

Don't Fear the Swim

Best Practices for a Safe, Enjoyable Open Water Swim

Below are the current "Best Practices" for a safe and enjoyable open water swim regardless of swim distance. These were compiled from the latest research into what can be done by the swimmer and race staff to ensure swimmer safety in triathlons.

1. USAT recommends visiting your doctor for heart health exam on before participating in triathlons.
2. Practice in open water as much as possible before the event. Pool swimming is fine for form and endurance but you are strongly encouraged to practice swimming in open water before participating in triathlon.
3. Practice the open water swim in your wetsuit and make sure it fits properly.
4. Arrive early to the venue and get wet. Practice/warm up for a few minutes to get the feel of the water, the wetsuit (if allowed) and your surroundings, including other swimmers nearby.
5. Choose a spot where you want to line up for the swim start. If you line up in front, you'd better be fast. In back and to the sides provides space to move for proceeding at your own comfortable pace and helps in avoiding contact.
6. Don't sprint at the start; take your time lining up behind other swimmers and getting to the first buoy. A major rule in marathon running is not to sprint off the line. It is the same in triathlon - don't sprint in the start. This will take all your energy and sends extra adrenaline firing through your body and heart when beginning the swim.
7. While the Turn buoys may look like a good place to rest, they are not. Since every swimmer must make those turns and pass those buoys, congestion around the Turn buoys is very common. Keep congestion down and your confidence up by taking the turn wide and accelerating through and past the turn or by drafting off another swimmer. Per USAT rules, it is acceptable to draft off other swimmers and it provides greater speed with less effort. Gauge a swimmer you can follow and stay about 2-3 feet behind and/or to the side of their feet and draft.
8. Take your time, stop and rest, hang onto a watercraft, catch your breath. Pursuant to USAT rules, you can rest by holding onto a craft for as long as you like - provided you don't proceed forward.
9. Careful planning has determined the course you will be swimming on. We have tried to keep you as close to shore as possible and we'll have Sighting buoys along the course which, unlike Turn buoys, can be hung onto as well as lifeguards in the water on rescue boards. Do not hesitate to hang onto a sighting buoy (not turn buoy), rescue board or watercraft for a rest. Take a few deep breaths, calm down and focus on the swim. You can do this.
10. Raise your hand if you need help - lifeguards and divers are located around the entire course. Raise your hand and they will come.
11. Above all else **"Keep Calm and Triathl - On"**