselves.

Closed Road Cycling Circuit 20 adults

An experienced Level 2 may be able to cover this session with some additional help, especially if the group is out of sight for a while. A lot may depend upon the experience of the athletes. It would be sensible to reduce numbers for a novice session. The issues are mainly concerned with managing the group(s) so there are no collisions. Collisions are much more likely with novice athletes; however more advanced athletes may also be a risk if they are undertaking a demanding session at speed.

Closed Road Cycling Circuit 20 Children

It would make sense to split this group of 20 into two smaller groups and have two coaches cover the session. A Level 1 may be able to take a smaller group and a Level 2 manage a larger group.

For both cycling sessions above, it may make sense to have an experienced rider follow each group round the circuit, so they can observe any issues and report back to the coach or be able to raise an alarm should anything untoward happen.

Open Road Cycling Coached Session 10 Riders aged 16+

Following the guidance in the cycling section on route selection, for this session it would be advisable to split the group into two and use a small circuit (e.g. Industrial estate at a safe time). There should ideally be two coaches for this session, however if the groups are split into two groups of five, a safe option would be to have a static (non-riding coach) and an experienced rider or lower level coach to follow each group from behind, for observation and first response in case of emergency.

If your club has a situation that you are unclear of how to apply a ratio please contact [British Triathlon Coaching](#) detailing:

- who the session is for;
- what the session is;
- the environment;
- and where and why you are doing this.

We will then reply with guidance to support you.

Coaching Children and Adults at risk

The coaching ratios table on the previous page should in several cases be reduced for coaching of children, especially when the level or experience of the children and/or coach is low.

Any coach working with athletes under the age of 18 on a regular basis, must hold a valid Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), and should adhere to the British Triathlon Safeguarding and Protecting Children Policy.

A coach should consider the environment/activity/support/numbers when working with this group. All of these areas may have to be adapted to create safe and effective sessions.

[Request a DBS check.](#)



Coaching Mixed Age Groups

As the minimum age for a sprint distance triathlon is 15; that is, they can take part in a sprint distance event in the year they turn 15 i.e. by the 31 December. Some clubs may wish to allow their more competent over 14s to train within the adult sessions particularly in swim-based sessions. For this to take place a club should carefully consider the following:

- The need to ensure all safeguarding matters are considered.
- The coaches are happy to coach children in a mixed environment, they are properly qualified and have had the necessary DBS checks carried out.
- That the adult participants are happy for children over the age of 14 to take part in the session. This change will affect the dynamics of the session.
- If the club is not a junior club this will change the type of club from adult to junior/adult. The club will then need to have a trained welfare officer added to the committee.
- Parents are happy and provide informed consent for child to take part in session.

This section is extracted from [club Safeguarding Policy](#). Any questions on this area can be addressed via the Safeguard lead at British Triathlon.

Coaching and Teaching to swim

Generally Coaching assumes that we are working with athletes who can already swim; most clubs will have a minimum distance that a person can swim before they can attend sessions, e.g. 100m non-stop.

A challenge for triathlon coaches and clubs is catering for people who lack water confidence or haven't swum in years or even decades. Excluding people based on poor swim capability is not very inclusive and is a barrier to entry into the sport. Therefore, it doesn't make sense to place such a restriction on this type of coaching/teaching.

However, it does demand a different skill set from the coach and requires a coach who understands the needs of individuals, their own skill set and the environment when taking on very novice swimmers.

Working with a small group of novice adult swimmers to build confidence and ability can be achieved by a triathlon coach and may be a key way into the sport for many people who hadn't considered it an option. A coach should consider the following:

Appropriate techniques and training

- Self-reflect on your experience and training, can you offer what they need? For some people the wrong coaching or coach could be worse than having no coach at all, possibly putting them at risk, but more likely putting them off swimming or triathlon.
- Can you undertake additional teaching to support your development in this area, e.g. swim teaching qualifications?
- Working with a group of children, e.g. 5-8 year olds, would be best served by a qualified swim teacher or swim school.
- For nervous adults consider using the simpler and more basic [swim smooth drills](#) and [equipment](#) to assist, so they have a simple method of progression and feel safe and supported by using floatation aids for example.

Adaptability of coached session

- Clear progression in your sessions and ability to adapt if something isn't working will help provide appropriate sessions for mixed abilities.
- Understanding anxiety –which is a key issue for novices. It is important coaches don't underestimate this and structure their approach to gradually build confidence and skills with the participants.
- Really understand your athletes, what their strengths are, and where they need to improve. If you aren't sure, get them to complete some kind of 'test' initially, e.g. swim a length, start them in shallow water so if they have overstated their position they don't get into difficulty.
- Positioning - we generally don't recommend a coach is in the water with athletes; but in some cases, this may be appropriate. The coach should consider how they can best deliver the session, and any challenges or issues that may develop, e.g. how they will deal with a person who panics and grabs them. Safeguarding issues should also be considered before getting in the water. The coach should remain in close proximity at all times, until the swimmer's capabilities have improved. The coach should ideally remain in shallow water or near the sides and consider how they can get out quickly to deal with any situation arising.

Athlete safety and welfare

- Ensure that there is lifeguard support, and they are aware you are working with novices. Often lifeguards assume a club session means that everyone is a capable swimmer.
- Numbers of athletes and support you will need. **The less able the swimmers, the lower the ratio should be to the coach.**
- Pool layout and depth. Often you will have a lane, but it may be better if possible to stay in shallow areas and use widths initially if capabilities are very low. Alternatively consider just using the shallower end of the lane you have. Ensuring this can also help address the anxiety issues.
- Safety cover. In the event of a panic attack, how will you deal with this? Use the lanes next to the wall and have a method of the swimmer grabbing onto a rope or pole for assistance. Also consider how you will help them with the anxiety if they have a panic attack. Dealing effectively with this may increase their chance of persevering with swimming.

We would generally recommend a person who cannot 'swim' i.e. no fundamental ability to swim any stroke and who may require physical support in the water, should be referred to a swim teacher to gain the key competencies of swimming.

It should also be pointed out that triathlon coaches are insured to deliver coaching in the context of triathlon, so if a coach is offering specific 'swim lessons' to 'swimmers' outside a triathlon club with no overall triathlon goal/ event target this will be outside their British Triathlon Membership cover.

5. Coaching Pool Based Swimming Sessions

In addition to standard athlete safety and welfare guidance in previous sections, information specific to swimming environments is detailed in this section.

Safe Supervision

In 2018 we reviewed pool safety requirements in conjunction with the RLSS. Historically we have always stated there should be a suitably trained lifeguard present when coaching, and in most facilities, this will always be the case.

