

# Coaching Development in Aquatics

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🕒 Reading time: ~5 min



In aquatics, success isn't just about fast swimmers or talented players. Behind every great aquatic athlete, there's a team of coaches who shape their journey. Unlike many sports, aquatics is often a decade-long commitment, starting as young as four and extending through high school, university, or even Masters-level competition. Along the way, athletes pass through different groups, led by different coaches. That reality makes coaching less about a single voice and more about a collective effort. For clubs, the challenge isn't finding drills or technical tips (the internet is full of them). The challenge is creating continuity, collaboration, and clarity—so no matter

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who's on deck, athletes get the guidance they need to keep progressing. It's about building a long-term pathway for athletes and ensuring every coach along the way sets them up for the next step. Most athletes spend 10+ years in a club, and they'll work with multiple coaches as they move through groups. That means clubs need more than good drills—they need continuity, communication, and systems.

## The challenge

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- The internet is full of drills, strategies, and training tips. The real issue is: how do coaches organize this knowledge and use it consistently over the years?
- Coaches change. Without documentation and clear goals, progress risks being lost when someone leaves.
- Volunteers are essential. They bring energy and heart, but often lack the full technical knowledge. They need resources that are simple, clear, and ready to use.

## Key dynamics for clubs

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1. **Continuity across stages.** From ages 4–8 (early engagement) through 18 (high school), athletes move between groups. Coaches must pass athletes forward with the right foundations in place.
2. **Shared team goals.** Whoever leads the team should provide specific targets for every coach, aligning them to the club's overall process.
3. **Communication.** Coaches should check in regularly, share what's working, and adjust when needed.
4. **Succession planning.** Clubs should plan daily (mentorship of junior coaches) and long-term (handover processes for incoming coaches).

## Practical solutions

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- **The living document.** A Google Drive (or similar) where coaches update each season: what worked, what didn't, and what to improve. It evolves as kids and coaches change.

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- **The handover sheet.** One page per group, with goals, drills, and notes for the next coach.
- **Resources for volunteers.** A mix of documents, short videos, and activity lists. Like a restaurant manual—you don't need to be a chef to follow it, just clear instructions.
- **Mentorship culture.** Set regular coach touchpoints (e.g., weekly quick huddles + monthly documented check-ins) and provide shadowing opportunities. New/volunteer coaches learn by doing, with guidance.
- **Documentation after every season.** A short reflection: What worked best for this group? What needs fixing? This makes next season smoother.



## The Benefits

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- Athletes progress smoothly through age groups.
- New/volunteer coaches feel empowered, not overwhelmed.
- Clubs don't skip a beat when staff changes.

## Resources

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### “Coach Handover” template:

- Group name / age range:
- Season goal (1 line):
- What worked last season (2 lines):
- Top 3 priorities this season:
- Key drills (names + short purpose, 1 line each):
- Equipment & pool needs:
- Competitions to target:
- Notes for incoming coach: