



SWIMATHON |



# Tackling the Triple 5k

Simon Griffiths



## Simon Griffiths, founder and publisher of Outdoor Swimmer magazine, shares his top tips for Open Water Swimathon's biggest challenge.

In swimming terms, 5km is roughly the equivalent of running a half marathon. Doing three 5km open water swims over the course of a weekend therefore requires a little preparation. As well as needing the fitness to swim 5km, you have to recover fast enough to do it over again, twice. This might be on three consecutive days or over the slightly longer MySwimathon period.

**We therefore thought we'd share some tips on how to approach this challenge.**



- As much as you can, be consistent with your training, but if you do have to miss the occasional session, just let it go. Don't try to catch up in the following week, for example. It's better to be slightly undertrained than burned out.
- In the final week, just do the three regular sessions on the programme. There is no need to do extra at this stage, nor will there be any benefit. Pay extra attention to your sleep, rest and recovery in the days leading up to the event.
- Plan your weekend carefully. How will you get to each of the swims? If you're doing two (or even three) in one day at different locations, how will you get between them? How will you wash and dry your wetsuit between swims (to minimise the risk of spreading invasive species)? Do you need a second or third wetsuit? How many towels and costumes do you need? What are you going to eat between swims? How much can you prepare in advance to minimise stress on event weekend?
- Also consider whether you will want to eat or drink anything during each 5km swim. Most people should be able to cover the distance without eating, but that may leave you depleted and cause you to struggle on later swims. If you use a tow float, some have an option to carry a bottle, which you could fill with energy drink, for example. Alternatively (or additionally) you could put an energy gel or snack inside the sleeve of your wetsuit for easy access during the swim – but remember to stuff the wrappers back inside your wetsuit after eating to avoid littering.
- Pacing is always important on a 5km swim. It's even more important when you have three of them to do. If you've followed our training programme, and have rested and recovered leading up to the event, you should feel fit and full of energy at the start – don't blow it all on
- Firstly, do the training. We suggest following the training plan for the regular 5k swim. On top of that, each week, choose one of the three sessions and repeat it, so you do a minimum of four sessions each week.
- With this amount of training, it's important to look after your body. Eat well, sleep well and try to incorporate some core strength and mobility exercises into your weekly routine. Yoga or Pilates are both popular with swimmers. Book in a sports massage or two, if you feel those will help keep you in full working order. If you have any niggling injuries, get advice from a professional immediately. If they suggest cutting back on training, don't panic. It's better to take it easy for a week or two than to push on and give yourself a bigger injury.

the first 5k. Swim at a pace you might do for a 10km swim. You should finish the first and the second swims feeling that you have more in the tank.

- Try to eat and drink something as soon as you finish each swim (but wash your hands first). Go for snacks with a mixture of carbohydrates and protein rather than anything fatty. For your main meals on event weekend, avoid food that might upset your gut – spicy or greasy meals, for example. Keep it plain and simple, and don't overeat. Time your big meals so that you have three hours to digest before a swim.
- Keep an eye on the weather and prepare accordingly. If the water is cold, consider wearing a second swim cap or even a neoprene cap, as getting cold exhausts you quickly. Get dressed in warm clothes as soon as you can after each swim. Conversely, if it is hot, ensure you drink plenty and keep out of the sun between swims.
- Finally, make sure you're mentally prepared. Having a good written plan will help as it will reduce stress levels. Write down and practise some mantras you can use while swimming.

Also write down some stroke focus points to think about while swimming. Think of this as a 15km opportunity to become a better swimmer. What can you work on? Also, what will you tell yourself if you feel like giving up and you need to give yourself a metaphorical kick up the backside? I remind myself of all the training I've done and try to convince myself how lucky I am, in that moment, to be doing what I'm doing, even if it hurts and I'm tired.

The Triple 5k is a big challenge, and it will exhaust you and test your physical and mental resilience, but try to keep it fun too. Pick swims in nice locations and get friends or family to come along and support you. Celebrate afterwards!

For more open water swimming tips and inspiration, pick up a copy of [Outdoor Swimmer magazine](#).



# Good Luck & Enjoy It!

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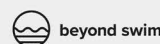
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