

OPEN WATER SWIMMING

SAFETY MANUAL

FOR SWIMMERS AND THE EVENTS ORGANIZERS

FOR THE BEGINNERS

1.- Learning to swim

Swimming is a lifesaving skill and can reduce the chances of drowning by 88% and is the first thing needed to prevent drowning incidents in open water.

2.- Never Swim Alone

Make sure you have a partner when you venture out into the open water — someone who will look after you while you look after them. Your "swimming buddy" is not a lifeguard. While it's nice to have lifeguards on duty, they must take care of a lot of people before they can focus solely on your safety. Swimming together can often be more enjoyable. Never swim alone!

3.- Go swimming in the designated place.

Most public beaches and lakeside locations have posted when swimming is allowed and use flags to mark the edges where people can swim. Never swim outside these limits. In addition, it is best to swim under the supervision of a professional lifeguard.

4.- If in doubt, get out of the water immediately.

Over time, develop confidence in the open water swimming. Allow yourself time to exercise, whether it's in the pool or closer to the shore. It's okay if you don't feel "ready" right away. Start where you are comfortable and go from there at a pace that suits you. The level of comfort increases as the experience grows. In case something is wrong, get out of the water immediately. Simply leave and get back in the water another day, whether it's because the water gets rough, the weather turns bad, or your body doesn't respond the way you want it to due to exhaustion or cramps. It's always a good idea to follow your gut. Relax. Look around you. Be careful not to accidentally drift too far from your boat, shore, or your swim partner. While floating in the water is fun, be aware of your surroundings and make eye contact with your swim partner. The key is to have a fixed location where you can calculate the distance traveled so you can conserve enough energy to swim back to shore. Stay calm, and never panic. If you start feeling uncomfortable, the very first step is to stay calm. Alert your swim buddy, and calmly swim back to where you feel comfortable.

5.- Familiarize yourself with the conditions

Before entering the water, check the weather and water temperature. If the water is cold, it is best to swim in a wet suit and avoid staying in the water for too long. Remember that swimming in the rain is dangerous, especially if there is thunder and lightning. Don't be afraid to swim back to shore if the weather changes. Know your underwater creatures. It's always good to know what creatures to look out for - i.e. steer clear of jellyfish and other poisonous fish. Generally, a good rule of thumb is to look, but not touch anything; leave the delicate sea floor the way you found it.

6.- Choose the appropriate equipment



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Always choose appropriate equipment for OWS, such as wetsuits if the water is cold, a swimming cap, and swimming goggles. Note that wearing a wetsuit may not be wise if the water temperature is above 21 degrees. Prolonged use may lead to heat exhaustion. Likewise, when the water is colder than 16 degrees, swimming is not recommended at all, not even with a wetsuit. To avoid skin irritation when swimming in seawater, apply a suitable cream (e.g. vaseline or baby cream) to the areas of most frequent irritation under the armpits and around the neck.

7.- Understand sea currents

Open water and sea experiences often involve the uncontrollable. Currents, waves and tides can take you off your planned swim path. You can find out whether it applies to you or not by choosing a static "beacon" on the ship or the shore. Do not panic if you do find yourself in a storm. To escape, try to stay calm and swim towards the shore, avoiding the currents. You can get tired and even more scared if you try to swim against the current.

8.- No Alcohol

Alcohol changes the way you perceive danger, increasing your tendency to take unnecessary risks. In addition, drinking alcohol affects your balance and coordination, which are essential for swimming and avoiding hazards in the water. So avoid drinking while in the water.

9.- Use an approved safety buoy for swimming

Small children, weaker swimmers and everyone, in general, should use a safety buoy for swimming. It allows them to be more visible, and in case of fatigue, cramp, or any difficulty, they can lean on it and wait for help or swim supported towards the shore.

10. Create an emergency plan

Whenever you enter the water, whether with a swim partner or by yourself, have a plan in place to deal with emergencies. Tell someone about your destination. It is a great choice to have someone watching from the beach and ready to help if needed. Prepare for every scenario and try to remove as much uncertainty as possible. It's always a good idea to have a basic strategy before you go out, including where you want to swim, how far you want to go, and how long you want to stay in the water. It would be a good idea to notify someone on shore if you plan to go swimming that day. Even if you have a swim partner (never swim alone), check with a lifeguard before you go.

If you start feeling exhausted or uncomfortable, take a break. Either tread water, or calmly make your way back to shore.

11.- Swim parallel to the shore

Never let fear cloud your judgment if you ever find yourself in a current. You can be quickly swept away by the water from the shore. Since most rip currents average about 50 meters wide, swimming parallel to the beach, rather than towards it, is the best approach to avoid it. Avoid exhaustion by trying to swim against the current to escape the rip current by trying to relax and breathe by keeping your head above water.

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FOR THE MORE EXPERIENCED

Currently, open water swimming is very popular. Possibly as a result of how the Great Swims truly gave the sport a boost in popularity, with some events now drawing up to 10,000 swimmers.

One of the most crucial things to keep in mind about open water swimming is that it presents several challenges not present in pool swimming. There are a few guidelines to abide by for anyone new to open water swimming to make their first open water race a stress-free experience.

12. - A Suitable Wetsuit

Open water wetsuit try-ons are ideal before the event, but if you are unable to do so, at least check the fit of any wetsuit you intend to wear. To choose the best wetsuit for size and fit, keep an eye out for try-on days at some stores or online swim stores that offer free size exchanges.

13. - Goggles Considerations

Make sure your swimming goggles are leak-free and that you have a replacement pair on hand in case the ones you're wearing have a strap that breaks.

14. - Open Water Practice

This is crucial, especially for swimmers who are new to this style. Gaining knowledge of mass starts, stroke adaptation, swimming around buoys, and sighting can all help you perform better in an open water swim competition. You should ideally participate in either a private or group session with an experienced open water swim instructor.

15. - The Importance of Cold Water Conditioning

You can prepare for the circumstances of an open water race by practicing swimming in cold water. Open water swimmers must become acclimated to the cold water to avoid panicking and hyperventilating during the race.

16. Warming Up

Before a race, swimmers typically have the option of swimming in the water to warm up. It is important to take advantage of this opportunity since it will help swimmers adjust more easily when the race actually begins. Alternately, splashing or bathing your face in cold water will also help you get used to the shift in temperature.

17. - Retaining Heat with Two Caps

For swimmers, the majority of heat loss occurs through the head, hence wearing two hats as opposed to one can aid to minimize heat loss. Under your swim cap, a sturdy neoprene swim hat will work best.

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18. - Bright caps

You should wear a bright cap so that other people using the water can see you. Bright colors such as fluorescent pink, fluorescent orange, and fluorescent green should be used. Dark green, blue, gray, black, and even white are not so noticeable.

19. - Short nails

If necessary, trim your nails before the race as long nails may tear the neoprene. Try to put on the wetsuit with the palms of your hands to reduce the possibility of tearing. Using gloves to put on your diving suit is a great alternative to consider if you decide to keep your nails long.

20. - Swimming with a Friend

A newbie may benefit from having a friend who has open water swimming experience. They can provide advice, but they can also serve as an inspiration as a training companion. They will also be able to assist you if you encounter any difficulties while competing.

21. - Not Shaving

Before an open water swim, shaving is not advised because the mix of salt water and razor burn can make swimming in the water unpleasant.

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FOR THE OWS EVENTS ORGANIZERS

*Note: Recommendations for OWS competition organizers where fine OWS rules and regulations are not fully applied, i.e. which are not under the FINA and/or LEN OWS competence.

22. Be sure to create a Security Plan that will be available to all participants of the competition. The plan must be based on, i.e. include:

22.1. Anticipate the most adverse scenarios possible regarding the conduct of the competition. Like what

22.1.1. Sudden thunderstorms

22.1.2. The disappearance of individuals or several swimmers

22.1.3. Loss of consciousness or injury with massive bleeding swimmer

22.1.3.1. Here be sure to apply the so-called rule "4 minutes", that is, that the number and positions, as well as the equipment of escort ships, is such that from the moment the injured swimmer is spotted to the moment of providing CPR, or/and stopping massive bleeding, should pass no more than 4 minutes.

22.1.4. Shark appearance or similar sudden danger

22.1.5. Entry of an uninvited high-speed boat into the competitive area

22.1.6. And other, what the organizer assumes could at least theoretically happen and jeopardize the safety of the swimmers

22.2. The plan shall include appropriate procedures concerning the most unfavorable scenarios analyzed

22.2.1. Guided by the basic rule according to which "the exact number of swimmers in the water is known at all times"

22.2.2. Procedures must be feasible with the manpower and equipment that the organizer may provide to conduct the OWS competition.

22.2.3. Preferably provide each backup process and variant (plan B)

23. If the swimmers do not have a license with the national swimming federation, i.e. the swimming club, i.e. that the license does not confirm the possession of the appropriate medical certificate, require each swimmer to present the possession of a valid medical certificate, or report to possess a certificate in the race registration form.

24. It is mandatory to require the swimmer to use and organizer to obtain a sufficient number of safety buoys for swimming in the competition

24.1. Safety buoys for swimming should be of noticeable colors such as fluorescent green, yellow, or orange with a well-visible starting number on both sides.

24.2. The safety swimming buoys should have a dry compartment in which the appropriate GPS/GSM locator can be placed.

24.3. If the organizer cannot acquire the appropriate GPS/GSM locators, modern smartphones own it, and swimmers can put their smartphone in the dry buoy section, while the organizer should

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provide the appropriate application for tracking these phones, that is, swimmers with safety swimming buoys containing smartphones with GPS transmitter on.

25. Ensure a connection with all participants of the competition with the appropriate CB radio communication or with mobile phones.
26. Secure a connection with the main people in the organization of the competition via VHF radio connection, with a CB radio connection or mobile phone.
27. Ask the local maritime authorities in charge of competition security to be able to connect to the VHF radio station, as the fastest communication link.
28. In case the competition is not accompanied by a suitable ambulance, inform the nearest local medical service about the OWS event and arrange a way to communicate if needed.
29. Assign one or more persons who will be in charge of obtaining the appropriate certificate of microbiological water quality, measuring the temperature of the water, and checking the track itself immediately before the start of the competition.