

TOP 10 tips

For Women In An Open Water Race

1. Take Advantage of the Draft

Placing yourself within a pack of swimmers of similar experience and speed can prove beneficial to your swim performance and overall triathlon performance. There are actually two ways you can draft off another swimmer. One is swimming directly behind a lead swimmer and the other is swimming in the wake of a lead swimmer. And both can be very effective in an open water swim. If you were to swim directly behind a swimmer and close to his/her feet the result would be a "pulling" effect (similar to that created by an outboard motor on a speedboat). If you were to swim in the wake of another swimmer, ideally you would position yourself just off the shoulder of that swimmer. The benefit being, an added push provided by the swells or wake created by that lead swimmer. One note of caution. If you are swimming in a pack, things can get a little rough. There will be swinging arms and kicking feet and you might find yourself getting "wacked" by accident. Try to stay relaxed and let the momentum of the moving water push you along.

2. Wear Your Goggles Under Your Cap

You'll probably start the race with goggles, you'll probably want to finish the race with goggles too! (especially if you wear contacts). The start of an open water race is crowded and hectic. Someone to knock your goggles off your head intentionally - or unintentionally. If you put on your goggles before you put on your cap, they will stay put and not fall off.

3. No Jewelry

Although necklaces, anklets, and bracelets are fashionable, they are also very enticing for someone to grab on to and hold on to. And - depending on where you are swimming - if barracuda, sharks and other forms of carnivores are a concern, eliminate all shiny things, earrings included. Highly recommended.

4. No Crazy Swimwear

No itsy-bitsy yellow polka-dot bikinis. You have been warned!

5. Don't Shave Right Before The Race.

Razor burn and salt water. Yikes! Not good, don't do it.

6. Avoid Unwanted Chafing and Skin Burn

Chafing is the most easily overlooked Worst Case Scenario that can cause you the most grief. Chafing occurs in salt water, where areas of your body rub together and create sports hickies that can last for days, and sting throughout the rest of your event. Common chafing areas are the underarms, neck, and around swimsuit straps and openings. Chafing also occurs if you wear a wetsuit, mostly around the neck or armpits. Vaseline is an easy solution to chafing, and any serious open-water swimmer never packs a swim bag without it. A small amount rubbed around the susceptible areas is all you need to avoid chafing. Vaseline is not recommended if you use a wetsuit because the petroleum jelly can damage the rubber and cause it to deteriorate over time. There is a great wetsuit-friendly lubricant on the market that triathletes and surfers swear by, called BodyGlide. Found in most sporting goods stores and surf shops, BodyGlide works as well as Vaseline, without the greasy residue. It also comes in a convenient roll-on stick like anti-perspirant, with none of the mess that results from the manual application of Vaseline.

7. Relax Into Your Stroke

The ocean is more powerful than you are. Don't waste energy fighting it. Try to develop a rhythm with the current conditions. Don't worry about technique. Technique is something you practice in the pool. Your work in the pool will pay off in the ocean.

8. Pace Yourself

Frequently the men dash out of the start, using testosterone to their advantage by swimming as fast as they can. Then, somewhere near the middle of the race, they get tired and start to slow down. This is the perfect opportunity to reel them in and pass them one by one. The race hurts a lot less, and to be honest, it's fun passing men near the end of a race. Their egos may be a little crushed too. Plus, passing them gives you that extra mental boost to finish the race strong. Go for it!

9. Consider Growing Your Nails.

In an open water race, it is not uncommon for people - men especially - to swim over you in order to pass you. When you find yourself being plowed over by a huge guy, let him know they're swimming in your territory by giving them a little scratch! When they realize they can't just push you aside, they'll usually back off and chart their own course.

10. Carpe Diem!

Seize the day and the moment. Enjoy your surroundings. Embrace nature. Swimming in open water is very refreshing. You're doing something most people would never consider doing. Most people are afraid of it. Live in the moment and enjoy!

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