



Planning a Training Session

Before planning a session it is important that the Coach understands the needs of their swimmer/s, their abilities, preferred strokes and aims.

Coaches need to program sessions appropriate to their swimmer and be prepared to make unexpected changes in sometimes very short notice.

A Coach should consider the following:

- Swimmers medical requirements
- Ability level
- Pool space/depths/access/egress
- Timing of the session
- Number of swimmers per lane and session
- Preferred stroke/s – also called Form Stroke- that is their preferred stroke other than Freestyle
- What their aims are- recreational training (being part of a SO group for social connection) or Competition
- Coaches availability, accreditation and knowledge on various medical requirements

Depending on which season the training takes place will determine how the session is designed.

Table 2: Components of a training session per stage of the season

Pre-Season	Competition Season	Post Season
Warm Up	Warm Up	This is where the swimmer will have the opportunity to reflect on their achievements - it provides swimmers time to rest and do low level activities.
Set work	Set work- sprints/Endurance/Stamina-training specific for the events being competed	Encouraging good nutrition and sleep is important not only in both Pre/Competition Season but also during the Post Competition season
Drills	Starts/Finishes/turns	
Starts/Finishes/turns	Recovery - Cool down	
Endurance	Competition meal planning	
Recovery- "cool down"		
Working on the main strokes the swimmer will be competing in in the Competition Season		
Tapering of the sessions closer to competition		
Talk about nutrition/hydration etc		





Structure:

It is vital to structure your training session to ensure there is a process that you will follow throughout the time you have with your athletes. Having a structured session plan will keep you, as a coach, on track with the activities you have planned for your swimmers.

Step 1: Identify your training session's *topic*.

A Session Topic is the theme of your training session.

This should guide you on what activities to include in your training session and what the primary focus of the session is.

Within your session topic you should identify the aims and objectives of your training session.

For example: If your session topic is Fundamentals of Freestyle, the aims and objectives of the session should be focused around developing the fundamental movements needed to complete a freestyle swim.

Aims vs. Objectives

- An aim is the WHAT of the training session i.e. what skills you desire your athletes to learn/master.
- An objective is the HOW i.e. how you are going to facilitate your athletes so they can learn/master the skills.

Step 2: Outline what you want to cover in the session and the *time* you have to cover it.

Your session content are the activities you are covering in the training session i.e. warm-ups, drills, free-play, cool-downs.

In order to cover all of the content you want to in a training session, time management is essential.

Poor time management results in sections of a session being left out, overlooked, or rushed and not conducted correctly.

When planning a session set out how much time you are allocating to each section of the training session.

For example: for a 60 minute session:

- **Warm-Up** - 10 mins
- **Drills** - 20 mins
- **Free-Swim** - 20 mins
- **Cool-Down** - 10 mins





Step 3: Lay out activities in the training session.

Once you have your session content layout and time allocated, you can become more specific with the details of each section of your training session. This will involve including specific activities that relate to each section in the training plan.

For example: for a 60 minute session:

- **Warm-Up** - Warm Up 1 (from Fitness Section) - 10 mins
- **Drills** - Drill 1(a) [15 mins] + Drill 1(b)[5 mins] One arm stroke - 20 mins
- **Free-Swim** - Freestyle swim; give feedback on turns between lengths [9 mins x2 + 2 mins rest] - 20 mins
- **Cool-Down** - Cool down 1 (from Fitness Section) - 10 mins

Step 4: Revise your training plan to ensure it all aligns with your session topic.

Games:

The majority of swimmers attend training sessions to enjoy themselves as well as learn and improve. Games are fun activities that can be included in your program that meet these requirements. Although it is important to ensure that games are suitable for the ability of the swimmer.

Games can be an extension part of the skills you are having your swimmer practice in their session and usually conducted at the end of the session.

Here are some examples of games you can use with your swimmers in a training session:

- Kick relays - develop kick action in all strokes.
- Relays - all strokes.
- Water polo - this will encourage treading water/using sculling actions.
- Tunnel ball - helps develop submersion - exhaling.

See our sample session planner below:





Swimming Session Planner

In association with SO Fitness



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Date: _____

Practice Length: _____ mins

Practice focus:

Warm Up: _____ mins

Aerobic

Dynamic Stretches

Basics and Conditioning

Transition Activity: _____

Drills/Skill Building: _____ mins

Notes: _____

Transition Activity: _____





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Stroke Work: _____ mins

Notes: _____

Cool Down: _____ mins

Fitness Lesson of the Day: _____

Tips/Reminders for Athletes: _____

Coach's Reflection: _____

