

Return to social sport and recreation

Information for clubs, organisations and participants.

What changes are being made to sport and recreation?

From 16 May 2020, social sporting activity can recommence in outdoor spaces with a maximum of 10 people.

This phase focuses on social participation, training, activities within small groups and with continuing emphasis on physical distancing, personal and respiratory hygiene. Under this first phase, any physical contact, sharing of equipment and use of communal facilities is discouraged. If equipment needs to be shared, it will require proper cleaning and disinfecting during and between sessions.

Later phases will aim to progressively reintroduce larger groups, indoor sports and venues, full training in groups of more than 10, allowances for spectators and competition.

General hygiene and physical distancing principles will continue to apply.

What is defined as “community sport”?

The term “community sport” or “social sport” includes any organised sporting activity, be it through community clubs, commercial providers, individual activities or high performance training programs.

What are the requirements for sports from 16 May?

The first phase of resumption allows for outdoor activities to recommence in small groups of no more than 10 participants. Sports that can deliver outdoor activities, or are able to modify their activities, to comply with the parameters of this first phase are able to recommence. These parameters require that small groups are maintained at all times, with no intentional physical contact (e.g. wrestling, tackling) and there is promotion of general hygiene and physical distancing at all times.

The structure of activities and protocols for hygiene and physical distancing will be sports specific.

All sports are recommended to have a clear “Return to Play in a COVID-safe Environment” framework that details how, in a sport-specific setting, activity will be delivered under this first phase, and any subsequent phases. This framework should provide clear and consistent guidelines for participants, coaches and volunteers, while also providing confidence to participants that their activity is being conducted safely and in accordance with requirements.

Pools are able to re-open for training and public use however limits apply – no more than one swimmer is permitted per lane, with no more than 10 people (a small group) in the facility at any one time.

Other indoor activities cannot recommence as these facilities are not identified to re-open at this time.

Why are indoor sports and gyms not able to resume at this time?

The sharing of fitness equipment and surfaces coupled with an indoor crowded and sweaty environment pose a serious risk for the potential spread of the COVID-19 virus.

When can indoor sports and venues reopen?

Indoor sporting venues, including gyms, will be considered for reopening at a later date.

Does my sport need clearance from the ACT Government before restarting training?

No, however we recommend each sport or activity provider develop a “Return to Play in a COVID-safe Environment” framework that is consistent with ACT Government guidelines, Public Health Directions and considers the recommendations outlined in the [AIS Framework for Rebooting Sport in a COVID-19 Environment](#).

What is meant by a “small group”?

The first stage of resumption allows for outdoor activities to recommence in small groups of no more than 10 people, including coaching and support staff. Numbers are restricted to a maximum of ten to ensure the risk of transmission of COVID-19 is minimised, and contact tracing will be more effective if there is an outbreak.

How many small groups can use a single space or venue?

A number of small groups (of ten people) are allowed to train within an area, such as a football field or court, if they are clearly separated at all times and following the one person per 4 square metre rule.

This allows sports to make use of single spaces (e.g. a football field or outdoor netball court) for more than one small group where appropriate spacing (physical distancing) and hygiene principles can be applied.

A sport or activity provider’s “Return to Play in a COVID-safe Environment” framework should establish how available outdoor spaces (and in later Phases indoor venues), will be used. For example, this may include a cap on the number of small groups within a field or the clear demarcation of the field/activity space for use by individual small groups.

My playing field is much bigger than some other sports. Can I have additional small groups on my playing field to reflect this?

Sports organisations can determine how they will use their field or area in line with physical distancing measures.

Larger sporting areas such as football or AFL fields may be able to handle multiple small groups, whereas a much smaller netball or tennis courts might cater for only one small group per court or per multiple courts.

A sport or activity provider's "Return to Play in a COVID-safe Environment" plan should establish how available outdoor spaces (and in later Phases indoor venues), will be used.

Can our group share equipment?

While sharing of equipment such as balls and weights is allowed it is discouraged and should be kept to a minimum.

If equipment is shared it will require proper cleaning and disinfecting during and between sessions.

Participants should practice good hand hygiene before and after training sessions.

Can I use ACT Government sportsgrounds?

ACT Government sportsgrounds will be available for bookings from 16 May 2020, supporting activities consistent with the Phase 1 resumption of social sport, including small groups and adherence to general hygiene and physical distancing principles.

Bookings are required to make formal use of sportsgrounds for training.

Where the phased re-introduction of social sport limits the capacity for sports to move toward competition, ACT Government sportsgrounds will be made available for weekend training alongside weekday availability.

Community recreation will be allowed on the sportsgrounds during daylight hours within small groups. Any formal booking of the sportsground takes precedence over informal community uses.

The ACT Government has waived sportsground hire fees for six months from 1 April 2020. Do I still need a booking?

The ACT Government has waived all sportsground hire fees for six months from 1 April 2020. However, bookings are required to ensure that fields can be protected from unauthorised use and that toilet facilities and lighting (as required) can be made available.

Historical sportsground allocations for the winter season are still in place for the 2020 winter season unless changes have been mutually agreed between all parties.

Commercial operators, including bootcamps, are required to place bookings for use of ACT Government sportsgrounds also. Their activities should also comply with Phase 1 requirements, including outdoor gatherings requirements.

While there is no hire fee at this time, sportsground users are encouraged to limit bookings to what is reasonably required. Some bookings may not be approved by Sport and Recreation Facilities if it considers that the bookings are excessive or not warranted.

Informal (unirrigated) ovals remain available for recreational use with no bookings within the small group context. These facilities are not fit for formal sporting use, including trainings.

Are there any restrictions on the use of ACT Government sportsgrounds that we have booked?

Users will need to comply with Phase 1 restrictions such as small groups, physical distancing and good hand and general hygiene, while also ensuring they are complying with their “Return to Play in a COVID-safe Environment” framework.

Under Phase 1, the focus is on the provision of ACT Government sportsgrounds for training use. The Sportsground Charter, including prioritising junior trainings from 4pm and seniors from 7pm, will continue to apply.

Enclosed ACT Government sportsgrounds remain unavailable for training purposes, however where the phased resumption of social sport limits the capacity for sports to move toward competition, all other ACT Government sportsgrounds will be made available for weekend trainings.

Does my (free) booking of ACT Government sportsgrounds override the facility’s use by community members wanting to use the field at the same time for general/informal recreation?

As part of our urban open space network, sportsgrounds have been invaluable in providing our community spaces and places for informal physical activity during the COVID-19 pandemic.

While community recreation is allowed on the sportsgrounds during daylight hours in small groups, as we move to the phased resumption of social sport any formal booking of the sportsground will take precedence over informal community uses. Cricket nets are available for use (in small groups) provided there are no bookings on the sportsground.

What about access to other outdoor sports facilities not owned or managed by government?

Under Phase 1, outdoor training can resume subject to restrictions on small groups and adherence to general hygiene and physical distancing principle. This allows outdoor facilities owned or managed by non-government entities to re-open, however some ancillary facilities such as changeroom, clubrooms or cafes may continue to be subject to advice or restrictions. The decision to re-open for social sport activity rests with the asset owner/manager.

It is recommended that any venue owner/manager, independently of a “Return to Play in a COVID-safe Environment” framework that might be put in place by individual sports/hirers, considers its

own framework as to how venue-specific physical distancing and general hygiene principles might apply both within the phased resumption of social sport and even beyond the COVID-19 pandemic.

Will sporting changerooms be available for use?

The [AIS Framework for Rebooting Sport in a COVID-19 Environment](#) recommends caution around the use of communal facilities – this includes changerooms, clubhouses and kitchen facilities.

Changerooms at ACT Government sportsgrounds will NOT be available under the Phase 1 resumption of social sport, supporting the “get in, train and get out” principle outlined in the AIS Framework. Participants/activity providers are encouraged to limit any social engagement beyond their small group activity/training.

