



AN INTRODUCTION TO OPEN WATER SWIMMING

Open water swimming, in essence, is about adjusting your stroke and acclimatizing to the environment in which you are swimming. The following skills should be practiced in an indoor pool or within a controlled open water environment.

Sighting

Sighting is the term used to refer to the process of looking where you're going in open water and maintaining the straight-line swimming trajectory. The absence of lane ropes, black lines and the inability to see the bottom in an open water environment makes navigation and swimming in a straight line challenging. In order to sight, you should lift your head to the front. A good sighting technique involves lifting your eyes out of the water, returning the head into the water, then turning your head to the side to breath. This should all take place in one smooth and fluid motion. It takes practice to integrate good sighting technique into your front crawl stroke without interrupting your rhythm and momentum. Avoid keeping your head elevated

for several strokes at a time as this can be extremely fatiguing.

Mass starts

Our best advice for newbie open water swimmers is to avoid the huge rush or the 'washing machine' of people that is the start of a triathlon or open water event. You can do this by positioning yourself towards the back or sides of the group avoiding the more compact centre. It is however inevitable that you will find yourself in amongst a group of flailing arms and kicking feet, which can be a cause of anxiety for some. Prepare yourself for this by grabbing your mates and start swimming in groups getting as close to each other as possible. Make sure you are comfortable breathing to both sides so you can turn your head away from excessive water spray and splash.

Stroke adjustment and longer distances.

It may be obvious but there is no lane ropes or flat tiled floors in an open water environment! Swimming 400m consistently without stopping is very different from swimming in a 25/50m pool when you can rest at the end of the lane. Try and incorporate longer distance swims into your training sessions without touching the sides or the bottom of the pool. Start with just 100m swims then build up to 400m. Larger 50m outdoor lidos are perfect for this kind of training.

Have a plan as to what stroke you want to swim. Remember backstroke is not allowed in most open water races. Swimming freestyle is different in open water especially if you are planning to wear a wetsuit. Try and adopt a wider shallower arm recovery with minimal glide at the front of your stroke. Booking a 1-2-1 session with an open water instructor will help you achieve your best possible swimming style for your event.