

# EMERGING FROM COVID-19

## A Guide for a Club's Safe Return to Swimming

September 5, 2021

THIS GUIDANCE HAS BEEN SIGNIFICANTLY UPDATED FROM  
THE SEPTEMBER 15, 2020 VERSION



**Canadian Independent  
Masters Swimming  
Maîtres-nageurs indépendants du Canada**



**MASTERS SWIMMING ONTARIO**



## Introduction

This document is intended for CIMS, MSM and MSO affiliated clubs. It outlines club responsibilities and considerations, as clubs plan for the safe return to swimming in the 2021-2022 season. It has been updated from the September 15, 2020 versions to reflect more current public health guidance and provincial restrictions. It also points to relevant resources that clubs can use in preparing their Return to Swimming plans.

**There is no evidence** that COVID-19 is transmitted through pool water treated with chlorine or bromine<sup>1</sup>. The risk of transmission via fresh water bodies is described as infinitesimally small<sup>2</sup>.

The risks come from:

- The facility itself (e.g., the pool decks and surroundings, locker rooms, showers, washrooms and other amenities/equipment);
- Participant interactions (e.g., traffic flow, insufficient distancing); and
- Individual hygiene and behaviour.

Indoor, outdoor and OWS venues each require their own risk assessments and plans. If club-organized OWS training is envisaged, please also refer to the [OWS Guidance](#).

Facilities used by our clubs are owned and operated by cities, universities, boards of education, YMCAs and some are privately owned, e.g., sports club. OWS venues may be privately or publically owned, e.g., Provincial Park authorities.

Provincial and local governments, and facility owners will direct the timing and conditions for the reopening and use of facilities. It is important that clubs stay current with developments for their region. Clubs should engage facility owners as soon as possible to reserve time and, if possible, provide input in the planning of the rules/conditions for return to swimming at their facility.

Our clubs may be affiliated with CIMS-MSM-MSO only. Some may also be affiliated with Swim Canada through one of its Provincial Swimming Organization (PSO) who will communicate any additional reopening requirements. **The guidance in this document has been harmonized with other Canadian swimming organizations to the extent reasonable / possible to reduce unnecessary complexity and duplication.**

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<sup>1</sup> [Centre for Disease Control](#), Statement last accessed **September 3, 2021**

<sup>2</sup> [Dr. Jason Kindrachuk](#), Canada Research Chair in emerging viruses, May 24, 2020 Interview, last accessed **September 5, 2021**

Irrespective of club model<sup>3</sup> or affiliation, clubs have the responsibility to translate COVID-19 reopening rules/conditions into club plans to offer safe training sessions, communicate new rules/conditions to its members and respond quickly in the event that a swimmer, coach, club staff or volunteer becomes infected with COVID-19.

**NOTES:** As of September 5, 2021, Ontario is at [Step 3 of its Reopening Framework](#) and holding. MSO's [July 20, 2021 Return to Swim maximums](#) continue to reflect Step 3. An increasing number of institutions and facilities are requiring mandatory vaccination which will impact Ontario clubs' pool rentals.

As of September 2, 2021, Manitoba has updated its Emergency orders for sports and recreation facilities to include mandatory vaccination as well as masking when not actively engaged in physical activity. Stay up-to-date at <https://www.gov.mb.ca/covid19/prs/index.html#provinciallevel>

Continued distancing, masking, hand sanitation is needed in addition to vaccination, if we are to lessen the impact of the 4<sup>th</sup> wave and keep our pools open.

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<sup>3</sup> There is no single club model. Our clubs may be single, independent entities, whether incorporated or not. Some clubs operate as an extension of a municipal or private (e.g., YMCA, sports club) recreational program. Still others may be integrated with an age group club, operating under single administration.

Most clubs are run by its members with a governance structure overseen by a club executive while others are privately owned.

Our clubs may be affiliated with CIMS-MSM-MSO only. Some may additionally be affiliated with Swim Canada through one of its Provincial Swimming Organization (PSO).

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## Club responsibilities

Provincial and local governments, and facility owners will set out the timing and rules/conditions for sporting activities to proceed.

The reopening conditions will set the framework within which clubs must plan their own operations and practices. Do not expect “practices as usual”. Restrictions on numbers will impact both the club’s operations and finances.

*Participants*<sup>4</sup> themselves will decide when they are ready to return to the pool. Once the club has a “feeling” for how practices might be conducted, a member survey is advised.

