

Open Water Training Habits

Slipstream · Digital Guide

Diving into open water swimming can be a thrilling way to enhance your performance and enjoy the natural environment. This guide offers practical habits to help you train safely and efficiently in open water, focusing on technique, session structure, and maintaining work capacity. Whether you're preparing for a race or just aiming to improve your swimming skills, these habits will support your training journey.

Establish a Routine

Consistency is key in open-water training. Establish a regular schedule that suits your lifestyle and stick to it. This could mean swimming two to three times a week, allowing your body to adapt to the unique conditions of open water.

Start with shorter sessions and gradually increase the duration as your stamina improves. This progressive loading helps your body adjust without overexertion.

Remember to listen to your body. If you feel fatigued, it might be time to take a step back and rest. Balance is crucial to avoid burnout and maintain enthusiasm for your training.

Focus on Technique

Refining your technique in open water is different from pool swimming due to the absence of lane markers and the presence of natural currents. Work on maintaining a steady and efficient stroke to help conserve energy.

Practice sighting regularly to keep your course straight. Lift your head slightly every few strokes to spot landmarks or buoys, ensuring you're on track without significantly disrupting your stroke rhythm.

Get comfortable with bilateral breathing. This helps balance your stroke and manage the different conditions you might encounter, such as waves or wind coming from one side.

Develop Work Capacity

Increase your work capacity by incorporating interval training into your sessions. Alternate between high-intensity bursts and steady-paced swimming to build endurance and speed.

Include both short sprints and longer, sustained efforts in your routine. This variety helps improve your stamina and prepares you for the varied demands of open-water environments.

Always cool down with a gentle swim to help your body recover and reduce muscle tension after intense sessions.

Enhance Mobility

Good mobility is essential for efficient swimming. Incorporate dynamic stretches into your warm-up routine to prepare your muscles and joints for the session ahead.

Focus on the shoulders, hips, and ankles, as these areas play a significant role in swimming. Simple exercises like arm circles and leg swings can help improve your range of motion.

Post-swim, engage in static stretching to maintain flexibility and aid recovery. This can help you perform better in future sessions and reduce the risk of stiffness.

Plan Your Sessions

Structure each session with a clear goal in mind, whether it's improving technique, building endurance, or testing speed. This focus can help keep your training purposeful and engaging.

Warm up thoroughly before hitting the water. A proper warm-up increases blood flow to your muscles and prepares your body for the physical demands of swimming.

Include a mix of drills, distance swims, and speed work in your sessions. This balance will help you become a more versatile and well-rounded swimmer.

Prioritize Rest and Recovery

Rest is an integral part of any training program. Schedule regular rest days to allow your body to recover and adapt to the demands of open-water swimming.

Consider incorporating active recovery activities, such as light stretching or yoga, to help maintain mobility and reduce stiffness.

If you're feeling particularly fatigued, a deload week with reduced intensity can help refresh your body and mind, preparing you for future training sessions.

Safety First

Always prioritize safety when swimming in open water. Swim with a buddy or inform someone about your training plans and expected return time.

Check weather conditions and water temperature before heading out. Being aware of your surroundings can help you make informed decisions about your training.

Use appropriate gear, such as a brightly colored swim cap and a swim buoy, to increase visibility and ensure you're easily spotted by others.

Open water swimming can be a rewarding way to enhance your performance, offering both physical and mental benefits. By incorporating these habits into your training routine, you can enjoy the experience while improving your skills. Remember, if you're ever unsure about your

technique or progression, seek guidance from a qualified coach or specialist. Stay safe, stay consistent, and enjoy the journey.

Before you start

This guide is general training and performance guidance for healthy adults. It is not medical advice and does not diagnose, treat or rehabilitate any injury, pain or condition. Do not use it if you are training through pain, are post-surgical, are pregnant or postpartum, or are managing a cardiac or blood-pressure condition — see a qualified coach, physiotherapist or physician first. Effort should be hard, not painful; stop if a movement hurts.

This guide is for general educational purposes only and is not medical, health, or professional advice. Consult a qualified professional for guidance specific to you.