



Australian Government

Australian Sports Commission

# FACTSHEET

## Keeping things safe

### Good coaching practices to reduce risk

- Plan all coaching sessions
- Follow child protection guidelines
- Conduct pre-participation screening using a medical history form
- Ensure participants warm up prior to activity
- Don't mismatch participants (consider size/strength, not age)
- Clearly establish the rules for behaviour and activities
- Ensure the safety of playing areas, facilities and equipment
- Require participants to use protective devices
- Adapt activities for environmental conditions (e.g. hot, humid, or cold, wet conditions)
- Cater for individual needs.

### Tips for ensuring the safety of playing areas

Ensure that:

- the playing area is level, firm and free from obstructions (for example, holes or exposed sprinkler heads)
- permanent fixtures such as goal posts are padded, flexible and highly visible
- corner posts and other field posts cannot injure participants on contact (these should be made of cardboard or other 'non-threatening' material)
- there is adequate lighting if playing at night
- there is adequate matting where necessary (for example, gymnastics, high jump)
- perimeter fences are well back from the playing area
- spectators are kept well away from the playing area.

### Tips for ensuring the safety of protective equipment

Check that protective equipment:

- is worn by participants during training and competition
- fits the participant correctly
- is regularly checked and maintained
- is specific and appropriate for the sport, size and age of the participant
- is being used according to the manufacturer's guidelines and the recommendations of the governing sporting body.

### Tips for ensuring the safety of environmental conditions

In hot or humid conditions:

- Encourage participants to wear loose, lightweight, light-coloured clothing made from a natural fibre (for example, cotton).
- Avoid intense activity in hot or humid conditions and monitor participants carefully for signs of heat illness.
- Help participants avoid sunburn by encouraging them to slip on a t-shirt, slop on some sunscreen and slap on a hat.
- Encourage participants to drink plenty of fluid before the activity begins and schedule regular drink breaks during the activity.

In cold and/or wet conditions:

- Encourage participants to wear clothing appropriate for cold conditions (for example, dress in layers to trap heat, wear gloves and a hat to reduce heat loss).
- Avoid participants standing exposed to the cold for long periods.
- Encourage participants to change wet clothing as soon as practicable.
- Alternative venues (for example, indoors) should also be considered, to ensure the safety and wellbeing of participants.
- Long breaks will cause the body to cool down, so participants should be encouraged to wear warm clothing. Coaches should plan training sessions to avoid long breaks. Another warm-up period may be needed if long rest periods cannot be avoided.