

5 Tips for Successful Open Water Swimming



1. Get used to wearing your wetsuit.

- Get a great fit
- Use Body Glide (or other) to get your wetsuit on and off with more ease
- Consider swimming “skin”!

FOR WETSUIT RENTALS: Use Everyday Athlete in Kirkland (425) 821 4301. \$50-\$60 for Thursday-Tuesday rentals; 10% off a new wetsuit if you mention Say Yes to Life! Swims!

2. Reduce anxiety by focusing on things you CAN control.

- Relax your breathing; exhale when your face is in the water.
- Get that elbow up to get power in your stroke.
- Think “long and relaxed”.
- Stay in the present.

3. Sight often.

- Don’t lift your neck up more than necessary. Doing so will cause your feet and hips to drop, slowing you down.
- Sight on something larger, *behind* your goal, if possible (house or other landmark).

4. Get used to accidental brushes with other swimmers’ bodies.

- Practice swimming in a tight pack before your race or event.

5. Feel the joy.

3 SUPER-GREAT Pool Drills to Prepare You for Open Water Swimming

1. Bubble-Bubble-Stretch” Drill

What it does: Helps coordinate the catch and arm timing; helps maintain the lead arm’s support while you breathe.

How to do it:

Breathe out thinking “bubble’ for two arm pulls, and think about stretching out the lead hand as you take a breath.

2. “Pull Buoy and Paddles” Drill:

What it does: Isolates the arms to improve hand entry and arm strength.

How to do it:

Using a pull buoy, swim without kicking, using your arms for propulsion and stretching through your core. Rotate your hips in line with the shoulders.

3. “Popov” Drill

What it does: Improves your sense of core balance and control, as well as helping you achieve the classic high elbow recovery. Also promotes upper back and shoulder flexibility.

How to do it:

Kick on side, slide thumb up to armpit, ensuring the elbow is high; slide down to hip, up to armpit and then spear the hand into the water.

Safety Guidelines for Open Water Swimmers



1. Never swim alone.

2. Check water conditions before entering. Is it safe for everyone to swim? Are there hazards not immediately visible, such as potential boat traffic? Is the water quality poor or dangerous?

3. Have a plan for emergencies. What is your plan should something happen to you or your buddy? Does someone else know where you're going? Will someone be watching from shore, ready to take action in the event you need assistance?

4. Understand currents: If it looks quick, it is. Be careful, exercise extra caution, and be smart about deciding whether to get in the water.

5. Understand that you are basically invisible. Boaters, jet-skiers, and even other swimmers often cannot see you in the water. It's your responsibility to "swim defensively".

6. Watch the weather. If the forecast calls for rain or thunderstorms, it's prudent to not swim. If you hear thunder before or during your swim, get to shore and a safe environment immediately.

7. Prepare for the "Afterdrop". You will feel colder 10-25 minutes after you get out than you did when you were swimming. Bring warm after-swimming clothes and something to stand on to prevent further heat loss in your feet.

Open Water Swim Gear



ESSENTIAL	OPTIONAL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Swimsuit • Goggles (darker lenses) • Swim cap (latex or silicone) • Swim Safety Device (above) • Large towel(s) • Waterproof neck-bag (for driver's license, credit card, cash, keys) • Warm clothes to change into, including thick socks, closed shoes, and hat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wetsuit • Neoprene cap • Neoprene booties • Silicone ear plugs (Macs are good) • Nose clip • Hot drink in thermos • Flip-flops • Swim or triathlon watch • Warm water to pour over your body • Blanket to wrap up in • Emergency blanket made of Mylar • Gloves or mittens • Water thermometer

Why Safety Paddlers?



Safety Paddlers:

- Protect you from boat traffic.
- Help you stay on course.
- Provide a place to rest if you get a cramp or get fatigued.
- Feed you if you are going a long distance.
- Assist you in an emergency.

How To Work Effectively With Your Safety Paddler

1. Ensure that your paddler is carrying a separate lifejacket (PFD) for you.
2. Clarify your route.
3. Decide how you will communicate together. Will you use hand signals? (Keep in mind that it can be very difficult to hear your paddler once you are swimming.)
4. Agree on how you want your kayaker to inform you if you veer off course. (*Yell? Wave paddle? Gently nudge you with their boat?*)
5. Understand that if you run into the boat, your paddler is attempting to tell you something. *Look up!*
6. If you must rest, hang onto the front of the kayak (NOT the side). Distribute your weight evenly so you don't tip the boat.
7. If you are wearing neoprene and get hot, remove the item and hand it to your paddler to keep.
8. **Always answer your paddler's questions.** They are trying to understand your state of mind. Are you getting too cold, too tired? Communicate with your paddler if you feel cold, weak, or scared. They are there to support you.

Potentially “Bothersome” Issues For Open Water Swimmers

Swimmers should know about what can “get in the way” of totally enjoying open water ventures, and take steps to deal effectively with them.

1. Steamed-up Goggles

Rinse your goggles in warm water after every use. If you see that they are cloudy, you may want to soak them in water and a little white vinegar. If goggles fog up when you swim, take the time to lick the inner lenses. Saliva works—but only temporarily.

2. Milfoil

“Because it is widely distributed and difficult to control, milfoil is considered to be the most problematic plant in Washington. The introduction of milfoil can drastically alter a water body's ecology.” Washington State Department of Ecology

Milfoil is that weed that “strokes your skin” in warmer waters. It won't hurt you at all. Caused by fertilizer and other nitrogen run-off into our lakes, milfoil starves native plants and fish of oxygen.

Simply swim through milfoil or over it...and please watch what you flush down your drain.

3. Seattle Municipal Code SMC 16.28.010

This code states that the “Swimmer must stay within 50 feet from shore, unless the swimmer is accompanied by a boat that stays within 25 feet of the swimmer.”

Swimmers who do not follow this code can be, and sometimes are, cited.

4. Cramp

Some swimmers claim they get cramps more easily in open water than the pool. Here are some tips to prevent it:

- Make sure you are plenty hydrated before swimming.
- Regularly stretch your feet and calves.
- Increase your intake of potassium, calcium and magnesium.

Wetsuit Basics



If you're starting out in open water swimming or triathlon and you haven't tried a wetsuit yet, you're in for a treat. While there is an initial adjustment period in which you'll get used to being cocooned in neoprene, you'll learn to appreciate the warmth of the suit and the excellent buoyancy for swimming.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

There are three things you must absolutely pay attention to when purchasing (or renting) a wetsuit:

1. Price (The price that fits your budget.)
2. Fit (It usually fits well in the store. Ask if you can rent to try it in the water.)
3. Buoyancy (A blessing and a curse. Find out why below.)
4. Bonus: Do you feel like a superhero with the wetsuit on? If yes, you'll swim faster.

The features that really matter and that you can investigate in the shop are:

- suit snugness, overall flexibility, and suppleness around the shoulders
- comfort of the neck seal so that it keeps water out without choking you
- strength of the zipper and the stitching/seals around it
- length of the wrist and ankle cuffs

3 mil is a good thickness. A thicker suit is much warmer, so if you feel a little anxious in the water, a thicker suit will work fine. However, women should steer away from suits that have too much buoyancy in the hips and legs, as this may negatively impact their stroke.

Avoid scuba, surfing, windsurfing or water skiing wetsuits for open water swimming. You may get chafing around the neck and shoulders if you do. (Using Body Glide can help.) Open water swim wetsuits are made from regular neoprene and the shoulders are not constructed, providing more flexibility.