A [COVID-19 Webpage](#) provides a copy of this guidance, the Club Declaration form and all new or revised participant waivers and attestations.

## Regarding Club Insurance

As we return to swimming this summer, clubs must be *members in good standing* to retain insurance through MSO.

Since September 2020, the MSO insurance liability policy has a Communicable Disease Exclusion which includes COVID-19.

The directors and officers (i.e., club executive) of a CIMS-MSM-MSO registered club are responsible for the oversight of risk associated with their programs. While the planning for a return to swimming may be delegated to a committee, the club executive cannot delegate its fiduciary responsibilities.

The club executive is responsible for all representations made to stakeholders, whether they are financial, operational, strategic or social. This includes how you handle a crisis like COVID-19 and the club’s return to swimming.

## Lifeguards / Coaches

The *Life Saving Society (LSS)* will provide information and advice to facilities on their reopening and staff (e.g., lifeguard) training. Please consult the [LSS COVID-19 page](#) for their latest Guides<sup>5</sup> and updates<sup>6</sup>.

Some clubs have coaches with National Lifesaving Society (NLS) certification perform lifeguarding duties in addition to or in place of the facility’s lifeguarding staff. Clubs must ensure that any coaches who are expected to also fulfill the lifeguarding role have updated COVID-19 related training.

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<sup>4</sup> **Participants** include swimmers, coaches, volunteers and staff as applicable to the club.

<sup>5</sup> [Guide to Reopening Pools and Waterfronts, Lifesaving Society, UPDATED July 2 & November 17, 2020](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Ontario’s Roadmap to Reopen – Aquatic Facilities, Updated July 16, 2021](#)

### Club Return to Swim Planning

Clubs may wish to create a COVID-19 committee. But, irrespective of how a club organizes itself, planning and decisions should be recorded in accordance with the club's governance structure. Coaches need to be part of the planning process.

A *point of contact* should be appointed for any COVID-19 related communications with participants.

The club's planning should:

- Monitor the latest COVID-19 developments and their implications;
- Prepare a training/operational plan;
- Implement updated swimmer / coach registration and obtain new waivers from all participants, including volunteers and staff if applicable;
- Prepare and update communications to participants for the Return to Swim;
- Be prepared to modify training schedule and other plans as the situation evolves.

Clubs must communicate new processes and rules to all participants, and follow up to ensure that measures are being respected.

BEFORE the first practice, the club must have a plan in place to manage the possibility that a swimmer/coach has contracted COVID-19, irrespective of how or where the infection occurred.

- Identify the roles and responsibilities of the coach, the club executive or volunteers should an outbreak occur.
  - Who in the club is responsible for modifying, restricting, postponing or cancelling activities?
  - Who is responsible for communicating with participant?

Clubs must report any positive COVID-19 results, irrespective of source. MSO does not request personal details, rather only that a positive test occurred.

### Training Sessions (Operational Plan)

Indoor, outdoor and OWS venues each require their own risk assessments and plans. If the club-organized OWS training is envisaged, please also refer to the [OWS Guidance](#).

If other groups are using the venue at the same time or immediately before or after your training session, verify the facility's rules/conditions for how distancing and transitions are to be managed in order to maintain required distances and minimize risk of transition. Provide arrival and departure instructions to limit the use of change rooms and waiting time on deck.

While adhering to the facility's directions, clubs should (not exhaustive):

- Keep participation to those essential, e.g., swimmers, coaches;

- Keep training groups **homogeneous**, i.e., same swimmers and same coach for a given training session;
- Record attendance and retain on file to permit contact tracing should there be COVID-19 transmission;
- Verify participants for COVID-19 exposure or symptoms **before each practice** (appendix 3);
- Organize lanes to ensure physical distancing during rest periods (Different models for are provided in Appendix 2)
- Eliminate shared equipment, i.e., use no-toy OR own-toy practice sets;
- Check with facility to determine who will handle equipment, e.g., lane ropes, backstroke flags, pace clocks, etc.
- If the facility permits the use of whiteboards, ensure that:
  - Athletes do not congregate around them prior to practice;
  - Boards are thoroughly cleaned and sanitized after use;
  - Markers are not shared – coaches must bring your own.
- On-deck, dryland work is discouraged.

### Participant Responsibilities

Facilities and clubs are working towards a safe training environment.

Swimmers/coaches must take seriously their own responsibilities for reducing the risk of passing COVID-19 to others as well the risks of becoming infected themselves. If not mandated by the Province, facility or club, vaccinations are strongly encourage.

