

# GYMNASTICS AUSTRALIA NATIONAL GUIDELINES — RETURN TO TRAINING



The forced and prolonged closure of gymnastics clubs and facilities across Australia due to COVID-19 has created a number of unique challenges. In reopening these facilities, it is important that our athletes are returned to training in a graduated manner to ensure they are safe, free from injury and illness and that their performance can be enhanced as quickly as it can safely be achieved.

Gymnastics Australia (GA) has compiled this *Return to Training Guide* as a part of the *Rebooting Gymnastics* plan.

This guide aims to give coaches and athletes of all levels, across all Gymsports, a framework to ensure that gymnasts return to training and competition safely and productively following the extensive period of lost training time.

Please note that this guide should not replace the specific advice of health professionals working with athletes, coaches and clubs. In implementing a return to training plan, all athletes, coaches and clubs must abide by the requirements of the relevant federal and state government policies on participating in sport during COVID-19.

The timeframes stipulated in this guide are suggested as a maximum increase on a fortnightly basis. Clubs, coaches and athletes are not required to progress at the suggested rate and should consult a medical professional if they show signs of soreness due to this increase in activity.

## **Evidence for Framework**

In putting this framework together, GA assembled a working group, including the Chief Medical Officer, national team physiotherapists and strength and conditioning coaches, in order to make the best evidence-based decisions on returning to gymnastics.

This return to sport guide is largely based on the work of the AIS and the AIS White Paper which was released originally in 2015 but has since been superseded in 2020. This paper encompasses research across multiple sports and age groups in regard to optimising performance after time away from sport. For more information and to read the paper, [click here](#).

## **Return to Sport Timelines**

In compiling these guidelines, GA has taken into account the amount of time that clubs and facilities have been closed at the time of publication and made some prospective calculations in basing this graduated return to full training recommendation for its members.

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A number of factors will have determined how much activity individual athletes have been able to maintain whilst these facilities have been closed. For the purposes of these guidelines, it is assumed that athletes are returning to gymnastics from a period of complete rest.

Using the AIS White Paper as a guide, athletes and coaches can adjust the return to training timeframes depending on the amount of training and fitness they have been able to maintain whilst away from their regular training facilities.

## **Begin with Assessment**

Before utilising the framework and guidelines attached it is imperative some initial assessment is conducted with the athletes to gain a clear indication of the current status of your athletes. The initial fitness and strength testing will serve as a base for the programs you design and should be high on the priority list.

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Some recommended forms of assessment are:

1. Questionnaire / Similar — to gain an understanding of the most recent loading and intensity. A [sample questionnaire](#) has been put together as a guide for coaches.
2. Fitness Assessment — to gain an understanding of baseline fitness in regard to aerobic capacity and general fitness. An example could be the Yo-Yo Test, Counter Movement Jump and Sprint Test.
3. Gymsport-Specific Testing — to gain an indication of specific gymnastics related strength activities. An example could be rope climb, chin ups, or leg lifts etc.
4. Discussion — with your athletes about their welfare, current feelings around returning to training, concerns or questions they may have. Consideration should also be given to social and family circumstances during isolation and during the transition phase to 'regular' training. Use questioning techniques and build athlete engagement.

Some key notes with testing are:

- Conduct them over a period of time and consider modifications to the protocols you may normally use e.g. time and repetition numbers and number of tests within an assessment session, surfaces you are using etc.
- Consider the intensity required with your assessment and evaluate modifications
- Consider 'why' you are testing and what information you need?

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## Principles of Increasing Load

Increasing the load and demands on our bodies through training is necessary to progress physical and skill-based capabilities. In order to maximise performance and decrease the chance of injury or illness this has to be done in a progressive way. Load can be increased in a number of ways. Commonly these include;

- Volume — increasing numbers of any particular activity or skill
- Duration — increasing the time that an activity or skill is performed for
- Intensity — increasing the rate of work for an activity or skill
- Intervals — decreasing the rest time between repeated bouts of an activity, skill or training session

Increasing load too quickly does not allow the body to cope with the demands put on it. If load increases too slowly, by one or more parameters, time can be wasted.

Research from multiple sports suggests that a 20%–30% increase in load is an efficient and safe increment by which to adapt positively to load and enhance performance. This guide has used this, as well as the literature on building chronic workloads in athletes, for the basis of this guide.

## Using This Guide

The guide has been split into four groups to cater for high performance, competitive and recreational athletes. The principles that underpin each group are the same. The timeframe to return to full training differs depending on the amount of training an individual athlete will need to build back up to.

