

# **Open water swimming tips from The Internet Swimming Coach**

## **Tips for the Start**

After your warm up you should be well prepared to go at your set CSS pace from the beginning. Keep your warm clothes on until you enter the holding pen – specially on colder days. You can also wear two caps to keep your head warm. If you are a competent swimmer find a good place to wet start in the water – out to the side so that you can swim without interference. Pick the side that you are more comfortable breathing to. This way you can watch the other swimmers during the start whilst breathing. You can use an egg-beater kick until race start if the water is deep. If you are a novice or beginner start closer towards the back and do not run into the water. Slowly walk in, pull your knees up high so that your feet initially clear the water towards the side of your body. Only porpoise in and start to swim once you are waist deep and have clear water. Listen carefully to the starters instructions. Make sure you know where your markers/first buoy are.

Tip: DO NOT use strong breaststroke kicks before you have cleared other swimmers. Kicking a swimmer in the chest can lead to death.

## **Tips for the Swim**

### **Heading for the first buoy**

Starting from the side – head out as straight as possible towards the first buoy. Swimming with so many other swimmers all with different abilities can be very challenging. Watch out for the flailing arms and legs of those around you. You might get kicked, hit, scratched and swam over. Do not get flustered. Wait for the guilty parties to swim past and then find open water and a good line. Time your stroke so that you can breathe without getting splashed in the face or your goggles being knocked off.

### **Rounding the first buoy**

What happens on rounding a buoy can never be predetermined. If you are a fast swimmer in a small pack you can do a narrow turn around the buoy. Just make sure that you do not get entangled in the anchoring ropes. Slower swimmers in bigger groups should rather take a wider swim around the buoy to avoid collisions with other swimmers. DO NOT stop and kick Breaststroke around the buoy. Getting caught in a thrashing mob of swimmers and being kicked in the chest is the quickest way of prematurely ending your race. Going a bit wider ensure that you can maintain your stroke and swim effectively around the buoy. Focus on the next landmark or buoy as this will be you next goal.

## **Getting the pace right**

After rounding the first buoy you should have more space to swim in. Now is the time to swim at your CSS pace and get into rhythm. You can stay in touch with the swimmers that are swimming at the same pace as you or you can swim your own race and enjoy it. Finally you are swimming to reach your goal. This is what you trained for!

## **Sighting**

Sight frequently enough to maintain your course. Use your predetermined landmarks. Remember sighting takes energy. The more you look, the more tired you get. The less you look, the less straight you may swim. It is a trade-off, but you need to find what is comfortable for you. If there is a swell, sight as you are rising towards the top of the swell.

## **Tips for the Finish**

On reaching the last turning buoy sight on your landmark on the shore. Now you can give it your all! As soon as you see the bottom clearly just below your finger tips, stand up slowly. You might feel a little dizzy as your blood pressure normalizes. Walk out carefully to avoid stones and holes. There is nothing worse than twisting your ankle on the way out. On the ramp up there might be officials helping you onto the timing mat. Make your way as quickly as possible over the timing line where your time for the swim will be recorded. An official will remove your number strip from around your wrist.

Well done on completing your swim!

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