



BC Speed Skating

Return to Practice Guidelines

June 2020

Introduction

These guidelines represent a template for a **safe and successful return to group speed skating training in British Columbia**, following restrictions imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. A complete summary of the nature of the COVID-19 virus is not included in these guidelines; a succinct summary can be accessed through the [HealthLinkBC COVID-19](#) factsheet.



The COVID-19 pandemic restrictions have had, and will continue to have, far-reaching effects on lives across British Columbia (BC). The effects will be summarized in these guidelines by addressing risks to BC Speed Skating Association (BCSSA) members and organizations in the following two categories:

Participant Wellness	Organizational Wellness
Avoid transmission of the COVID-19 virus	Maintain financial health of organizations
Foster competitive spirit	Cultivate the speed skating community
Prevent return to sport injuries	Prevent personnel burnout and conflict

BC is currently in Phase 2 of [BC's Restart Plan](#), which allows a gradual return to organized sport under enhanced protocols as discussed in detail throughout these guidelines. These guidelines must be used as a template for the BCSSA and member clubs of BCSSA ("clubs") to develop their own **Return to Practice Plan** ("plan"). Each club's plan must, at minimum, be in compliance with orders and guidance issued by the Provincial Health Officer and must be available to the public (posted at a venue and/or on the organization's website). The Board of Directors of each club is responsible for ensuring the plan meets these minimum requirements. Clubs will be required to coordinate with their venue(s) to ensure adherence to the venue's COVID-19 response plan. Venue plans may vary greatly across the province based on the nature of the venue and requirements of the municipality and local health authority.

Throughout these guidelines, Return to Practice Plan content will be categorized as follows:

- Mandatory for inclusion in a club's written plan
- Recommended for inclusion in a club's written plan
- Optional for inclusion in a club's written plan

BCSSA will release further guidelines regarding a progressive return to speed skating when BC moves into Phase 3 of BC's Restart Plan.

Participant Wellness

Avoid Transmission of COVID-19 Virus

Avoiding transmission of the COVID-19 virus is critical to BC’s Restart Plan. Transmission can occur via person-to-person contact or surface contact. There are risks of both forms of transmission that are inherent in sport, and measures must be put in place to mitigate the risk. The ‘Five Principles for Every Situation’ below are included in BC’s Restart Plan. Each principle is discussed in detail in relation to the application and implementation for speed skating clubs in BC.

Five Principles For Every Situation

Personal Hygiene:	Stay Home if You Are Sick:	Environmental Hygiene:	Safe Social Interactions:	Physical Modifications:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequent handwashing • Cough into your sleeve • Wear a non-medical mask • No handshaking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Routine daily screening • Anyone with any symptoms must stay away from others • Returning travellers must self-isolate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More frequent cleaning • Enhance surface sanitation in high touch areas • Touch-less technology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet with small numbers of people • Maintain distance between you and people • Size of room: the bigger the better • Outdoor over indoor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spacing within rooms or in transit • Room design • Plexiglass barriers • Movement of people within spaces

● Personal Hygiene

- Share and post signage on [hand hygiene](#) and [respiratory etiquette](#). Enforce no-spitting policies.
- Recommend that non-skaters, including coaches, wear [non-medical masks](#) (also known as face coverings). Skaters should consider wearing masks pre- and post-activity. Provide education on the [proper use of non-medical masks](#). Coaches should consider options such as electronic whistles to avoid blowing into a standard whistle.
- Provide supplies for members to use during club events for hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette. Examples include hand sanitizer, disposable tissues, and a trash bin (preferably with a closed lid) for disposing tissues and other PPE. If bringing a trash bin on ice, ensure no metal components are touching the ice as it will leave a groove.
- Consider alternatives for vulnerable populations, including older adults and those with



compromised immune systems. Reducing the group size for these individuals may be an option.

- Ensure that participants bring their own labelled water bottle, preferably filled at home.

● Stay Home if You Are Sick

- Conduct daily symptom screening using a wellness questionnaire or [self-assessment](#). Clubs will need to consider what format works best for their club (e.g. online screen, paper journal, etc.).
- Implement and **enforce a zero-tolerance policy for any club participation while sick.**

● Environmental Hygiene

- Communicate with the venue to determine, and follow, their cleaning plan for venue-owned equipment.
- Avoid sharing equipment. This will preclude participation in some games and drills. Consider making it mandatory that the participant supplies their own skating protective equipment. If skates and/or skating protective equipment are lent by the club, they must be disinfected after each use.
- Develop [disinfection protocols](#) for sport-specific equipment that must be shared, such as protective padding and corner blocks. When possible, limit the number of coaches/assistants who touch the corner blocks. Given the logistical constraints with cleaning and disinfecting protective padding, individuals should perform hand hygiene before and after moving the protective padding. Avoid touching any other surfaces (especially the individuals' face) at all times.



● Safe Social Interactions

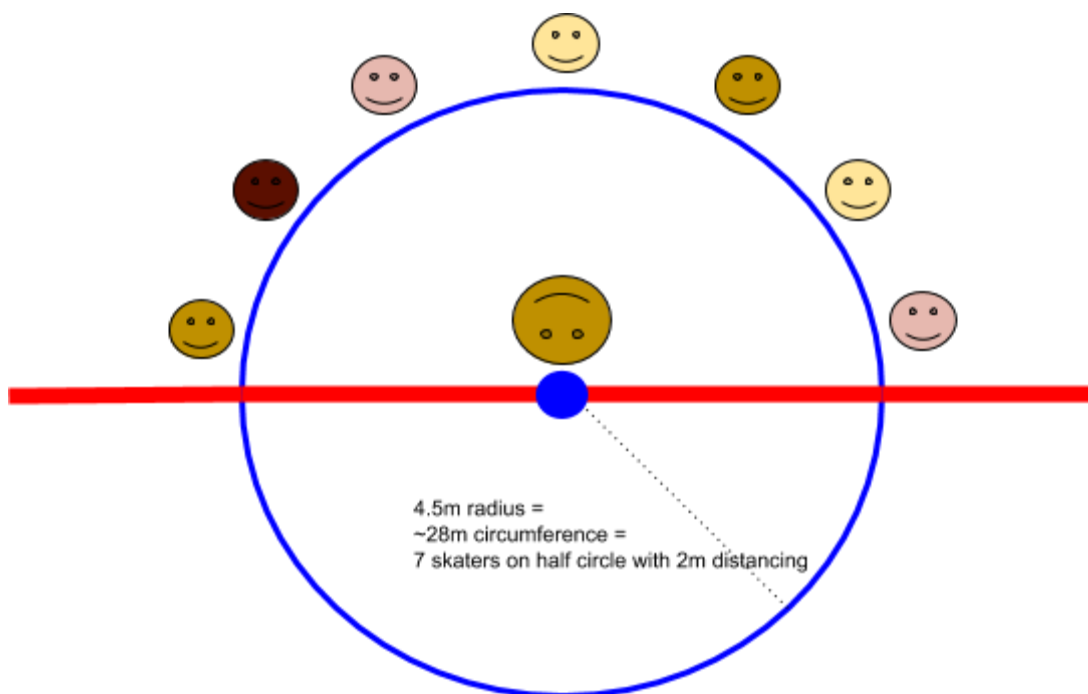
- The Provincial Health Officer has banned gatherings of 50 or more people. All traditional competitions and most club practices typically have more than 50 people (participants + support personnel) present. **Clubs should consider how to subdivide their training groups into 'cohorts' of less than 50 individuals**, including participants, support personnel and facility staff. It is recommended to keep the same cohort together whenever possible. Ensure maximum numbers are also in compliance with the venue's plan, which may specify how many participants can be on an ice surface (or other designated training area) at a time.



- In Phase 2, **sport participants must be able to maintain physical distance.** This precludes any pack-skating drills, training or racing, as well as most relays and games. Brainstorm a list of

physically-distanced (on-ice) practice activities for club coaches to use, including individual technical drills, individual lap skating, pursuit races, Olympic-style skating and long track-style relay races.

- In Phase 2, sport must remain community-focused. **Club members should be training exclusively with their own club** and avoid all cross-regional, inter-provincial or cross-country travel.
- Outdoor venues have more space to physically distance and improve ventilation. Clubs should consider [alternate training opportunities](#) that can be done outdoors. Ensure proper permits and insurance are in place for using outdoor venues.
- Clubs will be required to communicate early and often with their venue(s) to ensure compliance with the venue's COVID-19 plan. Plans will vary for venues across the province based on size of the venue, municipal rules and health authority rules. Venues may have rules around restricted access (e.g. venue access limited to participants, coaches and facility staff). Where participant guardians and/or spectators are allowed access, they must also comply with the Five Principles.
- Clubs should consider detailed arrival and departure plans that allow for staggering of cohorts. A [COVID-19 club host](#) could assist with directing participants.



Sample of physical distancing on-ice using faceoff circle. Note that this layout is easy for coaches to replicate as there are 7 skaters per half circle, which mimics the layout of the 7 corner blocks (per corner). The 'home base' for each skater may be drawn on the ice using bingo dabbers. Venue regulations may dictate that this arrangement exceeds the maximum number of on-ice participants; this diagram is provided for reference only.

● Physical Modifications

- Clubs will be required to work with their venue(s) to establish flow of participants through the buildings, use of spaces within the building (locker rooms, equipment storage rooms, washrooms, etc.), and other modifications to decrease common touch points (e.g. using doors that open automatically). Where possible, consider the use of larger areas (such as lobby areas or indoor sports fields) vs contained areas (such as change rooms) for putting on skating equipment. Participants may be required to arrive at the rink with their (freshly laundered) skin suits already on.
- In the event that a participant requires first aid, ***all first aid attendants must be wearing a mask, eye protection (goggles or safety glasses), and gloves***. Ensure that personal protective equipment (PPE) is readily available in the event of an emergency. PPE could be added to the club first aid kit and/or cut kits already used at club practice. Clubs should coordinate with their venue(s) to determine if any additional first aid requirements are in place in the venue plan.



● Member Communication and Training

- It is prudent for clubs to maintain timely and accurate communication with their members. It is strongly recommended that additional paperwork is read, understood and signed by members. See the [Mitigate Financial Loss through Solid Governance](#) section for details.
- A summary message from the club to their members should be issued as changes occur. See a [sample letter available here](#) (p32).
- Ensure communication is adjusted to the level of the audience. Young participants will require simple and clear instructions when on-site (e.g. “make sure you have enough room between you and your neighbour for ‘airplane arms’”). Young participants may require visual cues to help maintain physical distance, e.g. bingo dabber dots drawn on the ice to mark their ‘home base’.

● A Plan in the Event That a Case or Outbreak Should Occur

- A ‘case’ is defined as a single case of COVID-19. An ‘outbreak’ is defined as two or more cases. All cases must be addressed quickly to avoid outbreaks.
 - Develop or adapt an [Illness Policy](#) (p29) that clearly advises members and club administrators of the steps to follow should they begin to feel sick.
 - Ensure that attendance (participants and support personnel) is kept at all club events, including each practice session. Attendance should be



kept by one person, as compared to a sign-in sheet that requires multiple touches on the pen. This information will be required in the event of an outbreak and members should be aware in advance that it will be shared with public health should an outbreak occur.

Foster Competitive Spirit

Speed skating has been described as ‘racing on skates’. Individuals who enjoy racing may emerge from Phase 1 with a strong desire for competition, which may not be met in the traditional sense under enhanced protocols for sport in Phase 2 of BC’s Restart Plan.

● Plan for Competition Disruptions

- According to [viaSport’s Return to Sport Guidelines](#), activities that are not acceptable in Phase 2 of BC’s Restart Plan include:
 - “activities that cannot maintain physical distancing (including contact activities)
 - activities that have a high risk of injury
 - competitive activities that encourage large group gatherings
 - large public events or gatherings of over 50 people
 - activities that require travel”

These restrictions preclude the hosting of ‘traditional’ speed skating competitions during Phase 2. Clubs must be aware of these restrictions and are advised to clearly communicate this information with their members. As BC moves to Phase 3 and beyond, updated guidelines detailing the return to non-physically distanced activities and/or traditional competition (as allowed by the Phase 3 guidelines) will be released.

- Maintain communication with venues to review existing venue bookings, including cancellation policies for competition bookings.

● Create Alternate Competitive Opportunities

- Create a Strava Club for your speed skating club and/or join the [BCSSA Strava Club](#) for regular challenges.



STRAVA



- Brainstorm physically-distanced practice activities that have a racing component. Although formal competition is outside the scope of Phase 2, some practice activities with a racing component may be acceptable. Examples include: pursuits (1 lap, 2 lap,

2.5 lap, 7 lap), long track-style relays, and opposite-end skills-based races.

- Consider organizing opportunities at outdoor venues, as competition in outdoor venues may be allowed before competition in indoor venues. Contact local cities, ski resorts and x-country ski clubs who have ice surfaces that could be rented. Start planning early to ensure all insurance requirements are met, especially if the venue has not previously been used by the club.
- Form connections with a 'sister club' for virtual competitions, when a return to formal competition is allowed under enhanced protocols. For example, when formal competition is allowed, have skaters from two different clubs race a 2-lap pursuit at their home club, then compile a virtual leaderboard to determine the winner.

