



TRIATHLON
SCOTLAND



Safe Open Water Swimming Guide

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Safe Open Water Swimming

Triathlon Scotland is committed to promoting safe and well managed clubs and events in Scotland.

We recommend that members of clubs, the general public and members of Triathlon Scotland only take part in events that are permitted by Triathlon Scotland. In addition to this, individuals should only embark upon open water training sessions where a safety management plan is in place, where the risks for outdoor swimming have been appropriately assessed and managed.

The following document gives guidance to clubs considering organising open water training sessions.

Support for clubs

To ensure that club events are safe and well managed we are happy to provide the following support to clubs

- A dedicated staff team available to visit open water sites
- Guidance documents for organising open water sessions
- Guidance on the British Triathlon Rules for safety
- Guidance on water quality testing and safe parameters
- Swim safety plan guidance, templates and checking service
- A two day certified event organiser training course

Support for participants

To ensure that participants are prepared for taking part in permitted open water events we provide the following support

- An extensive club network throughout Scotland, all offering weekly coached pool based swim training sessions
- Coached open water swimming training days, in partnership with Scottish Swimming, throughout the season
- Level 2 coaching qualification which includes how to prepare participants for open water swimming (pool based and outdoors)
- Short distance events with small start waves throughout Scotland





Risk Reduction

Triathlon Scotland acknowledges there are risks to the general public when swimming in the open water without supervision.

To reduce the risk to health in all open water sessions, the following guidance should be followed by organising groups

Readiness for open water swimming

- Provide participants with the opportunity to increase their swimming strength and ability through weekly coached swim sessions.
- Provide participants with the opportunity to practice open water swimming skills and drills in a pool environment. Please refer to Level 2 and/or Level 2 + triathlon coach course material for examples
- Prepare a safety management plan and risk assessment before swimming commences. Templates are available.
- Encourage participants to first observe open water swimming sessions.
- Provide advance guidance for what the session will entail, and what equipment will be needed, such as a wetsuit, bright swim cap. Consider also encouraging additional protection (neoprene hats / gloves / booties) and providing flotation devices (fins / tow float) to aid ability in the water.

Venue considerations - organised commercial venues

- Choose venues such as Pinkston Watersports Centre (Glasgow), Knockburn Sports Loch (Banchory), Lochore Country Park (Fife), Foxlake Adventures (East Lothian) and Monikie Country Park, all of which host organised open water swim sessions. Contact the individual venues for details of their regular swim sessions.

Venue considerations - club organised sessions

- Appoint a session lead who will be responsible for the safety of the participants taking part in the session.
- Read through the open water swim safety management guide and complete all sections to create your plan.
- Return your safety management plan to your Triathlon Scotland regional officer for checking and to validate club insurance.
- For sea and coastal river swims, contact the coastguard for information about tides, rips and eddies. Choose venues with lifeguards and swim between the flags.
- Ensure that the water you wish to swim in is not privately owned or managed. If it is, ensure you have permission from the owner / manager before you consider swimming.
- If the session is to be coached, the session must be led by a Level 2, or Level 3 coach. Level 1 coaches can assist but cannot lead.

Further support and guidance

Our team of regional officers are available for support and guidance on open water events. Please contact them at any time if you have any questions.

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