



ANXIOUS SWIMMER LESSON PLAN

Lesson #1

By a show of Hands:

How many of you are first time ATLS swimmers?

How many of you are first time to Gyro?

How many of you have never done 2000m swimming in the same day?

Who here has done lots of pool swimming, but not so much open water swimming?

How many of you been doing some regular swimming in the pool?

Who is secretly also training for a triathlon?

What makes you most anxious about swimming in open water? (Take as many responses as possible depending on group size.)

Most of this is about BASICS! Our weekly lessons have been designed to go through **a sequence of confidence building steps**, to **increase your exposure to distance** swimming over 6 weeks. We are not going to rush any of you. We will start with 10-15 minutes on land, to explain things, and we encourage you to ask questions and to review what we discussed in the previous weeks.

Can you tell us what you think is different about open water swimming, compared to pool swimming?

Deep water—can't stand; dark water—no lines; cold water; things *in* the water; things *on* the water; waves, currents and wind; water taste is different; you may collide with other swimmers; no nearby lane rope or pool edge or lifeguard; can't easily swim in a straight line (sighting is needed); distances look longer; more confidence required in your fitness and your abilities; not relaxed—panic attack; swimming in a wetsuit.

All anxieties relate to significant uncertainties, a lack of control and feeling overwhelmed... not adequately having all of the contingencies covered like: The first

time you drove a car, or hiked way out in the wilderness, or as a child, the first time away from your parents: Any other concerns?

Lesson 1 (Equipment, Acclimatizing, The Pop-up Drill, Recovery position)

1) Your Swim Equipment (Putting on a wetsuit, goggles and cap and personal swim buoy)

4 benefits to a wetsuit: Thermal protection; floatation; core stability/better body position; and faster swim times sitting higher in the water.

a. **Wetsuit** Making sure your wetsuit fits you—good size, comfortable around the shoulders, chest and neck. Some tightness is expected. Give your shoulders as much play as possible: Put it on properly, make sure it is right up into the crotch to allow maximal redundancy for your trunk. Demo

b. **Goggles** You need to make sure your goggles fit your face, they have a good seal and they don't leak—Goggles are a personal item based on your face shape-find one that works for you and keeping buying the same one as a replacement.... newer ones are best, especially for races and long swims. Seal them with a bit of moisture. Demo the split strap, suction fit. A couple of differences for open water: consider tinting, reflective or even polarized goggles to reduce the effect of glare. Some prefer a larger goggle to increase peripheral vision and sighting needs.

c. **Swim Cap** —it keeps your head warm...especially a silicone cap, and especially doubled up in cold water. It also makes you more streamline in the water especially if you have long hair. Your cap should be put on properly, and should not be too tight. Some put goggle straps under their caps. Some even consider a neoprene cap if you swim in cold water regularly.

d. **Person Swim Buoy-** This is a quick introduction to one of the latest open water technologies. This is something you tow behind you as you swim. It makes you more visible to people monitoring you, as well as to watercraft. It can also provide you extra floatation and something to hang on to if you need a break—they can easily hold up a 250 lb man. And there are more advanced ones that you can carry stuff in for point to point swims.

2) Acclimatizing to the water

a. Walk in (don't dive), get your hands and feet wet---that will tell you how much adjustment you will need. When the water is under 15°C, the water may feel painful, but will ease with time.

b. Get some water in your wetsuit to ease the shock of the cooler water. A wet suit will hold the water in, and you wind up warming it up.

c. Splash water on your face and neck—reduce the paradox of the cold shock and mammalian diving reflex.

d. Do a few strokes, and stop. Does the wetsuit feel comfortable, and not restrictive anywhere? Are you breathing harder than expected? Is your heart pounding more as well, or faster than expected? Notice any brain freeze? Notice the added challenge of finding the right breathing pattern. This will depend on how cold the water is. Things need to be in control before restarting. Easing in to your swim allows you to maintain breath control easier.

3) Pop up drill: Get comfortable with the floatation ability of the wetsuit (Try the “sit on the bottom drill”—what happens? Your net buoyancy pushes you upward. The water is not out to get you or swallow you up, but rather wants to spit you out!) Remember that scuba divers in wetsuits have to wear weights to keep them from floating!

4) Get comfortable with a rest/recovery position (a happy, easy place, like a walk in the park) or an alternative stroke—floating on your back, treading water, side stroke, breast stroke (50 m of alternate swimming—the key is to reclaim the control of your breathing if you have lost it, and then to restart your stroke)

Try some sustained swimming for 50-200m...or more if you can, taking recovery rests if needed. If you cannot sustain this, try to keep moving, without putting your feet down, and then get back into a stroke.