

A close-up photograph of a swimmer in a pool, wearing a red swim cap and goggles. The swimmer's face is partially submerged, and water is splashing around them. The background shows the blue lane lines of a swimming pool.

# The ASA CLUB TOOLKIT For Introducing Masters

All you need to know about welcoming Masters into your club

# Contents

- 03 Introducing Masters to Your Club
- 08 Adults and Children Training Together
- 10 Masters Pre-training Assessment
- 11 Masters Pre-training Assessment: Answer Guide
- 13 Case Study: Masters Swimmer Joins a Club
- 14 Medical Protocol for Masters
- 15 Masters Checklist for Clubs

## ▶ Introducing Masters to Your Club

### Introduction

This toolkit has been produced to help your club recognise the contribution that Masters Swimmers can make, and to provide practical support in order to help you welcome Masters as club members.

This document is intended to provide guidance only and has been designed to help you rather than to give you rules that must be followed.

The toolkit contains information about who Masters Swimmers are, the benefits of including Masters in your club, and some simple steps on how to integrate Masters within your programme. You will also find the answers to some commonly asked questions along with some useful information on contacts and resources.

### Who are Masters Swimmers?

A Masters Swimmer is anyone over the age of 18 who swims regularly and is a member of the ASA. Masters are not normally part of the age group talent pathway.

#### Typical Masters include:

- Adults who return to swimming after a break.
- Adults who have not reached elite level but want to keep swimming.
- Anyone aged 18+ who doesn't want to take swimming quite so seriously.
- Mums and dads who want to swim whilst their children are also in the water.
- Adults who have found the sport later in life and want to be part of a like-minded group of people.
- Adults who regularly swim in public sessions but would like a little more direction and coaching.
- Adults who use swimming as injury prevention or rehabilitation.

These are just a few examples of Masters Swimmers, but the factor most Masters have in common is that they want to swim with others as part of their social life. Some want to keep fit, some even want to train hard, but they all want to have fun doing it.

## Why have Masters in Your Club?

- Masters volunteer their time – Masters Swimmers often have skills, knowledge and experience which could benefit your club, and may have the time to take on a voluntary role.
- Masters are members for longer – Masters Swimmers tend to remain at a club for a longer period of time than age group swimmers, helping your club to retain membership and ensure continuity.
- They provide additional revenue – the more members you can attract of any age, the more you will bring financial stability to the club in membership fees.
- Masters are excellent role models – Masters Swimmers want to make the most of their training sessions as time is often precious, making them fantastic role models for the younger swimmers.
- It can bring parents and children together – allowing adult Masters to swim with their children can help to promote a healthy, active environment which families can enjoy together.
- It provides positive promotion for the club – competing Masters Swimmers can be a great advert for your club, especially if they are competing at national and international levels. They may even bring some records back!
- Masters contribute to the club – Masters Swimmers can often help fill the gaps in open age groups at galas, or promote your club in Masters Competitions. They may want to join in your club galas and be role models or they may be happier volunteering at events.

## Step-by-Step Guide to Including Masters in Your Club

You may already be convinced that welcoming Masters into your club is a good idea, but feel overwhelmed by the barriers you will need to overcome to make this happen. We have listed below a few steps you can take in order to start breaking those barriers down.

### 1. Involve the club committee

Discuss Masters Swimmers in your committee meetings. Talk about how the club can provide for Masters and think about the sort of opportunities you could offer them. As a club, you will need to decide what you can realistically provide; are you just a competitive club, or can you offer skill development sessions for adults?

### 2. Be positive about Masters in your club

Masters can be a great addition your club and is an effective way of keeping your young adult swimmers in the water. Start thinking about how you can meet their needs. Older swimmers may no longer wish to follow the talent pathway, and by acknowledging this, the club can provide a more suitable training option.

### 3. Talk to Masters and see what they would like

Some Masters Swimmers may only want one or two hours of swimming a week, whilst others may be willing to devote every evening and morning, so talk to your Masters to find out what they want. Once you have established the needs of your Masters, ensure your club is able to provide for them. Take a look at the Checklist for Clubs at the end of this booklet, or download a copy from the ASA Masters Hub to help you prepare.

### 4. Encourage coaches to attend Masters development sessions and events

If coaches are not confident with adult swimmers, it is important to recognise any concerns they may have. To alleviate these worries, coaches new to Masters could talk to experienced Masters Coaches and visit local Masters Clubs to develop their understanding. The ASA Masters Hub is a great place for useful information and resources, and a Masters Coaching course is also available online. This course contains information on how to adapt training to suit Masters Swimmers, including session content, communication and the specific needs of older swimmers.

### 5. Put Masters on the agenda

If you already have Masters Swimmers in your club, do you regularly discuss their needs, progress, problems, and achievements in your club meetings? Are their achievements celebrated alongside those of the age group swimmers?

### 6. Make sure you have information available for prospective new Masters

Most adults will look for information on their own and are happy to search the internet for Masters swimming opportunities. It is important to look at your website and ensure your information is up-to-date. Make sure to include any relevant Masters information.

### 7. Contact your ASA region

You will need to make sure your club has informed your ASA region that you now have Masters Swimmers. This way you will be kept informed of all developments within Masters swimming.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Can Masters and children swim in the same lane?

Yes. The ASA acknowledge this isn't ideal but it is acceptable where there is no alternative. However, clubs need to complete a thorough risk assessment, taking all swimmers in the lane into account, focusing on their physical and emotional wellbeing. Please refer to the guidance about lane sharing between adults and children within this toolkit, and consult the ASA's Wavepower document.

### Can a Masters Swimmer belong to more than one club?

Yes. This allows swimmers to compete with other adults if their home club doesn't have competitive Masters. This may also provide additional training opportunities for the swimmer if your club is unable to offer adequate water time.

### Is there any additional administration necessary for Masters Swimmers?

No. Membership forms and renewals, competition entries and all other paperwork are the same for Masters and age group swimmers. We have created a Masters Pre-training Assessment document which allows you to collect background information on your Masters Swimmers before they get in the pool. A sample of this along with an Answer Guide is included in this booklet, but the full form can be downloaded from the Masters Hub.

There are some limitations to insurance cover as a swimmer reaches the age of 70. Full details of this can be found on the ASA website.

### Are there competitive opportunities for Masters Swimmers?

Yes. Once a swimmer turns 18 they are eligible to compete in Masters Events. Check the Masters Competition calendar on the Masters Hub for specific events. All times recorded at a Masters meet will automatically be included on the Masters ranking system.

### Can Masters compete in age group competitions?

Yes. The process is exactly the same, but be aware that any times recorded at an age group meet will appear in the British Swimming age group rankings rather than the Masters rankings.

### How are Masters training sessions different from age group sessions?

Adaptations will need to be made in order to cater for the needs of adult swimmers. Example training sessions for Masters Swimmers can be found on the Masters Hub. The Masters coaching course will cover this in much more detail, you can check the Masters Hub for further information on this.

## Contacts

There is a dedicated Masters Officer employed by the ASA who has a lot of experience in dealing with issues relating to Masters Swimming. If your club has any questions or does not know where to start, please contact [masters@swimming.org](mailto:masters@swimming.org).

Your ASA region will also provide support and information about Masters swimming. Please see the ASA website for your regional contact details.

## Resources

All of our resources are available to download from the ASA Masters Hub: [www.swimming.org/masters](http://www.swimming.org/masters).

Some of these resources include:

- Masters Handbook
- Masters Checklist for Clubs
- Masters Pre-training Assessment
- Medical Protocol for Masters
- Adults and Children Training Together

## ► Adults and Children Training Together

Swimming is a physical sport, and like many sports, there are inherent risks in taking part. The ASA is committed to ensuring that any risks to participants are kept to an absolute minimum.

We recognise that children (under 18s) and adults (18+) may train together if they are of a similar standard. However, it is necessary to consider the implications of children and adults sharing lanes in order to safeguard children in our sport.

Unfortunately, whilst incidents within training sessions are rare, the ASA have identified some problems arising from training activities and warm ups where adults and children swim in the same lane. This includes allegations of sexual and physical assault, both intentional and accidental. Such situations have caused considerable distress and concern for the children and sometimes also for the adults involved. The ASA has a duty of care to all ASA members alongside a duty to safeguard members under the age of 18.

Clubs may believe that the best solution would be to have adults training separately to children. However, the ASA recognise that, in some situations, it is neither appropriate nor possible for swimmers of different ages to train separately. This could include the developmental need of older children to train alongside adults, where training together can greatly enhance the experience for both parties, or at times where lane availability is limited. We recognise that an increase of participants in Masters swimming creates added pressure on pool availability.

Safeguarding can even be made more effective by allowing an appropriate mix of Masters Swimmers and older children, which can actively prevent bullying and sexual advances between older children themselves. Co-training can also aid the vital transition between juniors and Masters swimming. The ASA consider that in such situations, club officers and coaches must consider the risk involved and put procedures in place to ensure training activities are organised and concluded in as safe an environment as possible, minimising both the health and safety risks and any child welfare risk that these situations may pose.

When lane sharing between children and adults is unavoidable, coaches and clubs are required to conduct a thorough risk assessment. They must pay particular attention to the mix of swimmers in each lane whilst taking the following factors into consideration:

1. Suitability of lane supervision at club sessions involving under 18s.
2. The ages and sex of the swimmers.
3. The relative sizes and abilities of the swimmers.
4. The individual swimmers' lane discipline and precision of strokes.
5. Any lane etiquette guides, e.g. re overtaking.
6. The presence of lifeguards.
7. The width of each training lane.
8. The number of swimmers in each lane.
9. Whether the session is open to spectators.
10. Whether they have ensured that the club have an identified and publicised process by which concerns can be raised with an identified Child Welfare Officer.

The above list is not exhaustive but is intended to provide clubs with a starting point for evaluating the risks to swimmers, and highlights certain factors they should be considering to ensure their training sessions are incident free.

### ASA statement on adults and children sharing lanes in training

The ASA suggests that training sessions with both children and adults should not automatically be ruled out.

The ASA recognise that children and adults may train together in the same lane if they are of a similar standard and physical size, but additional consideration to child safeguarding must be undertaken by the club.

Where separate lanes are impractical, it is vital that the club adopts a critical appraisal of the swimmers in the water and completes a careful risk assessment to ensure that sessions are incident free.

Where competition warm ups involve both adult swimmers and children, promoters should consider providing opportunities for groups of different abilities/physical sizes, or Masters groups, to warm up at different times, or within separate lanes.

For clarity, Masters who are training with younger swimmers do not require a DBS check if taking part in just that role. When considering the use of shared changing facilities, please read the advice in the ASA Changing Room Policy located in Wavepower.

## ► Masters Pre-training Assessment

CLUB  
LOGO



**Masters Swimming Pre-training Assessment**

Please give as much information as possible in order to help our club find the right training for you

<b>Name</b>		<b>Date of Birth</b>	
<b>Address</b>			
	<b>Postcode</b>		
<b>Email</b>			
<b>Telephone</b>		<b>Mobile</b>	
<b>What is your swimming experience/background?</b>			
<b>Have you previously been part of a swimming club? How long ago was this?</b>			
<b>Roughly how far can you swim in 30 minutes?</b>			
<b>Can you swim all four strokes? If not, which one(s) do you struggle with?</b>			
<b>How fast can you swim 50m Freestyle?</b>			
<b>Have you competed before? If so, what are your most recent events and times (in the last year)?</b>			
<b>How many hours per week would you ideally like to train?</b>			
<b>Would you be prepared to swim with under 18s?</b>			
<b>Do you have any medical issues which may affect your ability to train?</b>			

Signature.....Date.....

**NB** All the information given will be kept strictly confidential and will be destroyed in the event that you decide not to become a member of the club.

## ► Masters Pre-training Assessment: Answer Guide

It can be useful to ask future Masters Swimmers to complete a pre-training assessment. The ASA have created a template to help with this; a sample of which is shown on page 10 and is available to download from the Masters Hub.

We've included some comments on the questions that could be asked, and how this information will help you. This list is not exhaustive and you are able to include further questions on your own assessment if you feel they are required.

### Name, address and contact details

These details will help you keep track of enquiries and provide vital information if you should ever need to contact the applicant. A variety of contact information will make it more likely you can reach them.

### Date of birth

A Masters' age will only give you an understanding of which age group they fall into, and may not have any relevance to their training ability. If the swimmer wants to compete, it will help both the coach and the swimmer to set future goals.

### What is your swimming experience/background?

Many Masters may have a lot of previous involvement with swimming, where others may have very little. They may be also be part of a triathlon club, which may affect how they want to train.

### Have you previously been part of a swimming club? How long ago was this?

Swimmers may come via other clubs or may have been part of a club as a child. It is important that you manage their expectations so that everyone understands what your club is able to provide from the start.

### Roughly how far can you swim in 30 minutes?

This will help the coach know which session or lane may be most appropriate for this Masters Swimmer. However, the coach may want to ask additional questions to gauge their level of ability.

### Can you swim all four strokes? If not, which one(s) do you struggle with?

This again is essential information for the coach, but it also gives you the opportunity to discuss how much of each stroke will be part of training sessions.

Tri-athletes may need an explanation about why it's important to train on all four strokes.

#### **How fast can you swim 50m Freestyle?**

This is a distance that can be easily measured by anyone. Most Masters are happy to test this, giving a baseline to work with.

#### **Have you competed before? If so, what are your most recent events and times (in the last year)?**

Some Masters Swimmers will have competed when they were children, others may be coming from a competitive background as an adult. It's important to understand their motivations in order to provide them with the appropriate level of support.

#### **How many hours per week would you ideally like to train?**

This will help your club discuss the expectations of the swimmer and decide what you can realistically offer ensuring that there are no misunderstandings from the start of the swimmer's experience.

#### **Would you be prepared to swim with under 18s?**

Your club may not have the facility to offer adult only lanes/sessions, so it's important to make people aware of this. The club coach may also feel some Masters may benefit from training with your senior squad.

#### **Do you have any medical issues which may affect your ability to train?**

It's important to acknowledge that some Masters Swimmers will have long term health conditions that may affect their ability to train. If the coach has any doubts about the health of a Masters Swimmer, they should refer the swimmer to the medical officer via ASA Signposting Helpdesk at [signposting@swimming.org](mailto:signposting@swimming.org).



## **Case Study: Masters Swimmer Joins a Club**

### **Background**

Emma, a 47-year-old woman, is moving from Spain to the UK. She used to swim with a large group of Masters in Spain and would like to continue training. She has two teenage children who have been swimming in a regional squad, training on average 6 times a week. She searches the internet and finds Super Sharks Swimming Club who advertise as providing sessions for both children and Masters. Emma calls the club and arranges for a trial session for both herself and her two children. They all get on well and agree to join. The children slot nicely into two different squads and Emma agrees to attend two sessions a week which are geared towards Masters.

### **Problem**

Several weeks pass and Emma is struggling to make sure both herself and the children get to the pool on time for their training sessions. All three of them swim at different pools and all of them are located a car journey apart. Emma has started missing sessions and her children are often late to theirs. The coaches have noticed this and she has been asked to improve their punctuality.

### **Solution**

This is a typical situation for clubs who have to utilise pool time whenever they can get it. Super Sharks talked to Emma and found that she was a single mum who couldn't quite manage to get herself and her two children to the various sessions on time. After a chat, it was decided that Emma could fit into an appropriate lane in the same sessions as her children, and she was introduced to other parents who could help her with lifts. Although Emma missed the more sociable aspects of Masters, she was able to continue training. As her children got older, they changed squads and Emma could return to her old training sessions with other Masters.

## ► Medical Protocol for Masters

On occasion, certain medical conditions can cause difficulties for a swimmer or their club. When this happens, a referral can be made to the ASA's appointed medical practitioner who will be asked for an expert opinion. That opinion will seek to balance the requirements of the swimmer with the needs of the club. This ensures that the individual receives the appropriate care, whilst also taking other members of the club into consideration.

### Example:

A Masters Swimmer has been diagnosed with arthritis in their knees and now finds breaststroke difficult. However, the swimmer would still like to continue swimming breaststroke. The coach feels this isn't advisable and is worried about the health of the swimmer. The coach or the swimmer can contact the ASA Signposting Helpdesk for advice.

If you have any concerns about a swimmer, or your own ability to train, please contact the ASA Signposting Helpdesk at [signposting@swimming.org](mailto:signposting@swimming.org) and include the words 'Medical Referral' in the subject line.

In your email, please give the following information:

- The name of the person making the referral.
- The contact details of the referrer.
- The name of the person concerned.
- The contact details of the person concerned.
- The reason for the referral.
- The type and amount of training the person will be completing.

All information supplied will be treated in the strictest confidence.

## ► Masters Checklist for Clubs

Tick	Task
	Talk about Masters positively in the club committee.
	Talk about Masters positively with club coaches.
	Identify any Masters related training needs for coaches/volunteers.

### Have a plan ready in order to welcome Masters to your club:

	Ensure that a contact point for Masters enquiries is clearly identified on your website.
	Ensure that the Masters contact understands the needs of Masters, and can make adult swimmers feel welcome. (It can be daunting for an adult to move into what is typically seen as a child's domain.)
	Ensure that a method of assessing the future needs of your Masters Swimmer is in place prior to allowing training to take place. See the Masters Pre-training Assessment.
	Ensure that the Masters Swimmer has completed a medical questionnaire prior to allowing training to take place.
	Ensure that the coach has an appropriate plan to introduce Masters to training. This may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asking them to watch a session first.</li> <li>• Choosing a session and lane according to their needs.</li> <li>• Explaining sets using simple language.</li> <li>• Introducing them to other swimmers.</li> <li>• Having a 'buddy' system.</li> </ul>
	Ensure that a risk assessment is in place if a Masters Swimmer has to swim with under 18s.  See page 69 of the ASA's Child Safeguarding Policy, Wavepower.

**The ASA**

Pavilion 3, SportPark, 3 Oakwood Drive,  
Loughborough University, Leicestershire LE11 3QF  
Tel: 01509 618700 | Fax: 01509 618701 | [www.swimming.org](http://www.swimming.org)