Decisions regarding communal spaces such as changerooms in non-government facilities is at the discretion of the owner/manager. Where these facilities are made available, it is recommended that venue-specific physical distancing and general hygiene principles are applied.

When can I start matches or competitions?

From 16 May 2020 the phased resumption of social sport is focused on training within the small group context.

However, it is possible that some outdoor sports like tennis, archery or bowls, might be able to restart some form of matches or competitions, even if it is only in a social setting.

Any decision to allow matches or competitions must adhere to the Phase 1 restrictions to ensure appropriate physical distancing and hygiene and will be at the discretion of the activity provider or sport.

It is recommended that reintroduction of training or competition is supported by a “Return to Play in a COVID-safe Environment” framework. This framework should detail how, in a sport-specific setting, activity will be delivered under this first phase, and any subsequent phases. This framework will provide clear and consistent guidelines for participants, coaches and volunteers on the ground, while also providing confidence to participants that their activity is being conducted safely and in accord with requirements.

Can spectators attend?

The emphasis under Phase 1 and into further stages is to maintain, where practical, small groups and physical distancing. Spectators are not recommended.

It is recognised however that junior training in particular may require the attendance of a parent or guardian. Any spectators should be separated from participants (within their small group) and maintain physical distancing from other spectators of at least 1.5m.

Measures for control of spectators should be considered within any “Return to Play in a COVID-safe Environment” framework for sports and/or venues.

How are we expected to maintain physical distancing at training and in matches?

Phase 1 is focused on the recommencement of training in small groups up to a maximum of 10 people (including coaches and support staff), while adhering to physical distancing and good hand and general hygiene.

The [AIS Framework for Rebooting Sport in a COVID-19 Environment](#) (Level B) provides details as to social sport consideration in these areas, while also including some sport-specific guidance. This sport specific guidance includes the delivery of training activities, venue considerations and use (or non-use) of equipment.

As we move to subsequent phases, requirements or recommendations will evolve – clearly some sports cannot maintain their structures or integrity with preservation of physical distancing.

While subsequent stages may provide for on-field or on-court activities to return to “normal”, the activities and engagement of participants and spectators may be changed to reflect of hygiene and physical distancing for some time to come.

Beyond what is established in each phase and recommended in the AIS framework, the application of physical distancing to trainings, games, spectators and venues will be a consideration for sports/providers and should be captured in any “Return to Play in a COVID-safe Environment” framework.

Can we fire up the BBQ, start canteen operations or catch up socially after training?

The [AIS Framework for Rebooting Sport in a COVID-19 Environment](#) (Level B) places some caution around the use of communal facilities – this includes changerooms, clubhouses and kitchen facilities. This is to limit unnecessary interaction beyond the “small group” setting.

The Phase 1 re-introduction of social sport supports the “get in, train and get out” principle outlined in the AIS Framework. Participants/activity providers are encouraged to limit any social engagement beyond their small group activity/training – this might include cessation of face-to-face group meetings and social events.

Like changerooms, canteens at ACT Government sportsgrounds will not be available for access under Phase 1.

Access to communal facilities and the use (or requirement) of amenities like canteens or BBQs may be a consideration in subsequent phases. The use of the facilities, including any general hygiene or physical distancing, should be considered with any “Return to Play in a COVID-safe Environment” plan.

Are there additional government requirements for us in respect of participant health and hygiene?

There are no additional ACT Government requirements beyond what is required for each Phase within the re-introduction process for social sport. But you must ensure you are practicing good hand and general hygiene.

[More information about how to protect yourself and others.](#)

The general principles for hygiene and physical distancing within the AIS Framework also provide a sensible guide as to precautions that activity providers should follow and participants should reasonably expect.

How will we be supported to implement any additional hygiene requirements at government-owned venues?

Sport and Recreation Facilities have installed additional soap dispensers in toilet facilities at sportsgrounds.