Please use the appropriate table for each individual athlete and utilise it as the basis to structure a return to training that follows the requirements of both your State and Federal governments. A list of medical professionals that are qualified to assist with implementing this plan will be available with these resources.

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## Return to Training Framework — > 20 Hours (approx 10 sessions per week)

Determined by:

1. Athlete questionnaire
2. Individual baseline assessment — General Fitness
3. Individual baseline — Gymnastics-Specific Fitness
4. Discussion with athlete and parent

Week	Number of Hours per Week	Evidence-Based Recommendations
Week 1	9	Aim to build a rest day between sessions to allow for tissues to adapt and respond to loading.
Week 2	9	Aim to build a rest day between sessions to allow for tissues to adapt and respond to loading.
Week 3	12	Aim to build training with two days in a row to adapt to multiple loading sessions with less rest.
Week 4	12	Aim to build training with two days in a row to adapt to multiple loading sessions with less rest.
Week 5	15	Aim for multiple days of training in a row to rebuild load tolerance.
Week 6	15	Aim for multiple days of training in a row to rebuild load tolerance.
Week 7	21	Aim to incorporate one or two days during the week with two sessions in one day. Aim to have a rest day between dual session days.
Week 8	21	Aim to incorporate one or two days during the week with two sessions in one day. Aim to have a rest day between dual session days.
Week 9	24	Aim for multiple days in a row of dual session days, ideally with a rest day in between.
Week 10	24	Aim for multiple days in a row of dual session days, ideally with a rest day in between.
Week 11	30	Return to normal training schedule.

# GYMNASTICS AUSTRALIA NATIONAL GUIDELINES — RETURN TO TRAINING



## Return to Training Framework — Up to 20 Hours (approx 7 sessions per week)

Determined by:

1. Athlete questionnaire
2. Individual baseline assessment — General Fitness
3. Individual baseline — Gymnastics-Specific Fitness
4. Discussion with athlete and parent

Week	Number of Hours per Week	Evidence-Based Recommendations
Week 1	9	Aim to build a rest day between sessions to allow for tissues to adapt and respond to loading.
Week 2	9	Aim to build a rest day between sessions to allow for tissues to adapt and respond to loading.
Week 3	12	Aim to build training with two days in a row to adapt to multiple loading sessions with less rest.
Week 4	12	Aim to build training with two days in a row to adapt to multiple loading sessions with less rest.
Week 5	15	Aim for multiple days of training in a row to rebuild load tolerance.
Week 6	15	Aim for multiple days of training in a row to rebuild load tolerance.
Week 7	20	Return to normal training schedule.

# GYMNASTICS AUSTRALIA NATIONAL GUIDELINES — RETURN TO TRAINING



## Return to Training Framework — Competitive Gymnastics, Up to 18 Hours (approx 6 sessions per week)

Determined by:

1. Athlete questionnaire
2. Individual baseline assessment — General Fitness
3. Individual baseline — Gymnastics-Specific Fitness
4. Discussion with athlete and parent

Week	Number of Hours per Week	Evidence-Based Recommendations
Week 1	6	Aim to build a rest day between sessions to allow for tissues to adapt and respond to loading.
Week 2	6	Aim to build a rest day between sessions to allow for tissues to adapt and respond to loading.
Week 3	9	Aim to build a rest day between sessions to allow for tissues to adapt and respond to loading.
Week 4	9	Aim to build a rest day between sessions to allow for tissues to adapt and respond to loading.
Week 5	12	Aim to build training with two days in a row to adapt to multiple loading sessions with less rest.
Week 6	12	Aim to build training with two days in a row to adapt to multiple loading sessions with less rest.
Week 7	18	Return to normal training schedule.

# GYMNASTICS AUSTRALIA NATIONAL GUIDELINES — RETURN TO TRAINING



## Return to Training Framework — Recreational Gymnastics, Up to 12 Hours (approx 4 sessions per week)

Determined by:

1. Athlete questionnaire
2. Individual baseline assessment — General Fitness
3. Individual baseline — Gymnastics-Specific Fitness
4. Discussion with athlete and parent

Week	Number of Hours per Week	Evidence-Based Recommendations
Week 1	6	Aim to build a rest day between sessions to allow for tissues to adapt and respond to loading.
Week 2	6	Aim to build a rest day between sessions to allow for tissues to adapt and respond to loading.
Week 3	9	Aim to build a rest day between sessions to allow for tissues to adapt and respond to loading.
Week 4	9	Aim to build a rest day between sessions to allow for tissues to adapt and respond to loading.
Week 5	12	Aim to build training with two days in a row to adapt to multiple loading sessions with less rest.

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