Open Water Swimming Guidelines

BE SAFE IN OPEN WATER
Respect the water: Plan your day

• **Choose your swimming spot carefully:**
  - Where possible, use an open water swimming venue with safety crew and follow their guidance.
  - At the coast, choose a life guarded beach and swim between the red and yellow flags.
  - Don’t swim in reservoirs unless there are clearly organised swimming sessions.
  - Make sure you have permission to swim at your chosen spot.
  - Don’t swim near locks and weirs. If a sign says ‘no swimming’ and/or ‘danger’ - don’t swim there.
  - Don’t jump into pools unless you know there are no hazards beneath the water. Check first; pools change, what was safe last week could be dangerous this week.
  - Make sure you can get out at the same point at which you enter the water or somewhere near.
  - Try to have a buddy with you. If swimming alone make sure someone knows where you are going and when you are due back, so that they can call for help if you don’t return on time.
  - If you are caught in a rip, don’t try to swim against it. If you can, stand, wade, don’t swim. If you can’t stand, swim along the shore until you can get back to the beach where possible. Raise your hand and shout for help.
  - Avoid swans, especially during the nesting season.
  - Don’t swim in stagnant water.
  - Don’t mix water with alcohol. You are more likely to get into difficulty if you have drunk alcohol - don’t drink and swim.
  - Don’t get cut off by the tide: Check the times of high and low water before swimming in the sea or in estuarine waters.
  - Cover cuts and abrasions, however minor, with sticking plasters before entering the water. Don’t swim if you have deep cuts.

Let the experts show you the way

If you are not a confident outdoor swimmer or are new to open water, get some practice and advice from your local open water swimming venue.
Float to live

If you fall into water fight your instinct to swim until cold water shock passes; **relax and float on your back** until you can control your breathing.

When open water swimming, if you are tired roll on to your back to rest, hold on to something that floats, signal for help if needed.

When swimming in a river, float with your feet facing downstream and your bottom up – you can use your feet to kick off any hazards. Keep your bottom up to protect from contact with debris.