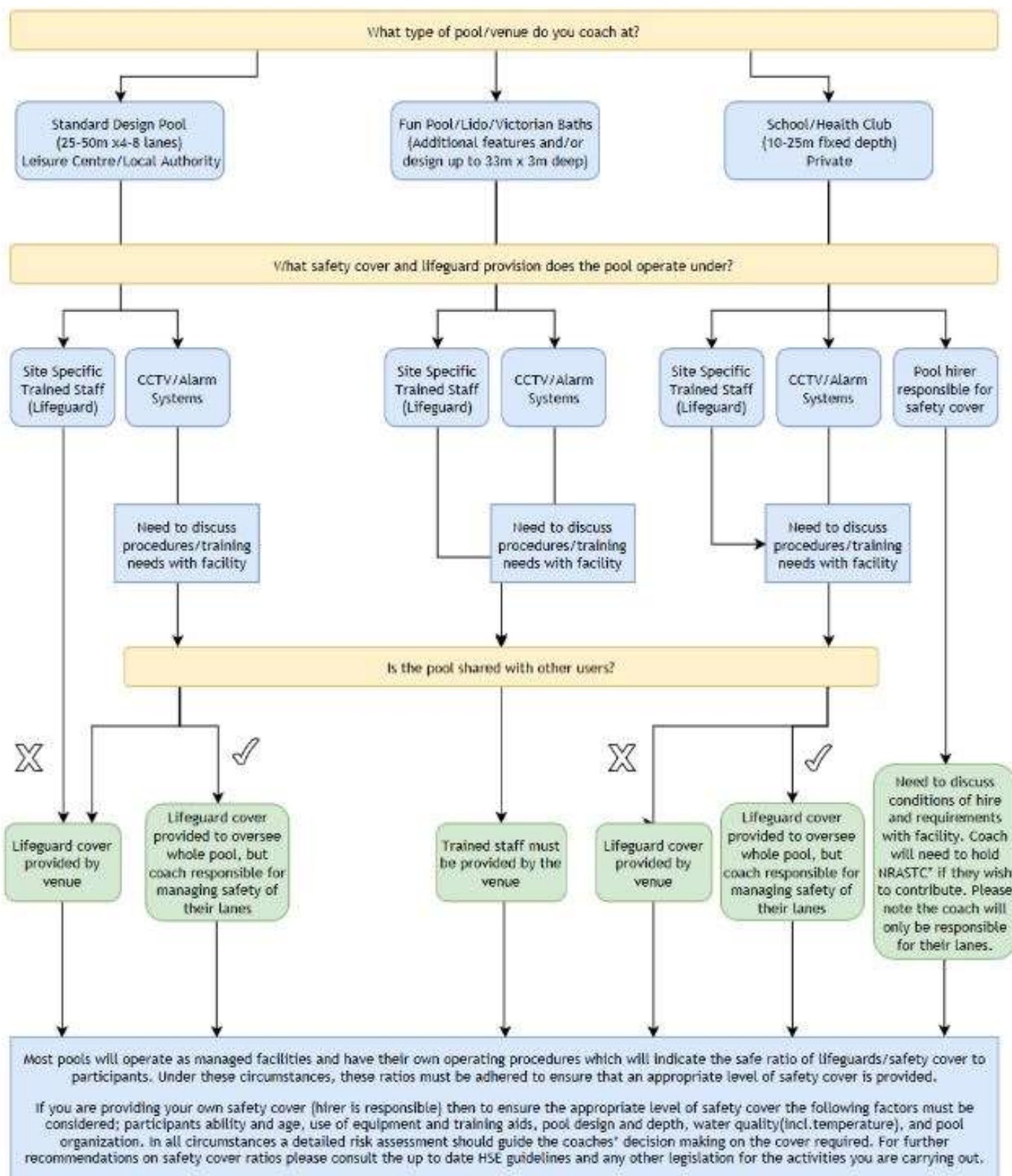


We still continue to advise that a coach should not operate in the role of coach and safety cover at the same time - with the exception of those that hold the [NRASTC](#). (National Rescue Award for Swim Teachers & Coaches)

We have identified that safety requirements in the pool environment has evolved and our guidance has been revised accordingly:

- Safety provision must be considered and reasonable for the activity, participants and facility.
- It is important to note that the coach is responsible for the safety of their athletes, but how this is covered will better reflect the pool environment they are working in.

We have created a flowchart to help identify what safety cover is required - click on the image to see the full PDF



*National Rescue Award for Swimming Teachers and Coaches (NRASTC) RLSS UK. This qualification allows swim teachers and coaches to work in specific pool environments without the need for additional safety cover. Whilst it does not remove the need for safety cover, for coaches working in private pools (that meet the criteria), it gives a level of safety cover to ensure sessions can be delivered.

Safety Cover and Lifeguarding

In most managed facilities a qualified NPLQ 'lifeguard' will be on duty for all sessions, but some pools will operate alternative safety cover. We have defined some of these alternatives:

- **Site specific trained staff.** These will act as lifeguards- generally will hold a first aid qualification and have been trained in rescue methods for the pool they will work at. This is normally for modern pools with uniform depth.
- **CCTV/Alarm systems.** These are often found in health and fitness clubs. There are no staff on poolside, but as above trained staff will react to issues and alarms. Coaches should discuss with centre staff/ management, and whilst systems may be in place they may not be monitored.
- **Pool hirer takes responsibility for safety.** The hirer must ensure they provide safety cover as outlined in the conditions of hire. A coach should check carefully with the facility operator to understand their requirements. In these situations, it is likely that the Coach will be able to contribute to the safety cover if they hold the National Rescue Award for Swimming Teachers and Coaches (NRASTC) RLSS UK.

National Rescue Award for Swimming Teachers and Coaches (NRASTC)

This qualification has been designed to allow swim teachers and coaches to work in specific pool environments without the need for additional safety cover. Whilst it does not completely remove the need for safety cover, for coaches working in private pools (that meet the criteria) it gives a level of safety cover to ensure sessions can be delivered.

More details on the qualification can be found on the [RLSS Website](#).

How a coach should ensure safety cover

The coach should start by talking to the venue, they will define the requirements for safety. The coach can then risk assess the venue based on the facility, the activity and the range of participants.

In general terms a coach will need more safety provision for larger, mixed ability groups or children and when working in pools that don't have a uniform depth or design.

The coach also needs to consider that their role is to coach, and whilst all coaches need to constantly consider safety, their effectiveness as a coach will be reduced when taking on additional safety roles.

Here are some examples:

- **School / health club Pool with CCTV & Alarm single coach working with group of competent swimmers.** The pool is of modern design (easy access), single depth (can stand up in any section) in this situation the risks are low, but the coach should consider: is anyone monitoring the CCTV and when the alarm is pressed what help can be expected to help effect a rescue. A coach holding the NRASTC should be able to work in this environment.
- **Coach hiring a Victorian pool (33m up to 3m depth) no safety provision given. Large mixed ability children's group.** This type of pool needs a site-specific trained person, extracting a person from deep water with a high edge on the pool is challenging. To deliver safely at this pool the coach would need to make sure there is a team of appropriately trained lifeguards available to conduct a rescue.
- **Local Authority pool 25 or 33m – 2 lanes hired, rest of pool open for general users.** This is the usual set up for most club sessions, a lifeguard will cover the whole pool, but the coach is still responsible for ensuring the sessions are safe- e.g. lane discipline and direction. The coach should liaise with the venue on creating risk assessment and emergency action plan, and the lifeguard at the start and finish of each session.

The next section outlines areas which the coach should review, and risk assess.

Facility Requirements

Most indoor and outdoor swimming pools operate as managed facilities. In these circumstances the venue will have their own operating procedures which will indicate the safe ratio of lifeguards/safety cover to participants.

In these circumstances, venue specific guidance on lifeguarding/ safety cover ratios should be adhered to in order that an appropriate level of safety covered is provided. Wherever possible it is advisable to engage with the facility to provide lifeguard/ safety cover.

Where the pool is in *shared use* and clearly divided between coached and recreational swimming activities, the facility must provide appropriate lifeguard/safety cover. Whilst the coach is not responsible for the safety of the wider pool & users, the coach should understand the general safety requirements & responsibilities as they will contribute to creating a safe pool environment.

Participant's Ability

The factors to be considered include:

- Age of participants.
- Range of their swimmer's ability. This should be known by the coach and each new participant should be checked at the first session, in shallow water (for example get participant to swim a width to demonstrate level of competence).
- Use of flotation aids (e.g. arm bands, this doesn't mean training aids e.g. pull buoys or kickboards) is generally to be avoided unless needed due to disability/ injury. This should always be discussed before a session starts.
- Ability of participants to comprehend instructions including their command of the language in which the session is delivered.
- Any physical or learning difficulties.
- Smaller (younger) athletes will lose heat more quickly in colder pools and this should be taken into consideration.

Most clubs will have a minimum distance that a person can swim before they attend club sessions, it is important to note that some people may not be able to do what they have stated, new participants should be observed and guided carefully.

Equipment and Training Aid Hazards

A range of equipment in swimming can present risks if not used safely, some of the common training aids are listed here:

- **Training fins (flippers)** should be of soft design, maintain gaps between swimmers.
- **Paddles** ensure adequate space is given between athletes. Coaches should only use paddles if their training has covered using them. Coaches should err on the side of caution for those inexperienced in using paddles.
- **Pull buoys and floats** ensure safe storage- can be a trip hazard if on pool side.
- **Warm up cords/ stretch bands** ensure enough space to use safely, only use if trained to do so.



Some training aids may not be allowed in certain pools; this should be checked by the coach before starting a session. Coaches should be aware that over use of above equipment may lead to injury or may lead to reliance on equipment (e.g. pull buoys).

Pool Specific Risk Assessment Factors

Owners, operators and occupiers of swimming pools must follow the general duties and responsibilities in the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974, Guidance on the Management of Swimming Pools (HSG 179) and the Management of Health and Safety in the Work Place Regulations 1999.

Generally, operators are expected to take all reasonable and practical measures to ensure that their facilities and operations do not cause harm. This will include making sure that staff and anyone hiring the facility knows how to operate safely.

Venue operators are obliged to take all reasonable and practicable measures to ensure that coaching activities are conducted safely. They have the overall responsibility for every person on the premises. It is advisable that coaches are familiar with the core principles pertaining to swimming pools so that they are aware of issues before it is too late, as often they may be the first person to observe issues.

Each pool will have unique features that make particular demands on safety. This section highlights important factors.

Pool Design

The suitability of the general design of the pool area for coaching includes:

- Blind spots resulting from the position of features or equipment.
- Glare, reflection, lighting and noise.
- Access into and around the pool.
- Height of pool walls, deck level pools (water at same level as floor) allow easier access and reduce waves.
- Larger pools (e.g. 50m) that can be split into 2x 25m sections.



Depth

Importance in relation to the ability and height of the participants includes:

- The depth and extent of shallow water areas.
- The extent of deep-water areas.
- The pool floor profile, in particular sudden changes in depth,
- The possibility of being able to segregate the shallow water area (e.g. roping off and using a boom).
- Pool with adjustable depth- usually this will be displayed- but coaches should not assume when working with this type of pool.

Water Quality

The following factors need to be considered:

- Temperature of the pool water (and the air) in respect of comfort – bearing in mind participants' size, age and physical ability. Ideal operating temperatures for indoor pools are around 27-29 degrees centigrade.
- Clarity of the pool water- is the bottom of the pool visible?

- Water quality testing, the facility will have its own schedule, but the coach should report any issues as they come up e.g. contaminants, swimmers complaining of poor taste/smell/clarity/minor irritation.
- Any acute reaction to the water e.g. burning eyes or skin/difficulty in breathing should be treated as an emergency.

Coaches should be aware of these issues especially if they are the first users of a pool on a particular day and ensure the relevant tests have been completed before participants enter the water.

Pool Organisation

The arrangement of the coached session must consider:

- Who has the overall responsibility for the pool?
- Is there exclusivity of use?
- Is there shared use with other activities?
- If use is shared what are the implications? (e.g. life guarding responsibilities)
- Pool etiquette/lane direction

Coaches may wish to consider sessions which do not include lane ropes to better simulate and prepare athletes for open water environments; however, they need to carefully consider the abilities and experience of the participants, be aware and address increased risk factors such as collisions due to lack of lane ropes.

6. Coaching Open Water Swim Sessions

It is important to note that this guide is intended as a reference for coaches to coach in a venue that is managed by a suitably trained and qualified operator. Coaches who have not had further training should be aware that they don't have qualifications or skills to manage an open water venue in the same way that they are not qualified to manage an indoor swimming pool.

The [Sh2out programme](#) has been set up to support clubs and facilities to run safe open water venues, further details can be found in the final section of this chapter.



At no point should you exceed the maximum ratio as outlined in [section 4 on ratios](#). The below factors including but not limited to, should be considered when making decisions on how many participants you will have in your sessions.

- Open water environment (sea/lake/river/reservoir/marina).
- Experience of participants.
- Your own open water coaching experience.
- Level of safety cover provided by venue.
- Temperature of water.
- Environmental conditions e.g. weather/swell/tides.

If you find you have large numbers of people simply wanting to swim, the club should consider if these sessions are to run un-coached but under the safety cover of a managed venue.

Qualification Requirements for Open Water Swimming

Level 3 coaches may deliver open water sessions independently, in appropriate open water environments.

Level 2 coaches can deliver open water swim sessions independently if either:

- Completed their Level 2 qualification and have attended the British Triathlon Open Water Coaching CPD Workshop.
- Completed and certificated as a Level 2 coach on a course commencing after October 2011.

Level 1 coaches can only assist open water swim sessions under direct supervision from level 2 or 3 coach.

Open Water Coaching CPD Workshop is now (from 2017) accessible by all levels, but coaches must still adhere to their wider qualification remit.

Please Note: Open water swimming skills can be delivered by a Level 1 or 2 Session Coach (not meeting above requirements) only in a swimming pool.

Venue Selection

Ideally venues used for open water coached sessions should be a managed facility with appropriate safety procedures including lifesaving staff and water quality checks. This is not always possible in some locations and in these cases the following general advice should be taken when selecting venues:

- Ensure that the water quality is sufficient to minimise the risk to participants ([see Open Water Specific Risk Assessment Factors section](#)).



- **Under no circumstances should open water swimming take place until the results of the tests are known and acceptable readings have been recorded.**
- The site is easily accessible by participants but also by emergency services should they be required.
- There is adequate safety provision for participants.
- Entry and exit from the water are safe and does not create issues for safety or emergency services staff needing quick access.
- There are suitable facilities to deal with any injuries or accidents, especially being able to get them into a suitable environment for example in cases of hypothermia.
- The conditions in the water, such as temperature, currents, waves, tides, depth are suitable and appropriate to the capabilities of the participants.
- Water owner/operator permission for open water swimming has been granted, preferably in writing.

These guidelines are focussed around coaching, and this section is designed to give coaches an understanding of what is needed to deliver safe open water coaching. An initiative has been launched in partnership with the [RLSS](#) to give clubs and venues support and guidance for open water. Details can be found at the end of this chapter.

Safe Supervision

Due to the nature of open water environments safe supervision of participants requires a much greater degree of resources and actions to ensure a safe environment.

A coach should NOT provide a dual role of coach and safety personnel. They can act as an additional safety person, but only over and above the minimum requirements. Best practice safe supervision is about having sufficient cover to spot and come to the aid of someone who appears to be getting into difficulty before it becomes an emergency, i.e. that they should be proactive, rather than just wait for an alarm to be raised and respond to that alarm.



Safety Craft and equipment

In a managed facility it is the responsibility of the owner/operator to provide appropriate safety equipment; this could take the form of:

- Powered rescue craft.
- Human powered rescue equipment (boards/boats).
- Safety line/flotation devices.
- Resuscitation equipment.

The coach must ensure the appropriate equipment is available for the venue and how this will be accessed/ contacted in the event of an emergency. The ratio of safety craft to participants will be site specific. Anyone using safety craft or equipment must be trained in their use.

Lifeguards/ Safety Personnel

Providing lifeguard and safety provision for open water is very different to coaching at a pool. Open water rescue is based around the equipment that will be used and the specific environment e.g. lake or beach. It is not possible for British Triathlon to formally define the qualification required, for the above reasons.

A coach should ensure adequate provision is made; generally, this will be down to the facility owner/operator to provide. They should also check that the personnel are suitably qualified/trained.

In most instances the venue staff will be first aiders/lifeguards who have received site specific training for rescues (e.g. use of powered craft).

For more information regarding qualifications see [Royal Lifesaving Society](#).

Participant's Abilities

Even strong swimmers can get into difficulty in open water environments due to a variety of factors. It is even more crucial therefore to gain a better understanding of the participants than in other environments.

Factors that should be considered and affect risk assessments and likely actions to minimise risk include, but are not limited to:

- Swimming ability of participants,
- Open water experience, even experienced swimmers can become stressed in cold water.
- Over-confidence, inexperienced swimmers may be over confident, for example assuming that because they have swum in a warm lake overseas before, a cold quarry will be just the same.
- Those with lower body fat are more susceptible to issues in cold water.



Children often fall into several if not all of these groups and for this reason extra caution should be considered when coaching children in this environment. Additionally, children are less aware of body temperature than adults and this can exacerbate any issues.

Use of Equipment and Training Aids

The most common elements of equipment are swim cap and wetsuit. Swim caps should be a bright, easily identifiable colour, and as well as providing temperature protection to the head, also offers a safety element allowing safety crew to see participants in the water. Wetsuits should ideally be swim specific wetsuits and should be of a good fit. A poor fitting wetsuit may allow water to flush through the suit and reduce its temperature protective properties.



Generally, within the UK wetsuits are highly advisable, and coaches should consider making them mandatory for training sessions. This is even more important with novice swimmers. The only exception to this is when temperatures become too high, and there then becomes a risk of overheating in a wetsuit, whilst rare in the UK, it is a possibility when water temperatures exceed 22 degrees, depending upon the length of the swim and other temperature affecting factors (see [Water Temperature](#) section). A wetsuit will serve as a flotation device should a swimmer have problems such as cramp or is fatigued.

Use of buoys as swim markers is a common piece of equipment in open water, however care should be made to minimise the risk of participants coming into contact with anchor chains or other elements of a buoy which could be sharp or hard should there be a collision between the buoy and the swimmer.

Some swimmers may elect to wear additional temperature protection, such as booties and/or gloves and neoprene caps. Whilst some of these pieces of equipment are not permissible in race situations they should be allowed and possibly recommended in training where appropriate.

Open Water Specific Risk Assessment Factors

The risk assessment will assist the coach (and the site owner) to identify whether the body of water is suitable for open water swimming and that participants are not being placed in danger due to the location or condition of the venue. There are several factors that need to be considered and documented including both physical hazards and people related hazards.



Responsibility for the content of the risk assessment lies with the Lead coach (or club) although a designated third party e.g. a safety officer can be engaged to write the document.

Water Quality

Water quality should be tested regularly to ensure it remains safe and suitable for swimming. Testing of water quality should include tests for acidity (pH), evidence of blue-green algae and other water-borne pathogens. In a managed facility testing should be carried out by the facility on a regular basis, the coach should clarify this is the case and that checks have been done. In a non-managed facility, the coach/organiser may need to organise testing. The Environment Agency or Local Authority can undertake the necessary tests and give guidance on the frequency of the testing.

Coaches should be aware of external factors, such as heavy rain which for example may wash farm chemicals/waste off into a lake and may affect water quality or visibility.

Issues such as algae are more common later in the summer or after periods of warm/dry weather.

Whilst water quality tests provide an indication of the suitability of a venue for open water swimming they do not mean that there is a complete absence of potential pathogens. It should be noted that there is always a risk when swimming in open water. There are simple practices that triathletes should be advised to adopt to minimise risk of infections further:

- Cover all cuts and abrasions, however minor, with plasters or other appropriate medical barriers. You should not consider swimming if you have deep cuts.
- Wash hands in fresh water before eating after you have swum.
- Take a full shower at the earliest opportunity and also wash out any kit used.
- Try NOT to ingest any water whilst swimming.
- Report any ill symptoms experienced after an open water swim to a doctor, as soon as possible, stating that you have participated in an open water swimming session/event. The speed of response to any water borne infection is important. Often the symptoms presented are flu like and this can delay diagnosis and treatment.

Water Temperature

The [rule book](#) gives guidance around minimum temperatures for racing and maximum temperatures for wetsuits. You will need to understand your athletes' abilities, tolerance of cold and preferences.

Coaches should note that training sessions may not be as physically demanding as race situations, and athletes may cool more in training than race scenarios.

In training sessions elapsed time in the water should be considered in conjunction with water temperature, in a similar way that distance and temperature are considered for races.

Factors Effecting Water Temperature



- Most large open bodies of water will often have large variances in water temperature- warm in the shallows, cold in deeper water.
- Air temperature- water will not heat up as quickly as land, and can have huge variances e.g. 25' air temp with 7' water temp.
- Sea temperature does not rise until late summer, often still being very cold into May and June.
- Other weather factors such as wind and rain can have a significant impact on participant comfort levels.

Water Based Hazards

In addition to the sections previously mentioned these additional factors should be considered (non-exhaustive list):

- Access and egress, condition and proximity of start and finish points;
- Likely water temperature – which will have implications for recommended swimming distances and immersion times;
- Nature of water – e.g. lake, river, sea;
- Currents or eddies;
- Hidden, overhanging or underwater hazards;
- Other water users, e.g. other groups including sailing, windsurfing, jet ski;
- Depth (changes);
- Conditions underfoot, especially on shore and in standing depth water;
- Wildlife, e.g. geese and swans;
- Reduced visibility due to topography of sight, buildings or natural features, overhanging trees and position of the sun;
- Some plants growing around the banks of open water can be poisonous if brushed against and although rare in the UK, some jellyfish can also carry stings which can affect swimmers.

Additional Emergency Action Plan points

With increased risk comes a need for a greater focus on an [Emergency Action Plan](#) (EAP). The following points are in addition to generic ones covered earlier in this document. Open Water Swim EAPs should additionally include:

- Description of venue – including maps, diagrams of swim course;
- Access arrangements for club;
- Access arrangements for emergency vehicles, including either grid reference or postcode and description of how vehicle access is to be gained to water side;
- Any points raised in venue's own normal operating procedures;
- What to do when an injury to a swimmer occurs in the water;
- What to do when a swimmer gets hypothermia;
- What to do when a drowning or near drowning occurs;
- What to do if a swimmer becomes distressed in the water;
- What to do if deteriorating weather occurs e.g. lightning, high winds, poor visibility, including how to evacuate swimmers from the water;
- What to do if an unauthorised craft entering the swimming zone;
- A safety officer should be appointed for the specific session with the role of liaising with the venue and coach. Consideration should be given to how communication will work in reality, use of whistles, walkie-talkies etc;
- A register should be taken, and swimmers counted into and out of the water;
- Consideration should be given to changing facilities, hot showers, provision of blankets, a warm environment for treating those who may need it, especially those in shock or with hypothermia;
- Where possible it is advisable to practice scenarios to test the EAP remembering that when an incident does occur safety cover needs to be maintained for all swimmers and that all attention should not be focused on where an incident is occurring.

Suggested Club Open Water Session Rules



The following list is a suggested list of recommendations to be given at club based coached session, this is non-exhaustive but is included as a guide to the type of provisions that should be made:

- No entry into the water will be allowed until all safety arrangements are in place and the safety officer/session leader has indicated that it is safe to do so;
- Wetsuits must be worn always, except in unusually warm conditions, e.g. optional between 20-24 degrees in training sessions. Note this band is higher than race scenarios and the coach should always consider the safety element of wearing a wetsuit;
- Brightly coloured swim hats must be worn by swimmers;
- Swimmers will use a defined course set by the session leader/coach – using landmarks where buoys etc. are not available;
- Swimmers are to swim parallel to the bank/shore where possible;
- Safety cover will be provided at all sessions and this will not be below the required minimum standard identified in the venue risk assessment;
- Register to be taken before entry into the water and after exiting the water;
- All participants to have provided their emergency contact details along with any medical issues to the session leader/coach. This information will be recorded;
- Before every session a pre-swim briefing will be given. This will provide clear guidance on the session, the group structure, the course to be swum, and information on what to do if a swimmer experiences difficulty;
- Sessions will not stray into water space used for other activities;
- All sessions will finish at the allotted time.