Prevent Return to Sport Injuries

Athletes returning to sport after a forced period of lockout may be at higher risk of injury if the return to sport is not well managed.

● Provide Holistic Education Early

- Explain the risk of return to sport (RTS) injuries, which may be caused by an abrupt RTS (without an appropriate build of intensity and volume of training).
- Educate members regarding a focus on controllable factors and address areas with opportunities for improvement: mental wellness, mental performance, nutrition, sleep hygiene, rehabilitation of previous/chronic injuries, biomechanical (movement pattern) deficiencies.
- Provide age-appropriate links to trusted sources such as [Canadian Sport Institute Pacific](#).

● Follow RTS Training Principles in Club Programming

- Address biomechanical deficiencies for fundamental movement skills (examples: jump, throw, run, kick, hinge, squat, lunge) and sport-specific movement skills.
- Focus on general athletic abilities first: aerobic, strength, explosive movements (jump and sprint).
- In Phase 2, the focus should be on skill development and low risk activities.
- Gradually increase training volume and intensity.
- Avoid peaking (reaching max performance) during the period of ongoing COVID-19 pandemic restrictions.



Organizational Wellness

Maintain Financial Health of Organizations

Speed skating clubs should prepare for the possibility of increased expenses and decreased revenues when returning after the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, clubs should ensure they are protected from financial loss due to legal action.

● Mitigate Financial Loss Through Solid Governance

- The Sport BC insurance policies that cover BCSSA members and member clubs contain a contagion exclusion. In summary, ***the Sport BC policies will not cover any claims related to COVID-19***. The Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General has recently released a [Ministerial Order](#) which protects non-profit “amateur sports organizations and their representatives from damages arising, directly or indirectly, from COVID-19”. Clubs are strongly encouraged to read the Ministerial Order in full and seek independent legal advice where required. Clubs are also reminded to follow through on requirements to maintain their standing as a Society, including [requirements on holding an AGM](#).
- In addition to their regular registration packages, clubs should add:
 - A [signed agreement](#) (p31) stating that each participant will adhere to the organization’s plan. Clubs should communicate that failure to comply may result in removal from activities.
 - A signed acknowledgement of risk related to COVID-19 when participating in organized sport.

These documents may be combined together (as is the case in the template referenced above). Existing members should sign the document(s) in addition to the registration forms they have previously completed. It is strongly recommended that each club seek independent legal advice.

- Review all contracts into which the club has entered (including venue rental, coach/personnel compensation, registration fees). Ensure any cancellation deadlines or other clauses are noted and addressed as required.
- Develop a [WorkSafe BC COVID-19 Safety Plan](#) to protect the club’s ‘workers’. Best practice would be to include all those who do ‘work’ on behalf of the club, including those who work on a volunteer basis. ***It is mandatory, by order of the Provincial Health Officer, for all employers in BC to have a COVID-19 Safety Plan.*** viaSport has created a [‘sportified’ version of the WorkSafe BC COVID-19 Safety Plan template](#) (p35) for clubs to use. Clubs who use multiple venues for training should have a COVID-19 Safety Plan for each venue. COVID-19 Safety Plans should be clearly communicated to club ‘workers’ and training on any required skills should be provided.
- Despite restrictions on group sizes, ensure the [Rule of Two](#) is followed virtually and in-person at all times.

● Offer Alternative Membership Options

- Consider offering memberships in 'blocks' (e.g. a 4-week session). This may be a more appealing option financially for some members, and will help to create cohorts of participants.
- Consider offering part-time memberships (season-long). This may be a more appealing option financially for some members.
- Consider a temporary reduction in membership fees to maintain or grow numbers.
- Consider discounts such as sibling discounts.
- Consider temporarily eliminating skate rental fees, especially if participants are required to supply all other equipment due to sanitary issues.
- Include information on local grants (e.g. [KidSport](#)) on club websites.
- Consider offering payment plans throughout the season.

● Offer Additional Training Opportunities to Increase Membership Value

- Investigate venues and resources for offering inline training. Participants do not need to be on speed skating style of inlines to benefit from inline training. Ensure you have permission to use the venue (even if it is an empty parking lot) and verify if there are any permit and/or insurance requirements by the venue owner.
- Increase dryland training opportunities. Dryland training has the added benefit of often being done outdoors, which is preferable for group gatherings over indoors. Ensure you have permission to use the venue (even if it is an empty parking lot) and verify if there are any permit and/or insurance requirements by the venue owner.
- Offer technical training on outdoor ice surfaces. Contact local cities, ski resorts and x-country ski clubs who have ice surfaces that could be rented. Start planning early to ensure all permit and/or insurance requirements are met, especially if the venue has not previously been used by the club.
- Offer virtual training opportunities. Ensure you are following best practices for digital safety (e.g. follow the [Rule of Two](#), minors must be supervised, use secure platforms).

