



OPEN WATER SWIMMING CLUB GUIDELINES

Swimming in open water is a great alternative to pool training and can provide a different type of training stimulus and experience. It is critically important to note, that swimming in open water presents a number of risks that do not exist in the pool. It is essential that a detailed safety plan be in place prior to undertaking any open water activity. Before deciding to take your swimmers off to the lake or other body of water for a workout there are considerations for the safety of everyone that must be examined.

In order for a club training group to be considered as an approved activity, a checklist should be completed (sample below). Should you answer “no” to any of the questions, you will need to work with Swim Nova Scotia to determine if open water training can be considered as an approved activity, with the risks mitigated. If risk mitigation is not possible then coach led open water training should not be undertaken.

1. **Coaches:** Does the coach have open water coaching experience? This may include coaching previous open water training sessions; direct participation in preparation of swimmers for open water sanctioned competition; participation in open water training webinar/coach professional development opportunities specific to open water training.
2. **Swimmers:** Are the swimmers over the age of 11, and do they have open water experience? This may include previous open water swimming/training, participation in open water sanctioned competition, participation in triathlons that included open water swimming, beach or surf lifeguard experience. If the swimmers have no open water experience, do you have a plan to introduce them to open water swimming in a safe, secure and progressive manner?
3. **Safety Person(s):** A safety person can be a coach participating in the training but cannot be a swimmer. The individual must understand the established safety protocols.
Is there a certified lifeguard present at the location you are completing the open water training, who will be observing the training?

YES – If yes, do you have a designated safety person, kayaking alongside or accompanying on the shoreline to observe the group and communicate with someone on the shoreline in case of emergency?

NO – If not, do you have a certified lifeguard, kayaking alongside or accompanying on the shoreline line?

4. Do you have an appropriate number of boats/accompanying safety persons for the number of swimmers you have training?
5. Have you completed a review of the body of water to be used for training, considering water temperature, safety considerations (water quality, visibility, access points, current and expected water conditions, man-made and natural obstacles)? Water Temperature below 20C, the use of a wetsuit is strongly recommended. Depending on the individual, a wetsuit may be desired below 25C. Swimming in water below 16C or over 31C is not recommended. The water temperature at the shoreline may be considerably warmer than out in the deeper, faster moving areas of the body of water.
6. Is the route the swimmers will be using visible at all times by the coach and/or safety person?
7. Has an emergency action plan (EAP) detailing the chain of command and what happens during and after any emergency, been developed?
8. Are all swimmers and coaches fully registered with Swim Nova Scotia?

Open Water Checklist

Coaches should ensure the following before Open Water Training Sessions

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| Experienced Coach overseeing training? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Swimmers are all 11 & Over with Open Water experience? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Do you have designated Safety personnel on shore? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Do you have Safety personnel in the water? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Do you have a water craft i.e. kayak, stand-up paddleboard, etc? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Are you familiar with your training site and emergency access? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Do you have someone on site with first-aid/NLS training? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Have you checked the weather forecast? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Do you have an Emergency Action Plan | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |