



OPEN WATER SWIMMING SAFETY GUIDELINES – Coaching a training group

In light of COVID-19, Swimming Canada has received multiple inquiries regarding coach led open water training with their swimmers. In response to these inquiries, Swimming Canada has created this initial version of our safety guidelines in an accelerated fashion to address the immediate needs of the swimming community. A second version of the guidelines will be prepared in due course.

Open Water training should only be initiated once municipal, provincial and federal regulations permit the resumption of this type of activity. All the overarching health, medical and safety considerations must be adhered to.

Before deciding to take your swimmers off to the lake or other body of water for a workout there are considerations for the safety of everyone that must be examined. The [OPEN WATER SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS for INDIVIDUALS](#) examine many of the safety concerns of open water swimming and must be reviewed as part of the overall risk assessment. **Provincial sections may have additional requirements that clubs/coaches must meet.**

In order for a club training group to be considered as an approved (insured) activity, a checklist must be completed (sample below). Your provincial section may provide their own checklist to be completed rather than the one shared below. Should a club/coach answer “no” to any of the questions, the club will need to work with their provincial section to determine if open water training can be considered as an approved (insured) activity, with the risks mitigated. If risk mitigation is not possible then coach led open water training should not be undertaken.

1. Does the coach have experience coaching swimmers who have attended any sanctioned provincial open water events, Provincial open water championship, Canadian Junior open water championship, or OW event at higher level, and has the coach attended the open water competition with the swimmers and actively participated in their preparation?
2. Are the swimmers over the age of 11, and have they competed in a sanctioned open water event in their province, a provincial open water championship, Canadian Junior Championship OW event, or event at higher level?
3. Do you have a designated and experienced NLS certified safety person, kayaking alongside or accompanying on the shoreline line? And do you have the necessary # of boats/accompanying safety persons for the # of swimmers you have training, maintaining a 1:10 ratio (safety person to swimmers)? A safety person is NOT a swimmer or coach participating in the training. The individual is designated solely as the safety person for the open water training activity.
4. Have you completed a review of the body of water to be used for training, considering water temperature, safety considerations (water quality, visibility, access points, current and expected water conditions, man-made and natural obstacles)?
5. Is the route the swimmers will be using visible at all times by the coach and/or safety person?
6. Has an emergency action plan (EAP) detailing the chain of command and what happens during and after any emergency, been developed?
7. Have all swimmers and/or parents signed the Acknowledgement and Assumption of Risks form?
8. Has your club board reviewed the checklist, the emergency action plan, and confirmed all items have been completed satisfactorily by signing the checklist and retaining on file? Has your club met any additional provincial section requirements?



SAMPLE OPEN WATER TRAINING CHECKLIST to be kept on file by Club with all waivers.

Question		YES	NOTES
1	Coach Experience – attendance at OW provincial and/or Canadian Juniors or above		
2	Swimmer Experience – min 11 years old, participation in OW event at provincial level and/or Canadian Juniors or above		
3	Safety Person – NLS certified and experienced kayaker on water or on shoreline, ration 1:10 to # of swimmers		
4	Site Review – completed with all specifics documented		
5	Route – viewable with safety person		
6	Emergency Action Plan – completed and documented		
7	Acknowledgement and Assumption of Risks form – for all participants completed and on file		
8	Board Review – completed, documented and on file, provincial requirements met		

Signed by:

Club President:

Date:

Head Coach:

Date: