

OPEN WATER SKILLS 3

DRILLS FOR OPEN WATER

OBJECTIVES:

- To make sure you transfer good swim technique to open water
- To maximise swimming in a wetsuit
- To avoid bad habits from relying on a wetsuit

WHAT TO FOCUS ON:

Focus on slowing these drills down. **DO NOT** worry about performing these drills fast. Ideally you should relax into the drills thinking about the technical details of each, and think too about the symmetry of your stroke – achieving the same results both sides.

WHAT TO DO:

- 10min easy swim warm up
- Work through some or all of these drills as you feel comfortable. Aim to work on each drill for approximately 50m (half the distance between the marker buoys)
- 10m easy swim cool down

DRILL 1 – TORPEDO

This drill helps and strengthens rotation from the hips but is also a fantastic drill that in-turn will benefit your catch of the water.

- Arms stay by your side. Propel yourself just by kicking and rotate your body as though swimming normally – your shoulder should be exposed for the water on each rotation.
- Your wetsuit provides lots of buoyancy, so utilise this and make sure your hips and legs don't drop/sag.
- Breathe every 3 rotations to encourage bi-lateral breathing as this will help you achieve a balanced stroke.
- If you find this drill hard at first, use fins to help propel you more effectively.

DRILL 2 – KICK ONLY

Many swimmers kick too deeply, so their legs are far apart (like scissors). When this happens, your legs are acting like parachutes and slow you down, so the aim is to stay as streamlined as possible.

Also, we're mostly swimming for triathlons, so conserve energy with a light but efficient kick. You will benefit on the bike and run!

- Extend both arms in front of you. Focus on a light 'flicking' kick action.
- Visualise your legs are confined in a pipe that is no wider than your hips – your focus is to make sure that your feet don't break out of that pipe when you kick!

TIP:

Point your toes in slightly. Every 12 kicks or so, try and flick your big toes against each other as you kick. This helps maintain focus on doing the drill correctly.

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DRILL 3 – ADVANCED SINGLE ARM

- One arm stays straight by your side. The other swims normally but at a slow, relaxed pace – don't be tempted to rush the stroke, instead think about the different phases of your stroke and feel how each part works: the hand entry, the extension, the catch, the pull, the hand exit and recovery.
- Focus on good rotation by pointing the non-stroke arm (the one by your side) to the bottom of the lake as the stroke arm recovers and extends out of the water.
- Breathe AWAY from the stroke arm, and breathe on every stroke on this drill.

DRILL 4 – DOGGY PADDLE

Cold water dulls the senses and with a wetsuit on, it is easy to lose the sensation of movements in your arms. This can result in swimmers thrashing through the water and using a straight-arm catch and pull. For short distances this is not a problem and can be quite fast but over longer distances uses lots of energy and will be much less efficient. So this drill gets you to think about what is happening under water with your stroke.

This drill uses the underwater phases of your swim stroke, and the recovery is also underwater, so your arms don't come out of the water at all for this drill.

- Extend one arm forward with palm facing up. Turn the hand as your arm extends and start the catch phase using a slightly downward pointing hand position. Your body should be rotating and stretching into the extended position. Keep the elbow high and bend from the elbow to make the catch. Pull through trying to keep a high elbow, try not to cross your centre line as you pull i.e. keep your hand in-line or next to your wetsuit body.
- Focus on a long, smooth pull right through to your hip. Try and feel your thumb just rub against your wetsuit on your hip as you pull through.
- As you pull through, rotate and extend the other arm through the water with palm facing up and repeat the process on this side.

DRILL 5 – 6/3/6 DRILL

- Start by swimming on one side, arm extended out in front of you, the other by your side. Make sure your extended arm is straight but pointing down into the water slightly, drop the angle of your hand a little as well. Be careful not to let the elbow bend and drop.
- Kick to propel yourself for 6 beats then rotate from the hips and swim for 3 strokes. Think nice long and extended strokes for these 3 strokes.
- After 3 strokes you will be on the opposite side. Keep the arm extended, hold the other by your side and kick for 6 beats.
- Repeat for 50m.