Suggested Session User Rules:

Additionally, the following list details a suggested list of rules that should be given to swimmers. Before taking part in an open water coached training session, swimmers must:

- Provide the session leader with information about any medical issues;
- Provide their emergency contact details;
- Sign up to the club's safety code and rules for open water swimming;
- Swim within their own ability and adhere to any directions given by the safety officer/session coach and anyone providing safety cover;
- Be of a Minimum age of 8 (as at 31st December in the current year).

Coaching Guidance

A coach should not take part in their own sessions; however, as coach you should consider the best place to coach from:

- From bank/shore;
- From pontoon;
- In a boat or canoe (if they are competent, a coach who cannot control the boat or canoe can become a hazard themselves);
- In the water- this would only happen where the water is shallow around the bank and the swimmers have to walk out to be able to swim. The coach should position where they can stand up comfortably, i.e. no more than waist deep;



When selecting a position to coach from the coach must always consider their own safety and that of the participants.

A coach should consider how they will observe their athletes and control the group, if they are at distance from the coach this will be challenging, and the risks to the athletes will increase.

Coaches should consider courses set out for coached sessions and make use of small laps close to the shore, which reduced the burden on safety staff and craft, and reduces stress on inexperienced participants.

SH₂OUT

SH₂OUT is an exciting new programme that has been developed to further promote and progress open water swimming and the safety within the sport. By contributing to the sport's growth, the partnership will provide appropriate resources and support the development of standards that ensure safe and compelling experiences for participants.

The joint venture aims to help promote safety and enjoyment in open water swimming with five key strategic objectives:

- Safe Venues - delivering a publicly recognised quality standard for open water swimming venues;
- Quality Event - ensuring open water swimming events are delivered to approved standards;
- Vibrant Community - providing a compelling offer to all open water swimming;
- Industry Guidance - proving market leading education, support and advice to the triathlon and lifesaving communities;
- Inspiring Participation - develop a clear and supportive participation pathway, enabling more people to take part in open water swimming.

For more information visit the [SH₂OUT website](#)

7. Coaching Cycling Sessions

The following sections cover guidance for coaches and participants during coached cycling sessions.



Cycling Clothing

Clothing should be appropriate to the activity, environment and weather conditions, taking into consideration possible changes in weather. Trousers or shorts should not be loose or baggy, to avoid getting caught in chain or on seat during mount/dismount activities. Shoes should be appropriate to the activity and experience of the participants. Appropriate cycling gloves are recommended in most situations.

Participants and coaches should be dressed suitably for the session. Due to the nature of cycling, wind chill can have a far greater effect than inexperienced participants would consider. Clothing should preferably be of a layered nature to enable easy modifications to be made. Water proof layers may be required, which will also provide wind chill protection.

For indoor turbo sessions, the opposite is true, and there is great potential for participants to overheat, loose fitting (except cycling shorts) and light clothing is recommended here.



Consider the cost of clothing when advising athletes, in particular younger athletes who are still growing. Some items can be used for running and cycling.

Helmets

Within competitive triathlon, helmets are a mandatory requirement. British Triathlon strongly recommends that riders always wear a helmet for training sessions as well as racing, with the exception of static bike (turbo) training sessions. British Triathlon qualified coaches should, within reason, insist upon wearing of helmets within coached sessions.

The only possible exception may be when wearing of a cycle helmet may not be compatible with religious, faith or disability issue. In these occasions the cyclist may be permitted to participate but the ultimate decision will rest with the coach who conducts the session and be based on a risk assessment for that session.

Helmets should be:

- Undamaged and in good condition;
- Correct size for the rider;
- Confirm to an appropriate standard such as BS EN 1078:1997 (Europe) or SNELL B95 (USA);
- Worn correctly, namely, the right way around, covering the forehead, shouldn't move around on the head, it should not be possible to move chin strap over the chin.



Image shows acceptable and inappropriate helmet positions. Children in particular may push the helmet back (as shown in A & D) , coaches should give guidance on this as this will give little protection in frontal impacts.

Bikes

Any bikes used within a coached session should be fit for the purpose of the session. For example, this may mean that a bike that is acceptable for a slow-moving skills session in a playground may not be suitable for a closed road session with larger groups moving at speed.

Coaches should be aware of, and consider advising participants, of the general rules for bikes within triathlon races (see [British Triathlon Rules](#)). These are evolving to take into account areas such as disk brakes, in most cases this won't affect a coaching session, however for example a coach should be aware that a person who arrives with a new bike with disk brakes, may need a chance to get used to increased stopping power before riding in a group.

From a safety perspective the following points should be prominent in the coaches thinking and advice to participants:

- There must be a brake on each wheel;
- Both wheels must be classified as free wheels;
- Handlebars and tri-bars must be plugged (**pictured**);
- Add-ons, such as computer or lighting brackets and mounting points, must be positioned so as to prevent injury in the event of a crash or collision with other competitors or spectators;



For training sessions where groups are riding in close proximity at speed (e.g. practicing for draft legal racing on closed road circuit there are additional requirements:

- Only traditional drop handlebars are permitted;
- Clip-on handlebars (tri-bars) will be permitted, and they must not be longer than the brake levers' foremost line;

- Straight forward clip-on handlebars must be bridged with a solid material, and must not carry forward-facing brake levers;
- Forward-facing bar or gear shifters are NOT allowed on the end of the clip-on handlebars, the only exception will be a grip shifter;
- Wheels shall have at least 12 spokes (no disc wheels).



A triathlon coach is not trained in the maintenance or repair of any cycling equipment. A coach should not attempt to repair a participant's bike that they are not qualified to perform. The triathlon coach should encourage all athletes to check their own equipment, using bike 'M-Check' ([see Cycling Section: M-check for details](#)). A coach who isn't trained could damage equipment or directly lead to injury by incorrect maintenance.

It is the athlete's (or the parent's, in case of those under 18) responsibility to have basic understanding of bike maintenance, (e.g. puncture repair) and to ensure their equipment is fit for purpose.

If a coach feels that an individual's bike isn't safe, they should not allow an athlete to take part in a session until this is resolved.

Coaching Equipment

Additional equipment may be used within a session, for example cones for marking courses, and in skills sessions. It is recommended that only soft (dome shaped) rather than road traffic cones are used.

Other equipment may be used as appropriate to the knowledge and experience of both coaches and participants, such as water bottles to pass to participants.



2-way radios can be very useful when working with groups over larger areas.

Any equipment used should be fit for purpose and the coach should be clear on how to use safety and effectively. This is particularly important with any shared or borrowed equipment, any loss or damage should be reported.

Participants

The coach should pay due care and attention to the health and safety of the participants, others involved in the session and themselves, particularly when coaching on open roads. The weather and environmental conditions must be conducive to learning and allow safe participation in the session.

Weather can have a greater effect on different participants, children are more likely to become cold more quickly than adults.

A coach must be prepared to cancel a session at any point if the weather will make the session unsafe. The coach should monitor the weather before any session and have a plan of how they will cancel or end a session early.



Surface Conditions

The coach should consider the ride surface in line with the proficiency, and experience of the participants and as appropriate for the session, taking into account elements such as:

- pot-holes and gutters;
- glass, litter and debris such as wet leaves;
- painted markings especially when wet;
- pedestrians and observers of the session;
- recently resurfaced roads;
- street furniture (e.g. traffic lights, sign posts);
- drain covers, manhole covers and other metal work on the road (especially when wet);
- rain following dry spells will give roads a surface film which can be slippery;
- in cold weather any areas that could be icy even if other areas are clear (e.g. areas in permanent shade/ near water sources).

Level 1 Coaching Environment

An appropriate environment for a cycling activity session conducted by a Level 1 Coach should meet the following criteria:

- Indoor or outdoor traffic-free venue/location (e.g. a multi-use courts, playing field, or car park where access to vehicles is restricted);
- Has a surface that is appropriate for the bicycles and the activity (e.g. grass, tarmac, concrete);
- Is an appropriate size for the activity and size of the group;
- Appropriate for coaching the basic and selected intermediate triathlon techniques (e.g. gear selection, cornering and group riding);
- Easily accessible for the participants - it is not appropriate for a Level 1 Assistant Coach to have to lead a ride to get to the venue/location;
- Optionally does include undulations to aid delivery of gear selection sessions;
- From 2016 Level 1 coaches can also deliver static cycling sessions, see [Static Bike Section](#). Coaches who completed course pre-2016 can upgrade by completing the Level 1 bridging course).



Closed Road Facilities

Level 1 coaches qualified from October 2016, or Level 1 coaches who have completed the 2016 bridging pack can also coach in the following locations. Level 1 coaches should be aware of their own abilities and experience and should gain support from a senior coach when starting sessions on these venues.

Closed Road Circuits

Most commonly this may be a purpose-built closed road circuit. The circuit should be:

- Well maintained, particularly the surface;
- Have a region around the whole length of the circuit where riders may run off the circuit safely, such as a grass verge;
- Ideally restrict access to non-participants to stop them crossing the circuit (e.g. dog walkers);
- Ideally not have ball sports in a proximity, to avoid balls and other athletes crossing onto the circuit.

Outdoor 'Velodrome' Facilities

These are usually concrete or tarmac of an oval shape and may include banking. Following a review with our Insurers in 2016, coaches can utilise these venues providing they meet the following requirements:

- Conduct full risk assessment and emergency action planning process in line with general guidance;
- Dynamic risk assessment each time used and review use of venue in wet or icy conditions;
- Review venue NOP and rules of use. Please be aware some venues may require a track certification/ formal induction for all users;
- Liaise with any other users who may use the track or surrounding area;
- Ensure any users have an orientation to the facility on first use and understand any risks;
- **Standard bikes must be used by participants - and must have front/ rear brakes and free wheel (non-fixed). Track-bikes are not allowed;**
- Consider novice and junior ability when planning sessions, in these sessions avoiding any banked sections until participant ability is developed;
- Do not engage in any activities beyond the scope of coach or athletes e.g. track style racing/training (Keirin or Derny pacing).

Level 2 & 3 Coaching Environment

Coaches are qualified to deliver sessions in the environments including all the Level 1 environments plus:

Open Roads

Coaching on open road environments is challenging to deliver effective sessions and presents several risks. If possible, it is advisable to find a suitable off-road solution, however this isn't always possible. At Level 2 or 3 coaching on public highway is permissible, however it is vital that the following considerations for this environment are considered:

- Current legislation governing road use should be adhered to. The coach and participants always adhere to current legislation and best practice, this may differ in England, Scotland and Wales.
- Other road users, sessions taking place on public highway present a risk to both those involved in the session, but also other road users, such as motor vehicles, pedestrians and horses.
- All riders should be over 14 years of age; Coaches working with young athletes on the athlete development programme (academy onwards) should contact the coaching team for guidance.



- Younger riders (those aged 14-18) should have parental consent, and the coach should have a clear supervision plan in place, further guidance is given in the next section.
- Road and weather conditions, length of the ride as well as the type of road (e.g. steep inclines) and areas where road climb to higher ground, all can have a significant effect on fatigue and air and wind chill temperatures, which can impact safety of participants greatly.
- The full route should be risk assessed, which is why it makes sense to have a short circuit as risk assessing a long-convoluted route is not practical. Therefore, a short circuit of approximately a mile would be best, so that the group can easily be managed, and they can reform if a split occurs. The selected route should ideally incorporate good visibility throughout, and the route should be selected so as to not risk impeding traffic.
- The content of the session must be carefully planned to ensure that activities practised will be safe in the location chosen.

Coaches should seek to minimise these risks by:

- Avoiding busy roads, or areas where other events are taking place;
- Giving plenty of warning to horse riders, and passing wide of horses more slowly;
- Avoiding riding in large groups (greater than 8), where necessary split larger groups into smaller groups, each with a leader, and ensure sufficient gaps between groups to allow other vehicles to overtake safely;
- Ensuring participants have a prior basic knowledge and understanding of cycling proficiency on open roads. Coaches may choose to direct participants to a Government approved Bikeability course, and ideally riders would have progressed through a Level 3 British Cycling Bikeability course. For further information, see <http://www.britishcycling.org.uk/cycletraining>;
- Seek to give feedback to riders in safe static situation, e.g. pull off the main carriageway into a car park or lay-by where the risk of injury or accident is significantly reduced, and participants and coach can give full attention to each other and the coaching points without having to overly consider safety implications;
- Support needed to ensure all group are visible at all times, which is why it's advisable to have a second coach or experienced athlete following the group. Pace to be controlled at all times and within limits of cyclist's capabilities;
- As with all sessions group control and emergency procedures should be in place along with Emergency First aid provision (for example the coach is trained as a first aider and has first aid kit);
- The coach also needs to consider logistics and safety of moving the group from a start/meeting position to the training area. This can be effectively managed as a non-coached group ride out to the training location;
- Sessions should be cancelled if the weather is poor, road conditions have changed adversely (e.g. excessive mud, flooding or ice), traffic on the route is heavier than expected;
- Have an appropriate plan in place in case of session cancellation;
- Industrial estates outside of normal working hours are usually a good option for sessions of this nature;
- Country lanes can have limited traffic but should be carefully reviewed. Issues include vehicles travelling faster than expected, limited passing places, farm traffic, livestock & mud on road,
- Ensure riders are signed in and out of the sessions.

General Guidance for Younger Riders

When coaching participants under 14 years of age (**closed road facilities only**), the riders should remain in sight of a coach or responsible adult always, an option could be to get parent to ride around with group, it's to help for instance if there is an accident out of sight, so that they can respond quickly throughout the session. It can also help with session discipline to ensure riders remain on task.



For participants between 14 and 18 years of age the coach should exercise discretion regarding the length of time riders may be out of sight of a coach or recognised volunteer. When making this decision the safety of the rider should be paramount.

Additional support will be needed in these sessions, for example positioning support coaches or approved parent helpers when athletes are out of sight.

Static Bike Sessions (Turbo and Spin)

Prior to delivering these sessions a coach should ensure they are suitably trained to lead these sessions. Since 2016 level 1 and 2 coaches are required to complete a static bike module as part of their course.

Coaches who qualified before this can access & complete the module [here](#).



For sessions which take part on static bikes, the following considerations are important:

- Spin bikes (i.e. bikes that rely on a flywheel and have fixed pedals (i.e. the pedals with keep rotating even when the participant stops pedalling) are permissible under British Triathlon insurance provided that the coach has undergone the static bike module on the Learning Hub (released to Level 2/ 3 September 2015 and to all coaches from September 2016);
- Spin bikes are adequately maintained with minimal chance of mechanical failure.
- Where a coach is hiring a bike from a facility, the coach should confirm the maintenance schedule and be given an orientation to the bikes on safe use.
- Bikes are set up appropriately for participants, in line with basic advice given on [coaching courses](#), to avoid serious injury due to poor bike fit;
- Bikes should be checked to ensure they are securely fastened to the turbo trainer, and there is no danger of bike (and participant) toppling over during the session;
- Adequate spacing between bikes should be maintained to ensure riders can get on/off without coming into contact with other participants;
- Ventilation and air flow should be considered to ensure participants don't overheat, provision of fans in more enclosed environments is recommended;
- Coaches should ensure that participants have adequate access to drinks;
- Participants should have their own towels to soak up sweat and avoid potential slip hazard of pools of water forming, additionally coaches may wish to warn participants of the corrosive nature of sweat on bike frames and tell the athletes to seek to minimise sweat on bike frames.

