

US Masters COVID-19 Restart Guide

<https://www.usms.org/club-resources/covid-19-restart-guide>

As pools and aquatics facilities reopen across the country, U.S. Masters Swimming wants to help you to bring back your Masters program and swimmers. Although many questions remain and circumstances vary, the ideas below can be used to help you return to the water.

First and foremost, consult with and defer to local authorities and facility managers on all health and safety provisions, including guidance and rules related to social distancing and group sizes. Educate yourself on facility, local, state, and federal guidelines.

You may consider sending a letter to your local health officials providing encouragement and guidelines for the safe opening of the pool for supervised swim practice. [A template letter can be found here](#). USA Swimming has published a [“Facility Re-opening Messaging and Planning” guide](#). It provides suggestions and guidance on a safe return to the water, and you may consider sharing this document with your aquatic facility.

Your Masters program is only one of many trying to find its way, and we urge a spirit of teamwork and the utmost patience. Beyond that, use the following information, developed in consultation with swim coaches and aquatics leaders nationwide, to help guide your thoughts and plans.

Preparing for Restart

You likely will have plenty of notice leading up to your facility’s reopening date, and your program might not have the go-ahead until days to weeks later. So, before you jump back in, take the time to review resources available to you:

- Member and Coaches resources information at [usms.org](https://www.usms.org)
- Local and federal guidelines for social distancing and shelter-in-place restrictions

Additionally, communicate with your facility’s management. Be sure to ask:

- What are the new protocols for use, maintenance, and staffing?
- Are there any updates to the facility’s emergency action plan?
- Will there be new procedures for entry and exit?
- Any new rules around locker rooms, lounge chairs, bleachers, or equipment?
- To be included in any communications regarding facility rules, so you can be an effective advocate for safe use.

Take good notes. You will need to pass this information along to your swimmers and be able to answer their questions.

Making Adjustments

Expect changes and be flexible. Your facility might need to adjust the schedule or space for your program. Some things to consider:

- If you have fewer lanes and/or shorter times, or if you need to limit the number of people in a session, how will you accommodate your members? One solution could be an online sign-up app such as SignUpGenius for swimmers to reserve their spots.
- If you have less time and space, do you need to renegotiate your contract or agreement with the pool?
- If there are underutilized times in the pool, consider asking the facility for additional access to fill those times. The new schedule might not work for all members of your staff. Check in with your assistants, if you have them, to make sure they will be returning to the program. Sketch out a coaching rotation that

works for everyone and evaluate whether you need more coaches on deck to accommodate working from both ends of the pool.

- Maybe your pool isn't opening as soon as others in your area. How will you adapt? Do you have an alternate short-term or long-term option? Is open water available to you? If so, are you competent and comfortable leading an open water practice?

Once you know your schedule, it's time to revisit some of your team policies.

- Does your fee schedule need to change?
- Are you able to accommodate drop-ins? How will you allow this, and what will you charge?
- If a member is unable to pay right now, do you have a scholarship program in place? Will you create one? How will you determine eligibility? Will you solicit donations to help members in need?
- Don't forget to update your Club Finder page on usms.org.

Countdown to Opening Day

Feeling ready? Great! It's time to communicate with your swimmers. They will be excited to hear good news from you!

- Schedule a virtual team meeting on Zoom or another virtual meetup platform. This is where you will walk through new rules, schedules, procedures, etc. Be sure to record the meeting, so it can be posted on your website and viewed by those who miss it or serve as an orientation for future newcomers.
- Be sure to also put this information writing. Post it to your club's social media accounts and website, and email it to all your members.
- Use this team meeting to make plans to celebrate your club's return (within the guidelines of social distancing, of course).

Coaching and Workout Plans

Before getting back on deck, give your season plan a look. Your swimmers will likely be returning at a diminished fitness level, so remember to scale back yardage, intervals, and expectations. If your schedule is significantly different, you may need to rewrite workouts to be shorter and less demanding than usual. You also can anticipate lanemates (if allowed) might need to change based on swimmer fitness and readiness to return. Some swimmers may need to gain medical clearance after having been away for so long.

Some other coaching considerations:

- Focus workouts on technique
- Revisit favorite drills
- Equipment (snorkels, kickboards, etc.) might not be allowed
- Sharing of equipment should not be allowed
- Adjust sets for rest instead of intervals
- Aim for a gradual increase in maximum heart rate

The training plans developed for the [SmartyPants Vitamins USMS Fitness Series](#) offer a good place to get ideas for easing into this new swimming world. The workouts were written by members of the Coaches Committee.

More Help is Available

The guidelines provided here are only a starting point and not all will be applicable to your situation. USMS's Club and Coach Services Department is available for one-on-one consultations and brainstorming sessions to help you get back in business. You can set an appointment if you want further assistance with your specific case.