



Swim Across America - San Francisco Bay

Open Water Swimming and Training Tips

This document outlines open-water swimming recommendations, tips, and general training plan for swimmers participating in the September 28, 2019, Swim Across America - San Francisco Bay event. This is in conjunction with the Swimmer Safety Document, which all swimmers must review prior to participating in the swim.

Swim Across America makes safety the most important component of our events. All participants are required to follow specific procedures, as every precaution is taken to ensure swimmer safety and compliance is necessary. Our Safety Directors put forth immense efforts to ensure adequate safety and support on the Bay, including coordinating with city and government entities, First Responders, and numerous volunteers.

Jumping into the Bay for Swim Across America San Francisco **should not be the first time you swim in the bay or in open water conditions.** It is required that swimmers who are not experienced in the bay or open water conditions take an open-water training course as part of their training for Swim Across America. Training opportunities may be found here: www.swimacrossamerica.org/sanfrancisco.

Swimmers are expected to be competent and proficient swimmers, with the ability to tolerate and swim in very cold open-water conditions. (Expected water temperature in the Bay late September is 58-61 degrees Fahrenheit.) All swimmers are required to wear wetsuits, unless they are given specific permission from the Event and Safety Director. Please see the Swim Across America Water Temperature and Wetsuit Policy [here](#).

Training Guide for Open Water Bay Swim

There are two distances for the swim. 1.75 mile and .75 mile.
Below are general guidelines for training for each of these swims.

1.75 Mile Distance

In order to be prepared for the 1.75 mile distance, you will want to be able to swim 1,650 yards comfortably in a pool, in about 40 minutes. We recommend ensuring you can do at least 2,500 yards without stopping.

Open water conditions are variable and ever-changing. It is imperative that prior to event day, you have several (ie. between 3 and 5) open-water training sessions. First, get your feet wet by experiencing similar expected water temperatures, the feel of your wetsuit, and establish a safety, or rest, stroke. (ie. Float on back, tread water, Sidestroke or Breaststroke.) Learn how to sight for directional purposes. You should work up to training sessions of at least 45 minutes long.

The wetsuit you plan to use during the event should be used at least one-time prior to ensure it fits properly and you are comfortable swimming in it.

.75 Mile Distance

In order to be prepared for the .75 mile distance, you will need to be able to swim 1,650 yards comfortably in a pool, in under 50 minutes. We recommend ensuring you can do at least 1,200 yards without stopping.

Open water conditions are variable and ever-changing. It is imperative that prior to event day, you have several (ie. between 3 and 5) open-water training sessions. First, get your feet wet by experiencing similar expected water temperatures, the feel of your wetsuit, and establish a safety, or rest, stroke. (ie. Float on back, tread water, Sidestroke or Breaststroke.) Learn how to sight for directional purposes. You should work up to training sessions of at least 30 minutes long.

The wetsuit you plan to use during the event should be used at least one-time prior to ensure it fits properly and you are comfortable swimming in it.

Tips for Open Water Swimming

- Freestyle (or front crawl) is the most efficient stroke for most people to use in open water.
 - Ensure that you are comfortable treading water. While you will likely keep moving for most of the swim, there may be moments in which you need to take a rest. Use pool time to get used to treading water comfortably in the deep end.
 - It is also recommended you learn and are comfortable with a secondary stroke, such as breaststroke or sidestroke.
- Sighting is key to open water swimming. Sighting is the movement of looking ahead during your swim to find key sighting points along the course. Swimmers may also be given additional directions from support craft.
- Repositioning:
 - Being re-positioned is a normal part of open water swimming, even the most experienced open water swimmers get re-positioned from time to time. If a support craft of any kind indicates that you need to be repositioned, please comply and follow their directions without hesitation.
 - Swim Across America [Course Compliance and Procedures](#).

Wetsuit Tips

SAA strongly encourages swimmers to choose an open water swimming / triathlon specific wetsuit over a general water sports wetsuit.

How do I choose a wetsuit that's suitable for swimming?

Open water swimming / triathlon wetsuits are specifically designed for swimming. General water sports wetsuits are mainly designed for warmth and protection from elements that are associated with specific activities in the open water environment such as surfing and scuba diving.

Open water swimming / triathlon wetsuits are single-backed neoprene, offering a flexible, smooth exterior surface, resulting in decreased water resistance and drag. Variances in the thickness of the suit's neoprene can benefit a swimmer's range of motion and buoyancy.

General water sports (ie. Scuba) wetsuits are "double backed neoprene," designed mainly for warmth and protection from environmental factors, in addition to equipment, such as a scuba tank. Typically, these types of wetsuits are not suitable for open water swimming as they offer less flexibility, range of motion, and buoyancy, resulting in a less efficient option for swimming vs. open water swimming / triathlon wetsuits.

How do I choose a wetsuit that fits properly?

It is very important for a wetsuit to fit properly, thus crucial to get fitted correctly by a professional. A wetsuit that is too tight may cause anxiety, difficulty breathing, or restricted movement. While a wetsuit may feel good on land, it might end up being too big when you enter the water. While it is expected to have a small layer of water in between the wetsuit material and body with a suit that fits correctly, a wetsuit that is too big or loose may take on excess water, resulting in the difficulty of carrying that with you throughout the duration of the swim.

Tips you should know

- Practice swimming in open water wearing your wetsuit before event day. (Remember to always swim with a buddy!)
- Apply a product like BodyGlide to areas that are prone to chafing, such as the neck line, under the armpits, over the clavicles, and for men on the chin line.
- How to put on a wetsuit from our partner, Orca:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ts1xs0OaUSc>