

Making Waves

**2025 USMS Relay
October 26, 2025
USMS Long Distance Committee**

Our Mission: Empower adults to Improve their Lives

Hosting Open Water Clinics to Build and Expand Local USMS
Clubs with Support from the LMSC

GOALS

To Promote USMS Swimming
To Promote Open Water Swimming
To Promote Club Growth
Team and Community Building
Involvement of LMSC

How the LMSC Can Contribute to Open Water Clinics:

5 Areas an LMSC can assist with holding an Open Water Clinic:

1. Venue

- a. Pool or Open Water
- b. Swimming Ability
- c. Size of the Clinic
- d. Volunteers
- e. 1 time or Series

2. Registration

- a. Keep listing of registrants. USMS and non-USMS

- b. Collect Money for Clinic Attendance
 - c. If non-USMS Member provide the paperwork to either join USMS or enroll in the USMS Guest Membership. Instructions on how to sign up as a Guest Member are on the USMS website.
3. Coaches and Volunteers
 - a. Assist in recruiting coaches and volunteers for the clinic.
 - b. Number needed determined by size and venue
4. Promotion
 - a. Social Media
 - b. Email: USMS Clubs other LMSC's
 - c. Contact Tri Groups
5. Financial – Considerations to determine cost
 - a. Cost of renting venue and any permits
 - b. Coaches
 - c. Safety Equipment/Lifeguards
 - d. Refreshments
 - e. Promotions

Reasons for Open Water Swimmers to Join USMS

- Improved Swimming Skills
- Friendships
- Coached Workouts
- Specific Training

USMS Website: Additional information can be found on USMS

Website: Open Water Central

Questions or Comments: Email - Long Distance Chairperson

Topics & Drills for Open Water Swimming Clinic

Additional information can be found on the USMS Website – Open Water Central

Overcoming swimmer anxiety

- Bubble, bubble breathe
- Practice swimming close to other swimmers

Focusing on the Exhale

- Bobs
- Bubble, bubble breathe

Swimming Straight

- 10 strokes with your eyes closed

Sighting

- Alligator eyes. 4x50 alligator sighting every 9 strokes, with & without fins

Comfortable Breathing to both sides

- 4x100 breathing just to left
- 4x100 breathing just to right
- 4x100 breathing bilaterally

Drafting

- In-line drafting. Practice in-line drafting with a partner, swapping who leads/drafts
- Arrow-head drafting. Practice with 2 friends arrow head drafting, swapping positions

Buoy Turn

- Corkscrew turn
- Breastroke

Stroke adaptations for the open water

- Swim with a tempo trainer to vary & increase stroke rate (75-100 SPM)
- Swim with a straighter arm recovery
- Punch the hands on the entry
- Swim with a head position forward-looking

Course & current navigation

- Start positioning
- River currents

Race strategy

- Pacing skills

Cold water acclimation

- Use of cold plunge

Start technique – Beach & water

- Dolphin dives
- Treading in deep water, start in middle of pool then open turn no touching wall

Exits & Transition

Wetsuits - selection, fitting, putting on, & removal

TOP TIPS FOR OPEN WATER SWIMMERS

Source :Swim Smooth Certified Coaches Manual

Many swimmers feel very intimidated by the open water, so here's some tips you can give to your swimmers to help overcome any worries they might have to go out there and have a great open water race.

TIP 1 Focus on your Exhale!

A good exhalation into the water is at the heart and soul of a great freestyle technique, you should be smoothly exhaling into the water between breathing to get rid of that CO₂ which will otherwise heighten the feeling of anxiety.

TIP 2 Become a Selfish Swimmer

You know the adage Control the Controllables? This is exactly what you need to focus on when you swim, things you can control such as your own movements, your breathing and the rhythm of your stroke. If you start thinking about things you can't control such as the waves, how deep the water is, other swimmers or some of the wildlife that may be in the water with you, then you will immediately feel much more anxious. So, to remain calm and relaxed become a 'selfish swimmer' and block out everything around you.

TIP 3 Pace Yourself

If you've swam in a distance race before you might have got 100m in and already felt exhausted. Sound familiar? The key to overcoming this is knowing how fast to start. On race day you're pumped with adrenaline but that will only carry you so far. Set off at the right pace and your training will get you to the end of the swim easily. Take it steady at the start and you'll get into a nice rhythm in no time.

TIP 4 Experiment With a Higher Head Position

Many swimmers have been told to look straight down at the bottom of the pool when they swim. Looking straight down is a distinct disadvantage in open water as it harms your sense of direction and makes it harder to see swimmers in front who you could draft off. Head position is a very individual thing for swimmers, so experiment with it in training.