All ACT Government sportsground facilities will be cleaned weekly by a professional cleaning company.

We encourage all sportsground users to take responsibility for their own hygiene procedures and requirements, including provision of sanitising products and wipes as required.

Am I required to promote all of these changes or additional “operational” requirements to my participants?

The delivery of social sport training and competition has changed for the foreseeable future, including expectations from participants as to health and hygiene standards.

Sport or activity providers should develop a “Return to Play in a COVID-safe Environment” framework that is consistent with ACT Government guidelines, Public Health Directions and considers the recommendations outlined in the [AIS Framework for Rebooting Sport in a COVID-19 Environment](#).

This framework will guide the “operational” delivery of social sport and how participants, staff, volunteers and spectators all engage within this.

Sport and activity providers are encouraged to ensure that their individual members/communities are well aware of the changing environment, through progressive phases and in a post-COVID context. This promotes compliance and safety, while also providing assurance to people that it is “safe” to return to sport.

Will the traditional winter season be extended to reflect/compensate for the part of the season we have lost?

As we commence Phase 1 for the resumption of community sport, with an emphasis on training, there has been no determination at this time as to the extension of the winter season. Any decisions will be made in consultation with the peak bodies for summer and winter sports.

What if the small group limits make it unfeasible to recommence activities or for venues to reopen?

We recognise that not all sport or activity providers will determine it is viable to re-commence activity at this time. These decisions remain at the discretion of individual entities, and we will be happy to work with you on a return to play framework.

We have NSW teams in our sport and often travel across the border to play. Can this recommence?

Phase 1 is focused on the recommencement of training in small groups up to a maximum of 10 people, while adhering to physical distancing and good hand and general hygiene. As such, teams should not be travelling over the border to play matches.

The ACT and NSW Government will continue to work together as we ease restrictions.

Why have some professional teams already been able to resume both indoor and outdoor training in advance of community sport?

Professional sporting teams have been able to recommence training activities over recent weeks, acknowledging that for these athletes their sport is their profession and their training facilities their workplace.

Professional sporting teams have recommenced formal training considerate of a range of strict physical distancing and health/hygiene protocols as articulated in detailed “Return to Play” frameworks developed within their sport.

My state/national body seems to have put in place some extra thresholds or requirements for training and competitions. Am I obliged to follow?

Peak sporting bodies have an important role to play in supporting the development and consistency of sport specific “Return to Play in a COVID-safe Environment” frameworks. These frameworks may include additional measures that they deem appropriate.

Clubs and organisations are allowed to recommence activity in line with ACT Government restrictions at a minimum. However, we encourage clubs to work with their governing bodies to ensure a safe return to play.

My organisation has paid staff. Is it safe for them to return to the office?

All employers are also encouraged to consider alternative ways of delivering their business practices and services.

If it is not possible to work from home or redesign practices, it is vital that no worker comes to work if they have any of the following symptoms: fever, cough, sore throat, and shortness of breath. If unwell, workers should contact their primary health care provider, who can liaise with the local public health authority to determine when it is safe for them to return to work.

[More information on workplace health and safety.](#)

How will physical distancing and hygiene be enforced? Who will enforce it?

While the COVID-19 situation is regularly changing, Canberrans know what they should be doing and they should be taking actions with the safety of themselves and the entire community at front of mind.

Where required, ACT Policing will encourage compliance before considering the enforcement of ACT COVID-19 directions.

ACTP members always assess each situation on its merits and decide on the best course of action when applying their powers under a health direction.

Remember, while restrictions have eased your personal responsibility hasn't.

What happens if there is a positive COVID-19 case within our sporting club or facility?

Restrictions are being eased gradually to ensure as there are any new cases of COVID-19 in our community, we can address them quickly and effectively.

If someone tests positive for COVID-19 the health authorities will perform contact tracing to determine where they have been and who they have been in contact with.

If your club or organisation is impacted, health authorities will contact you and advise you what to do next.

To help contact tracing it is recommended people download the [COVIDSafe app](#).