



**BE  
SAFE IN  
OPEN  
WATER**

**BE  
SAFE IN  
OPEN  
WATER**



## 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.



## 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.

## The right gear's a good idea

- When open water swimming, a bright hat (fluro green or fluro orange are the best) and a tow float will make sure you can be seen by other water users.
- Carry a floating dry bag containing a charged mobile in a waterproof case and a pealess whistle so you can attract attention if you get into difficulty.
- A wetsuit and clear goggles are a good idea to help you stay warm, be more buoyant and help you see where you are going underwater.
- Make sure you have something to wash your hands and face with once you come out of the water.
- On cold days make sure you have warm clothes, food and a warm drink after your swim.
- On hot days apply sunscreen and have a drink ready when you finish your swim. If wearing a wetsuit there is danger of overheating, so sit in the shallows and cool off before leaving the water.

Plan your day  
Get the right gear  
Know your limits  
Know how to get help  
Float to live

## Know your limits

- Enter the water slowly and allow time for your body to get used to the cold.
- Know how far you can swim in the conditions for the day. You may need to swim less or closer to the bank or shore. If the water is too rough for swimming, don't get in.
- The colder the water and air temperature, the quicker you will cool down; the colder it is the less time you should spend in the water.
- The wind can push you off course when open water swimming, keep an eye on your exit point and make sure you can return to it..

## Know how and when to get help

- If you get into difficulty at an organised open water swimming venue with safety cover then lie on your back and put one arm in the air and shout for help. If you have a whistle blow it to get attention.
- If you are swimming wearing a wetsuit, it will help you float; relax and wait for help.
- Carry a floating dry bag containing a charged mobile in a waterproof case, if you get into difficulty call 999 before you are too tired to get help.
- **In Inland waters:** In an emergency call 999 – ask for Fire & Rescue Service.
- **In Sea and coastal area:** In an emergency call 999 – ask for the Coastguard.

BE  
SAFE IN  
OPEN  
WATER



### 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 down stream and your bottom up – you can use your feet to kick off any hazards. Keep your bottom up to protect from contact with debris.