TIP 5 Try Swimming With a Slightly Faster Rhythm

The best pool swimmers don't always make the best open water swimmers and one of the reasons for this is the disturbed nature of open water. A slow arm turnover leaves you open to being stalled by waves or chop in the gap between strokes and this makes this stroke style very inefficient in open water. Try lifting your stroke rate a little and swimming with a little more punch to your stroke.

TIP 6 Use an Open Water Swimming Wetsuit You'll be amazed how much quicker and more comfortably you'll swim in a proper wetsuit. Swimming wetsuits should be tight fitting to stop water sloshing around inside the suit but not so tight that they restrict your movements or your breathing. Practice in the wetsuit in the pool before your race!

TIP 7 Know the Swim Course and Swim Straight!

Making sure you know the layout of the swim course sounds obvious but it's amazing how many swimmers fail to check this out ahead of their race and then get very disorientated during the swim. Knowing where the buoys are positioned and where landmarks lie in relation to them will help you navigate effectively round the course using good sighting technique (see next tip).

TIP 8 Learn Good Sighting Technique

Sighting (looking forward to see where you are going) is a very important skill in open water swimming. A good sighting technique will enable you to maintain a streamlined body position and look where you're going without disrupting the natural rhythm of your stroke. Practice looking forward as your lead arm starts the catch and either pop your head back into its natural position or go to take a breath immediately after within the normal timing of your stroke. Sighting regularly will keep you going in a straight line, the last thing you want is to swim than you must!

TIP 9 Wear Your Goggles Under Your Swim Cap

The type of goggle you wear is a matter of personal preference but one tip you should follow for a race is to place your goggles underneath your swim cap. Then if someone knocks your goggles in the race they won't come off and you lose them.

TIP 10 Get Drafting

Drafting, or catching the pulling effect of someone's wake in the water, can save you up to 38% of your energy expenditure. It's perfectly legal (and considered ethical) to do so. You can also draft to the side of another swimmer, breathing in towards their chest level. This is a more advanced method of drafting and is more technical as you must be very close to the other swimmer and match your stroke timing to theirs.

TIP 11 Get Into Open Water to Practice Before You Race

Most of your training should be in the pool. But training in open water to practice the finer points of sighting, drafting, and swimming straight is a good idea leading up to a race. It'll also help you get comfortable and less anxious swimming in open water.

Tip 12 Enjoy it!

If you've done your training and followed these steps, what else have you got to worry about? The best races are ones where you don't put any pressure on yourself. Remember everyone's in the same lake or ocean, so the person next to you is probably equally as nervous. Go out there and give it your best shot, with a smile on your face!

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USMS Requirements for Insurance:

The following requirements must be in place to hold a Masters open water swim practice and to have that practice covered under the USMS insurance like regular pool practices:

- The “coach/leader/organizer” of the practice must be a current USMS member.
- All participants in the practice must be current USMS members.
- The coach/leader/organizer of the practice does NOT need to be a USMS certified coach.
- The coach/leader/organizer MUST have line of sight of each participant when they’re in the water. This can be done from standing on the shoreline, from a kayak or paddleboard, or from a motorized boat or jet ski. IMPORTANT NOTE: If you’re using a motorized boat with a standard type propeller, you MUST have a second person on the boat as a “swimmer spotter.”

Things to consider when planning a practice

- **Weather conditions:** Research the weather conditions leading up to the practice and inform all participants of the type of weather expected on practice day. Be prepared to cancel the practice if weather conditions are too severe.
- **Local environment and water conditions:** Know and understand the water conditions for the body of water being used. Understand the

currents if there are any, tides, how the wind affects the area, how deep/shallow it is, what the public boat traffic is like in the area during practice time, and if there are any underwater obstacles or dangers, marine wildlife, surface dangers such as trees down, waves, chop, visibility, etc

- **Water temperature:** Both air and water temperatures can affect the practice significantly. Have a water thermometer to check water temps if there isn't a reliable source to obtain accurate water temps for that area. Watch and know the water temp and communicate this to the group. If water temps are colder, wetsuits might be needed at least for some swimmers. If the water is warm, 85F-87F, a very short (3K or less) and easy swim should be conducted with nothing too strenuous. If above 87F, no practice should be conducted.
- **Fear:** Being fearful of swimming in the open water is a real thing for many swimmers. If they've only swam in a pool, going to the open water where they can't see the bottom, where there is potential marine life, where conditions can be rough, etc. can all lead to fear. The coach/leader/organizer needs to communicate with each swimmer and understand those that may be fearful but want to swim in the practice. If a coach/leader/organizer has a person like this, pair them up with someone who has experience in open water and can help to keep them on track and more relaxed. Keep the swim groups together. Don't let swimmers swim off the front of the pack and leave everyone else behind. Know your swimmers and be ready to organize the group(s) for safety, comfort, and fun.