Further information is available through the [static bike module on Learning Hub](#)

8. Coaching Running Sessions

Running is generally the safest sport in terms of life-threatening situations, but the most likely sport for injuries to occur.

Environments

Coaches across all levels can coach in all the below coaching environments:

- Athletics tracks (tartan, grass or cinder surfaces);
- Off road paths and tracks;
- Parkland areas;
- Playing fields;
- Astroturf playing surface.



Non-fixed Environments

If the coach is not operating at a static venue, e.g. they are using paths or trails with their coaching group, rather than an athletics track, then the coach needs to consider the age and abilities of the group and anticipate fatigue and injury. This places additional burdens on the organisation of the session and the coach needs to consider how to manage the group safely and equitable, whilst operating within child safeguarding and protection guidelines (if appropriate).



This will usually require a greater number of coaches or recognised helpers; in case the group needs to be split based on ability or those unable to continue can be safely returned to the base location for the session. For these reasons shorter loops are preferable so that younger and inexperienced groups can be catered for if there is a need to modify the plans. Greater coach/helper : participant ratios also ensure children can be kept in sight at all times.

Specific Hazards

Coaches should consider the following hazards in addition to any standard risk assessment that has been produced:

- Surface and kerbing – slipping/tripping due to worn or uneven surface or loose kerbing;
- Other users, including pedestrians, cyclists, dog walkers;
- Surface conditions – debris and stray equipment;
- Weather conditions, e.g. rain or snow/ice, note that some running tracks can become icy/slippery in temperatures above freezing or overheating, heat stroke, sunburn;
- Other users of the track and field events (e.g. throwing objects or ball-based sports playing on infield);
- Observe lane discipline specific to the track – ensure participants are fully aware of which lanes they can and cannot use during the session.
- Light- during the winter months a coach must consider the time it will get dark. Floodlights may be available for tracks / courts but may need to be arranged in advance. Coaching sessions where



there is no available lighting (e.g. trail/ park) is not recommended after dark even where users have head torches

For all coaching environments coaches and athletes must exercise greater caution during the session when there are other groups or members of the public in the same environment.

Equipment and Clothing

Any equipment needed for the session must be:

- available and in good working order.
- manoeuvred in an appropriate way;
- tidied away and stored appropriately for other users.

Coaches should only make use of equipment they are trained and competent to use (for example using high hurdles is not a piece of equipment triathlon coaches will have been trained in using). Some equipment/facilities may need to be set 'out of bounds' such as long and high jump areas.

Coaches should check that participants are:

- wearing appropriate clothing for the session and weather conditions;
- wearing appropriate footwear for the session, weather and terrain;
- visible to other participants and road users (for example using high visibility clothing if appropriate);
- running on an appropriate surface to the participants and the session activity.



9. Coaching Individual Triathletes

Coaching individual triathletes refers to when a coach works on a 1:1 basis with an athlete.

This can either be in a face-to-face session(s), or by writing training programmes.

Guidelines for the new Level 2 Diploma Coach qualification can be found in this section.



Qualification Level and Insurance

Coaching triathletes on a one to one basis is only applicable to coaches who are in possession of a valid British Triathlon/1st4sport Level 3 Coaching Qualification or the Level 2 Diploma (new in 2018).

Level 2 Diploma

This is a new qualification that bolts on the level 2 qualification. further details can be found [here](#).

Guidance around insurance cover for level 2 dip coaches can be found [here](#).



Level 3

This has evolved significantly over the last 15 years; however the overall remit remains the same for all coaches who hold this qualification.

All level 3 coaches have received in depth and face to face training on a range of areas, including additional technical knowledge across all disciplines and working with specific groups.

The latest version of the level 3 course focussed on a very different delivery model- details can be found [here](#)

Level 1 and 2 coaches

Are only trained and qualified to deliver group sessions. Within these sessions, a coach can work with individuals on technique/performance and give general guidance to athletes, in line with the training they have received, and experience gained.

Level 1 and 2 coaches who coach/train individuals (e.g. prescribe individual training programmes) will be working outside the remit of their qualification, and in effect working without insurance cover. In the event of legal action, a coach could find themselves without support from the Home Nations Association or British Triathlon.

Individual Training Prescription

In addition to the general points listed in these guidelines, when prescribing training for an individual, the coach should also consider the following points.

- *British Triathlon regards a group to be defined as a **minimum of 3 or more participants**.*
- The **minimum** age for prescribing training programmes to triathletes (i.e. training prescription to an individual triathlete) is **14 years old**. This takes into the consideration the early maturation period of the [Long-Term Triathlete Development Model for Triathlon](#). In many club environments there may



be sufficient group coaching sessions to not need to prescribe individualised training until the age of 16.

- In addition to the general information that should be collected about the participant, an athlete Profile Questionnaire and Lifestyle Audit should be completed. Example forms are available in the [1:1 Coaching Resource section](#).
- Where triathletes complete prescribed training alone or in a group in the absence of a coach, the triathlete(s) are responsible for their safety and choosing appropriate training environments. In the case where a triathlete is under the age of 18, the parents are ultimately responsible for safety and training environments being used. This should be made clear to the triathletes and parents at the onset of coaching. All coaches should refer to wider [British Triathlon safeguarding guidelines](#).
- When coaching triathletes individually through a prescribed training programme, it is recommended that meetings should take place in a public place and if the athlete is under the age of 18 the parents should also be present. It is recommended that the coach keep a record of all communication with the athlete including meetings, phone calls and emails etc.
- Individual programmes should be developed with due consideration for the triathlete's goals, ability, age, lifestyle, training history and available resources (equipment, training environments and support).
- During the execution of prescribed training it is the responsibility of the triathlete to ensure that the correct personal clothing and equipment is used. For triathletes under the age of 18 it is the responsibility of his/her parents/guardians.

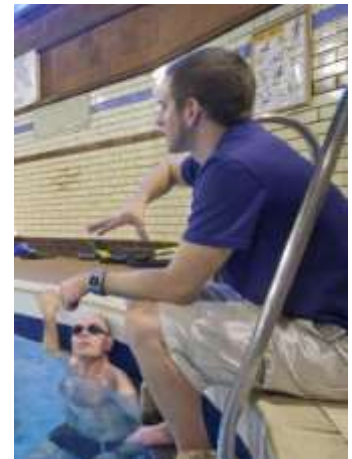
The coach must also ensure they meet the wider [coaching code of conduct](#), as working with individuals can present range of personal challenges for the coach.

Skills Based Sessions

Level 2 & 3 coaches may provide individual skills-based coaching in a club environment, e.g. working on a specific technical element of the swim stroke. This is effectively the same as providing drills and feedback to an individual in a group session, but just on a 1:1 basis.

In these situations, the coach should be aware of issues around being alone with athletes and should only work within their current knowledge and qualifications.

It is important to note that for Level 2 coaches this is NOT about prescribing training plans or a periodised programme for an individual.



10. Coaching Overseas

For most coaches, your overseas involvement will be in training camps. British Triathlon does offer overseas cover for coaches delivering camps, but you must ensure you have the correct level and still meet the wider remit and requirements of your qualification. For full details refer to the [insurance section](#) of these guidelines

Managing and delivering training camps should be approached the same way you would for any coaching in the UK, with risk assessments, emergency action planning and clear session planning.

Some other areas you will need to consider

- **Local laws and road regulations-** e.g. riding on the correct side of the road, rules for giving priority in situations like roundabouts. Some countries require helmets and to carry ID by law.
- **How will you overcome language barriers** whether accessing training facilities or in an emergency?
- **Emergency services-** there may be a different phone number and process to the UK, e.g. some ambulances are private and can charge high fees.
- **Health care-** do all participants have the right level of cover? You may have to pay at point on entry into a health service.
- **Travel insurance-** all participants including the coach should check the cover they have. Most will cover general activities such as swim, bike and run but may exclude specific training camps.

Simple planning and research will ensure that all have a positive experience and that everything is covered when something goes wrong.

Coaches that may be considering more longer-term coaching/ residency overseas.

- British Triathlon courses are designed to meet the requirements of coaching within the UK- specifically around the club structure. If you are planning to coach abroad, you will need to look at local guidance and regulations.
- In some countries formal licensing is required for coaches, in others such as North America which has a very litigious culture, having solid insurance and legal cover is a must.
- You may need to look at converting your UK qualification, the UKCC is recognised in Europe and is highly regarded worldwide but this doesn't automatically allow you to coach.
- Can you gain insurance? British Triathlon insurance cover only applies to coaches who are UK residents.
- If you need to get additional qualifications can you access a local [ITU approved](#) course?

Like when planning training camps, some simple research will allow to understand the requirements of the country you are looking to live and coach in, but you cannot assume that you will be qualified and insured as you are in the UK.

11. Non-Coached Sessions

What defines a coached session?

It is difficult to define exactly what a coached session is, but it will include some or all of the following elements:

- A set objective - focussing on technique and/or conditioning;
- A written session plan;
- Safety planning (risk assessment and emergency action plan);
- A coach present who directly supervises the session and provides guidance, direction and feedback; the coach and assistants will take responsibility for the athletes in the session;
- Clearly defined and explicitly stated as a coached session.

If a group session is organised, which is not coach led, British Triathlon recommends that the club and coaches make it clear that the sessions will not be coached and detail what, if any, supervision is offered, e.g. is there a navigator for the ride. Unlike a lot of sports, many triathlon training sessions may not be coached. These sessions are generally more informal.

Examples of non-coached sessions may include:

- Club rides.
- Chain-gangs.
- Club/park runs.
- Time trials.
- Open swim sessions (pool and open water).

Additional guidance which also details club insurance for activities can be found [here](#), or by contacting your regional manager.



Guidance for non-coached sessions

The following general guidelines will reflect good practice in these sessions:

- A session leader/navigator (not someone who is acting as a coach) will take responsibility for organising the group. However, this person is not responsible for the health and safety of the group.
- Sessions are advertised in advance clarifying:
 - Date/time/meeting point.
 - Outline of route (possibly online map).
 - Speed/pace of session.
 - Expectation of participants (equipment required/ experience and fitness level/etiquette within session).
 - What happens when someone cannot keep up with the group (will someone wait/meeting points on route).
 - At the start of the session a briefing is given confirming the above.
 - Any coaches taking part clearly state they are not acting in a coaching role.



- An [emergency action plan](#) is available to all, what happens in the event of emergency, including contact mobile numbers.
 - A basic assessment of risk and appropriate mitigation has been considered/actioned.
 - Any person under 18 should be supervised by an adult, who is taking responsibility for their health and safety, i.e. parent or guardian role.
 - No advice should take place whilst on the move or in a vulnerable position. Guidance and advice may be offered by suitably qualified individuals when stopped and in a safe location to do so.
- A non-proficient rider on a group ride could present a potential danger to other riders and road users. This person should be referred to coached sessions to develop riding skills, before attending non-coached sessions.
 - For open water swimming sessions British Triathlon recommends the same guidance on health and safety given in [Section 6](#) is followed, with the only difference being that there is no coach giving instruction.

Clubs or individuals offering 'non-coached' sessions without appropriate safety recommendations may leave themselves open to litigation. Further guidance for clubs can be found [here](#)

Activators and Leader Courses

A range of courses have been delivered to support clubs delivering non-coached activities, these included the following:

- CTC leading cycle sessions.
- Run leader course.
- Leaders awards.

These courses are no longer offered and from late 2016 a new suite of 'Triathlon Activator' courses have been developed and released. This course will cover all the elements of triathlon and allow activities to be led in a safe and effectively way.

It should be noted that currently there is no requirement for any person to complete these courses to lead sessions, but clubs should consider all the above points when allocating a person to lead a session.

Full details of the [Activators courses](#) are accessible via the British Triathlon website.

12. CPD and Personal Development

British Triathlon coaching qualifications have a specific remit as to what coaches are insured and expected to do. Sometimes this remit is narrower than a wider reaching coaching remit that may be required in some roles. Many coaches seek additional qualifications and training to enhance their skills and ensure they are appropriately qualified. British Triathlon has created a number of CPD opportunities with this in mind.



Whilst there is no formal requirement to complete a specific amount of CPD to retain coach status, we recommend all coaches should keep their knowledge and skills up to date. Any coach who is a home nation member has access to the Learning Hub which has the latest version of education materials, along with a range of other resources to support coaches.

A program of CPD courses and learning has been created. We are currently offering the following formal CPD workshops:

- **Head Coaches Workshop**
Aimed primarily at coaches who are performing the role of Head Coach within a club environment and aims to support their development within that position.
- **Open Water Coaching**
Designed to support the development of open water coaching knowledge and ability. There is also an opportunity to gain practical experience through coaching a group of open water swimmers.
- **Strength and Conditioning Workshop**
Coaches will be able to prepare, deliver and review safe and effective strength and conditioning (S&C) sessions within a non-weighted (body weight only exercises) environment. This workshop will not extend a coach remit to allow them to coach using weighted Olympic style lifting exercises and equipment.

Full details of the remit these courses give coaches can be found in the [CPD section of the website](#). Monthly coach's newsletters will contain articles and personal learning opportunities.

In 2017 access to the CPD courses was widened to allow level 1 coaches and those still in training to attend, **coaches must still work to their overall remit with any CPD activity**,

In addition to the workshops there is also a [British Triathlon Coach Mentoring scheme](#) and monthly coach's newsletters which contains articles and learning opportunities.

External CPD and Courses

There are a range of educational and CPD courses directly marketed to Triathlon coaches, these cover all the disciplines and areas of sport science. CPD courses not delivered or endorsed by British Triathlon, whilst may improve skills and knowledge will not be recognised for the purpose of widening coach remit or covered under the British Triathlon insurance policy cover. Examples of this are listed below:

- Ironman University.
- Component specialism e.g. track cycling certification.

With coach plus membership, certain qualifications and activities are covered under this package, please refer to the [coaching membership notes](#) or coaching team for further guidance.

Personal Trainers/ Fitness Instructors

Personal training/ fitness instruction and coaching do have a range of similar activities and outcomes; however, they also have a number of differences. Therefore, should be treated as separate in relation to remit and insurance cover.

The British Triathlon coaching pathway at Level 1 and 2 is focussed around group (club) coaching. In most instances personal training involves working with individuals towards health and fitness goals within a gym environment.

We recommend that personal trainers/ fitness instructors who are coaches, clearly define the roles in which they are working and ensure they are suitably insured. Coverage for certain Personal Training/ group training activities are now offered through the [coach plus membership package](#) providing clients are working towards a triathlon goal.

Examples:

Level 1 coach and personal trainer delivering a 1:1 session covering bike skills. on the open road.

This would be outside the remit of the Level 1 coach as on open road, and most likely not in remit of the PT insurance as coaching specific skills.

Level 2 coach and personal trainer - giving a triathlete a personal periodised triathlon plan for an athlete to follow.

This is outside the remit of the Level 2 and will depend on the PT qualification held, some do have modules with general periodised planning for fitness and sports goals. However, a true periodised plan covering all sessions in detail, will probably be outside the PT and coach remit. Under British Triathlon remits only a level 2 diploma or level 3 coach can prescribe this sort of plan.

13. Contact and Support

These guidelines have been designed to give coaches the guidance needed to conduct safe and effective sessions. Whilst it is impossible to cover all situations and outcomes, these guidelines will help in the decision-making process.

The wider objectives are to ensure there are as few barriers to coaching as possible, so the sport is accessible to all. Over the past decade a number of enquiries have led to changes in the guidelines which have benefited all coaches.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the coaching team who can provide support and give guidance.

Contact us:

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Twitter: [@brittricoaching](#)

[website](#)

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