Clubs are required to contact BCSSA prior to offering virtual training opportunities to ensure the virtual training meets insurance requirements.



Cultivate the Speed Skating Community

Speed skating is, by comparison, a small sport in BC. Clubs are encouraged to take active steps to maintain and build the local speed skating community. As BC emerges from Phase 1 and moves into Phases 2 and 3 of BC's Restart Plan, individuals will be returning to a 'new normal', which may include a simpler and more local lifestyle.



● Build Club's Sense of Community

- Use social media to share the club's activities and accomplishments. Be sure to have photo consent forms signed for all participants.
- Use club management and communication apps to build a virtual community and communicate important updates easily.
- Host social events virtually.
- Pursue club affiliation opportunities such as club uniforms.

● Promote Local 'Racing on Skates'

- Create informal challenges for community members to race on their skates. For example, create a social media video showing how to do the speed skating starting procedure ("go to the start, ready, GO!"). Include a statement to clarify that 'pick-up sports' racing is not sanctioned by the local club and participants must be following the rules of the ice surface they are using.



Prevent Personnel Burnout and Conflict

● Create and ‘Staff’ Additional Club Roles

- Designate a COVID-19 club ambassador to liaise with the club’s venue(s). This could be an existing member of the Board of Directors; carefully consider volunteer workload before designating.
- Designate a COVID-19 club host(s) to guide members through the return process. The host will provide communication directly to the members, help direct traffic within the venue, and be available to answer questions. It is recommended that the host is not a club coach or equipment manager, as these individuals are typically otherwise engaged during the times a host would be most valuable. In the event that clubs do not have enough personnel for a club host, consider pre-recording a short video to demonstrate what to expect at a club event as an alternative.

● Proactively Address Conflict

- Have the Board of Directors and/or coaches regularly engage with participants and guardians to gauge their tolerance to the risks associated with club activities. Opening lines of communication will help participants feel heard and accepted. Expect and respect that individuals will have differing levels of risk tolerance. Consistent and explicit engagement may proactively identify risks that are intolerable to the club and must be addressed.
- In the words of BC’s Provincial Health Officer Dr. Bonnie Henry, “Be calm, be kind, be safe”. Issue regular reminders that sport is for leisure and enjoyment. If sport is no longer enjoyable, a careful review of the causal factors is in order.



Disclaimer

This disclaimer is referenced from the Disclaimer in the viaSport Return to Sport Guidelines with permission.

The BC Speed Skating Return to Practice (BCSSA RTP) Guidelines is intended to be used for the purposes set in this document. While we aim to provide relevant and timely information, because information known about the COVID-19 coronavirus and recommended health and safety measures can rapidly change no guarantee can be given as to the accuracy or completeness of any information provided in the BCSSA RTP Guidelines.

It is important to note that the BCSSA RTP Guidelines is not a legal document and is to be used as a guide only. It is not a substitute for actual legislation or orders of the PHO. In the event of an ambiguity or conflict between the BCSSA RTP Guidelines and the Public Health Act, regulations or orders thereunder, the Act, regulations and orders prevail. Each Provincial Sport Organization should comply with the requirements of the provincial and local government and health officials in terms of public gatherings and sporting events when determining when it is safe to return to activities. Nothing in this document is intended to provide legal advice. Do not rely on this document or treat it as legal advice.

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References and Resources

These guidelines heavily reference the [viaSport Return to Sport Guidelines for B.C.](#). Other references consulted include:

- [The Recreation & Parks Sector Guideline for Restarting Operations](#)
- [WorkSafe BC COVID-19 and Returning to Safe Operation - Phase 2](#)
- [BC's Restart Plan](#)
- [COVID-19 Orders, Notices & Guidance](#)

Thank you to the BCSSA Risk Management Working Group for their work in preparing this document.

⚠ At minimum, each member club of the BC Speed Skating Association is required to have a written and publicly-accessible plan to outline their Return to Practice Plan. The club's plan must be approved by their Board of Directors.

The Return to Practice Plan must include the elements required in the WorkSafe BC COVID-19 Safety Plan. At the club's discretion, it is recommended that other elements discussed in these Guidelines are also included.

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