Swimmers, coaches and volunteers must

- Adhere to the club's *Return to Swim Plans and processes*;
- complete the required waivers
  - *COVID-19 Attestation and Agreement*
  - *Participant Liability Waiver*
  - *PIPEDA Waiver*
  - *Rowan's Law (Concussion Safety) (coaches and swimmers under 26 years)*
- Every participant must complete a *COVID-19 Self-Assessment* before each practice. The specific assessment will be provided by the club.
- Participants must not come to practice if:
  - you are feeling unwell or have any of the COVID-19 symptoms
  - you have been identified as a "close contact" of someone who has COVID-19 symptoms;
  - you have received a COVID Alert exposure notification on your cell phone; or
  - you have travelled outside of Canada in the last 14 days or have not completed that re-entry process.

- Athletes must be cleared for training by their physician or local public health after being diagnosed or suspected to have COVID-19.

The Ontario COVID-19 Self-Assessment tool is regularly updated for symptoms and actions that should be taken. <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/self-assessment/>

#### A COVID-19 Infection Occurs – Now What?

In spite of adhering to the facility requirements and club plans, a COVID-19 positive test can still occur.

If a swimmer/coach tests positive for COVID-19, the club should:

- Notify facility administration and Public Health (NOTE: The facility's direction to aquatic clubs may already cover notifications in their updated rules/conditions).  
The local public health authority will provide further management recommendations which may include further testing and arrange for contact tracing;
- Implement and monitor the Rules for Participation (above).
- Take the necessary actions to protect the remaining swimmers/coaches by modifying, restricting, postponing or cancelling activities.
- Communications: inform participants of the transmission and any actions regarding remaining practices/activities.
- Notify MSO using the COVID-19 Reporting Form – MSO does not request identifying information simply that a positive test has occurred.



## Additional Resources

CIMS-MSM-MSO COVID-19 Resource Webpage

<https://www.mastersswimmingontario.ca/covid19-resources/>

Ontario COVID-19 Self-assessment tool <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/self-assessment/>

*Guide to Reopening Pools and Waterfronts*, Lifesaving Society, Updated July 2 & November 17, 2020

*Ontario's Roadmap to Reopen – Aquatic Facilities*, Lifesaving Society Updated July 16, 2021

Check if the Society in your province has adapted the national guidance, as is the case for BC and the Yukon Branch, June 2020. & Restart Step 3 Guidelines for BC, June 2021

*COVID-19 Return to Swimming Resource Document, Version 2*, Swimming Canada, July 10, 2020

*Return to Swimming Resource Document - FAQs, Version 2*, Swimming Canada, July 24, 2020

*Preparing for a Safe Return to Operations*, Swim Ontario, July 29, 2021 (link goes to an evergreen document)

## APPENDIX 1 – SAMPLE OPERATIONAL PARAMETERS FOR AQUATIC CLUBS

**NOTE:** This is an example of parameters for one City's facilities. Clubs will be provided with equivalent parameters for the facility they are using. A club Return to Swim Plan would ADD sections on Governance, Screening, response to COVID-19 positive test.

### Who Can Return to the Pool?

- Athletes capable of independently adhering to strict 2-meter physical distancing guidelines.
- Athletes must be able to successfully complete a practice without any physical contact/support by their coach or instructor.

### Club Access Control

- Athletes and coaching staff must complete a health assessment prior to each practice.
- Athletes must arrive to practice at the scheduled time, avoiding user group mixing.
- Parents, fans cannot enter the facility and athletes must enter & exit the facility by themselves.
- Methods to enter & exit the pool area will be explained with the site Supervisor.
- Athletes should shower at home prior to practice and upon returning home.
- Athletes should arrive with their training suit on as change room lockers may not be available.
- Upon practice arrive, athletes must sanitize their hands at hand-sanitizer stations.
- Belongings must be placed on deck in a designated zone, identified by the pool supervisor. **NOTE**—in case of inclement weather at outdoor pools, athletes should be prepared to place belongings in a large plastic bag to keep contents dry.

### Supervision Considerations

- All coaches acting as Affiliated Club lifeguards must complete a new facility orientation prior to their first pool booking, including Covid-19 procedures for each location club practice location.
- Affiliated Club coaches must learn the new Lifesaving Society rescues procedures due to COVID-19.
- Prior to the club's first booking, coaches must share their training plan with the pool supervisor to ensure best practice guidelines are followed.
- Coaches are required to keep a training attendance log for each pool booking.

### Equipment Use

- Pool setup is completed by City aquatic staff and/or Affiliated Club Coaches. Athletes are not permitted to set up the pool.
- All athlete equipment must be brought home and thoroughly cleaned after each practice.
- Athletes cannot share equipment or use facility equipment.

- Athletes should bring their water bottles filled. Facility water fountains may not be available.

#### Operating Capacity

- Coaches and athletes must maintain physical distancing of 2 meters when not physically active in the pool.
- Dry-Land Training can only take place outside of the facility on green space until further notice. Dry-Land Training cannot be permitted on the pool deck.
- In addition to the above information, all swim clubs should review their respective sport governing body's "Return to Sport" plan.
- NOTE: Due to the varied nature of City pool layouts, pool supervisors may need to modify the guidelines above to ensure safety for all athletes and coaches.

#### Lane organization and flow

- City facilities may provide the maximum allowable swimmers per session. They may also provide the number of swimmers permitted in each lane.
- MSO's most recent lane limits were provided on July 20, 2021 and will be updated as needed. Watch for updates on the [COVID-19 Resource page](#).

## Appendix 2 – Models for Physical Distancing in the Pool

There are two aspects to a workout plan: Swimmers in Motion; and Swimmers Standing between sets.

As of July 2021, the Province of Ontario continues to require 2m distance when stationary in the pool, on the pool deck and in dressing rooms.

The province no longer requires 2m distance WHILE swimming. This permits single lane swimming.

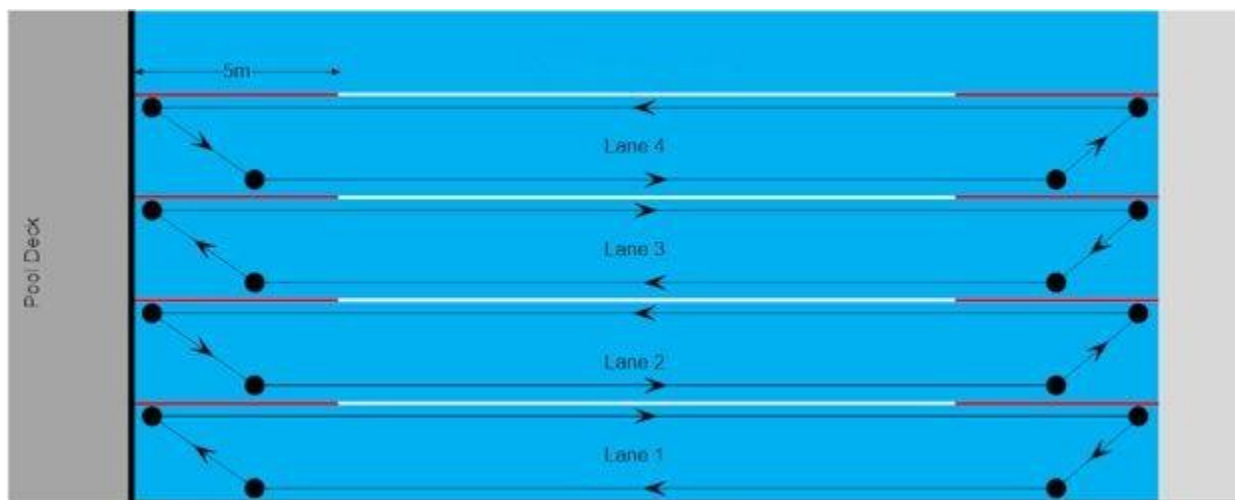
### Stationary Swimmers – Home Base

The greater risks during practice come when athletes are resting between repeats or receiving instruction. Every swimmer needs to have a **home base** from which to start and finish a repeat.

The Home base concept for a double lane format are explained in a MySwimPro Wednesday Whiteboard Video session titled [“Social Distancing 101 for Swimmers.”](#)

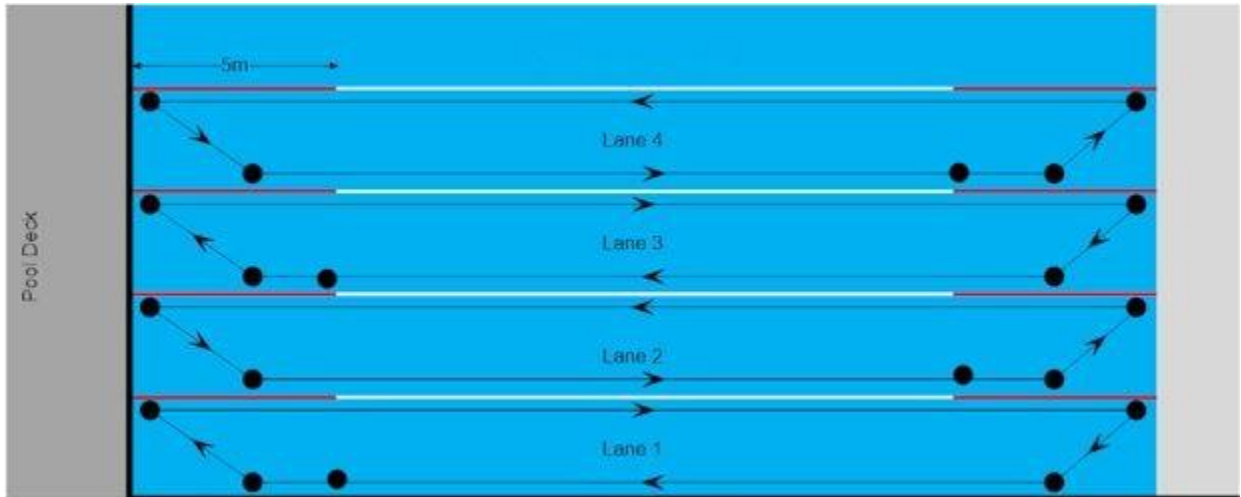
### Single lane formats

The following diagram shows **4 swimmers per single lane**, traffic flowing in **alternating directions**, as per the MSO warm-up rules. The lead swimmer at each end, signal their readiness and begin their repeat. All swimmers return to their home-base when done. Two swimmers cannot be at the wall at the same time.

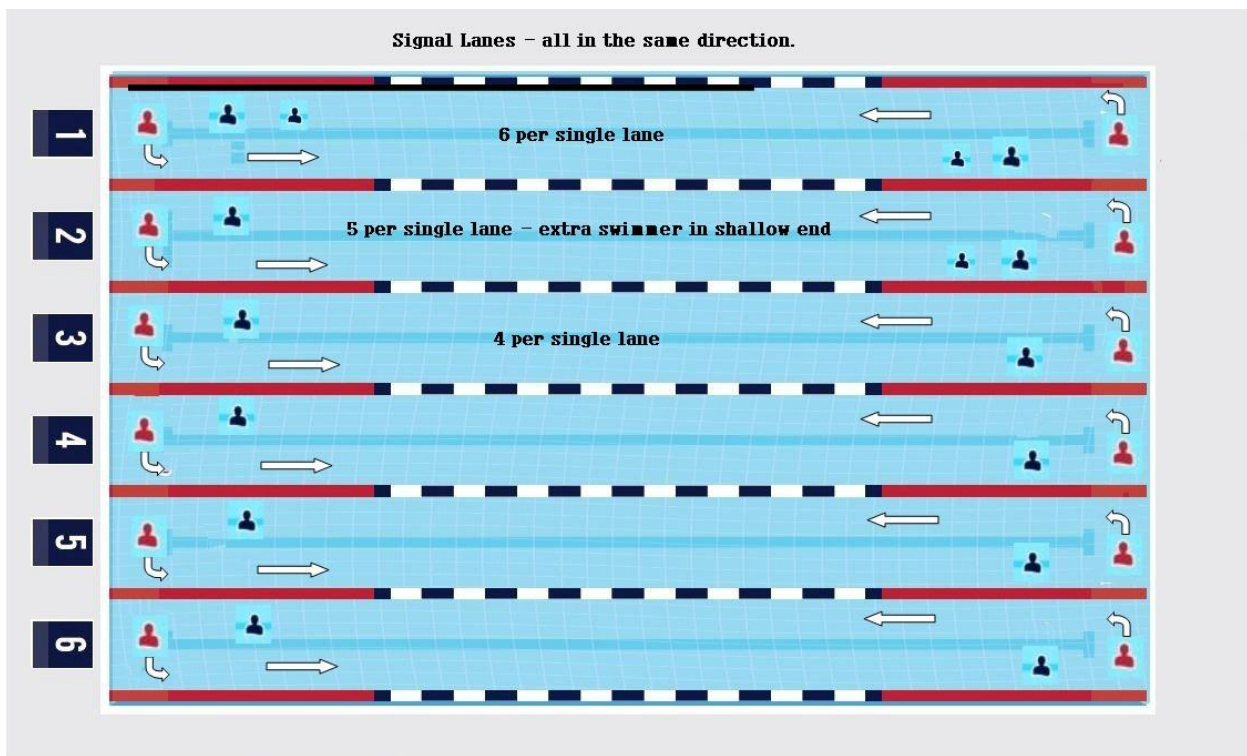


*4 Swimmers per single lane - alternating direction*

This format can be increased to **5 swimmers per single lane**, traffic flowing in **alternating direction**. If the pool has a deep and shallow end, then swimming sets of 75m and 125m give relief to those treading water.



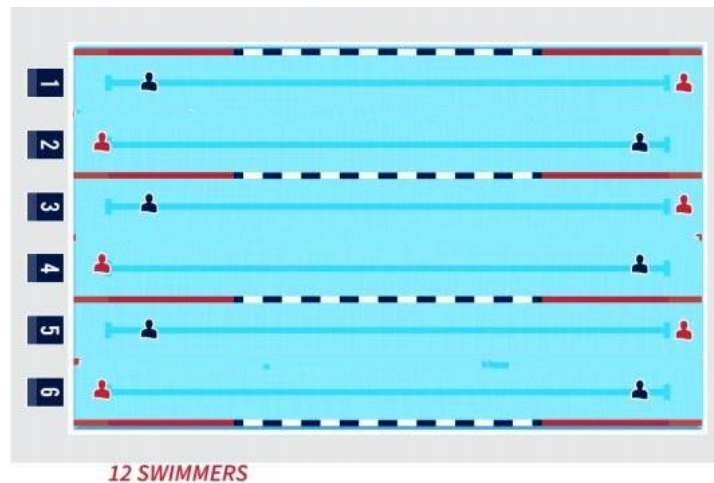
The following diagram shows **4, 5 and 6 swimmers per single lane – all lanes flowing in the same direction**. A 6 per single lane cannot easily be set up in an alternating direction format. The red swimmers lead the set and the blue swimmers shuffle over and follow 5 seconds apart.



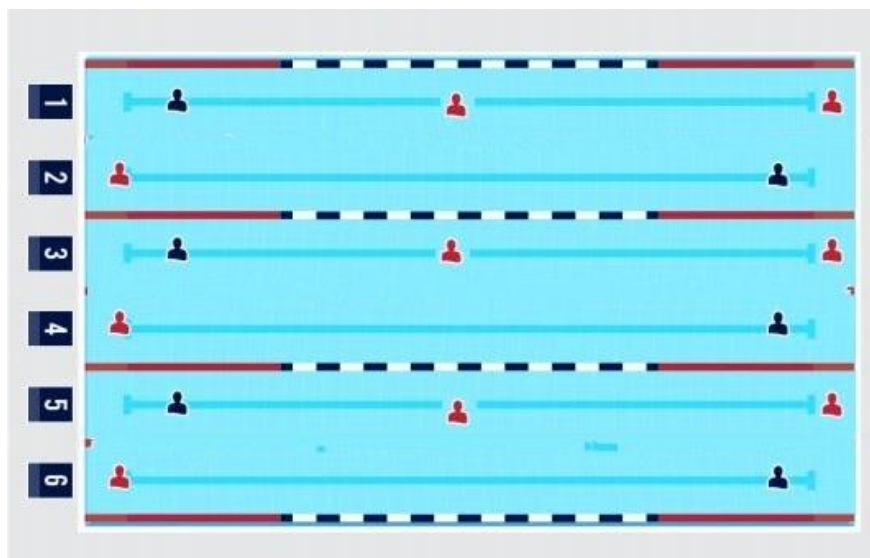
## Double lane formats

For clubs that wish to continue swimming double lane format

For a **12 swimmer 2 per double lane home base** the red swimmers in lane 1 and 2 start a repeat or a set. The blue swimmers shuffles over to the vacated spots and follow the red swimmer keeping the required distance. Swimmer remain overtop the lane line.



As numbers increase, yard pools with narrower lanes can use a **15 swimmer 3 per double lane model**, with the additional swimmer starting from the backstroke flags or from the middle of the pool at least 2 metres apart. Again, the red swimmers start the set or repeat, followed by the blue swimmers who have shuffled over to the vacated spots.



Similarly the **18 swimmer (6 per double lane) model** adds a second red swimmer to the middle of the pool or under the backstroke flags. All the red swimmers start a repeat or set. The blue swimmers move to the vacated spot and follow, keeping at least 2 metres distance.

