



Open Water Swimming Rules (last updated April 2026)

General Principles

Safety on the water is paramount.

Please ensure you have fully disclosed in your safety profile application, any swim-sensitive medical conditions; history of seizures, heart problems, high blood pressure, pregnancy and respiratory problems including asthma.

Whilst Swim England recognise these medical conditions as a potential risk in a swimming environment according, we can minimise risk by supporting you in following the below guidelines. You will also be provided with a coloured wristband that will alert our staff to stay vigilant to your presence in the water in case you should require assistance.

If you have a history of any of the above, please check with your doctor first before swimming with us. This will be checked on your registration and collection of wristband.

Do not swim if you feel unwell, have a temperature and/ or a persistent or paroxysmal cough.

Cover all cuts and abrasions with sticking plaster. You should not consider swimming if you have deep cuts or 'road rash' (grazing from falling off a bike at speed or similar event).

Make sure you have well-fitting goggles and a bright swim hat to aid visibility in the water.

Ensure your swim kit/ wetsuit is fit for purpose and the right size. Whilst a great buoyancy aid, an ill-fitting wetsuit can cause undue stress and panic if it is too tight and restricts air or too big and weighed down with water.

Make sure you are well fuelled and hydrated before your swim but allow a couple of hours before you enter the water if you've had a bigger meal.

Do not dive. Water depth is an unknown and will fluctuate even in bodies of water swimmers are familiar with. There may be objects under the water that cannot be seen from the surface that may cause spinal injury if dived on to.

Entry should be steady and measure. Rushed entry to the water can cause Sudden Cardiac Death (SCD). This is a recognised as a leading cause of swimming-related fatalities by the World Health Organisation.



Chelmarsh Sailing Club

Acclimatise to the water temperature before starting a swim. Rushed entry can bring on the onset of cold-water-shock through the actions of driving warm blood to power limb movement, sending cold blood from those extremities to the vital organs.

Do not stay in the water longer than your body is used to. Stay especially vigilant in water under 15 degrees the temperature which we recommend all swimmers wear a wetsuit if they are not cold-water acclimatised.

Your core body temperature is 37 degrees. It takes only a drop of two degrees for hypothermia to set in. As your body continues to lose heat when you leave water colder than your body temperature it is important to ensure you wrap up warm to prevent it dropping below safe levels.

Make sure you have warm clothes for after your swim, even on a warm day as the continued drop in body temperature and wind-chill will have an effect.

Try to ingest a minimum amount of water whilst swimming and stay hydrated with fresh water before and after your swim to ensure you are replacing any fluids lost through exercise.

Do not swim too close to the bank to reduce risk of bacteria and infection. When the water is above 20 degrees, avoid weedy patches of water to reduce the risk of cercarial dermatitis aka 'duck mites' (from snail larvae).

If you cut/ break the skin during your swim or on exiting the water, wash immediately with fresh water and clean with an antibacterial wipe before applying a sterile dressing such as a plaster. Alert staff for first-aid access and so they can record in the accident log-book. Monitor and seek medical attention if any bleeding, discolouration, redness, sensitivity or pain persists.

Wash hands in fresh warm water for at least 20 seconds before eating after you have swum and use antibacterial handwash where possible.

Take a full shower at the earliest opportunity Do not exceed your personal capabilities on the day of your swim; 'if in doubt, don't go out'!

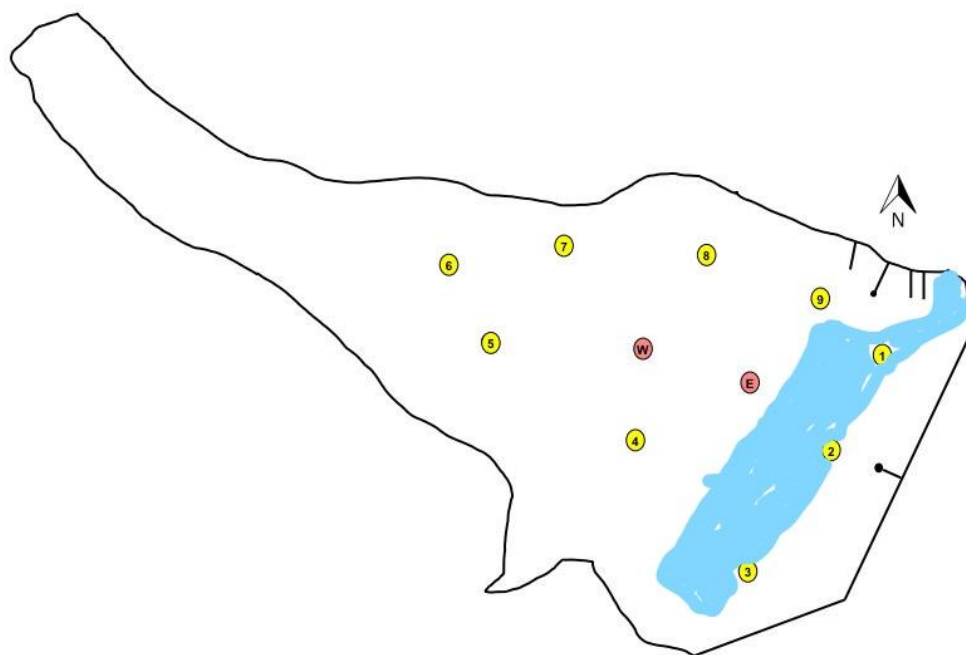
If you feel unwell after a swim, seek medical attention immediately informing them that you have taken part in open water swimming. Follow up by alerting the venue at your earliest opportunity.



Rules

1. Safety

- a. Personal floatation devices (PFDs) must be worn at all times by anyone on the pontoons.
- b. No swimming may take place unless the following provisions are complied with:
 - i. every swimming session is to be supervised by a Swim Manager and all swimmers must comply with any directions made by the Swim Manager;
 - ii. all swimmers must keep within the permissible swim area shown coloured blue on the below plan and any additional area as has been specified by the Swim Manager;
 - iii. no swimming is to take place:
 - Within 5 metres of the inlet and outlet towers of the reservoir;
 - Outside of the permissible swim area referred to in R1(b)(ii) above;
 - When powered craft are operating on the reservoir;
 - Without paddleboard safety cover in place in accordance with the provisions of the current standard operating procedures adopted by the club for swimming.
 - iv. Use of the water is prohibited if a Met Office weather warning of any colour is in place for the reservoir, and in the event of a thunderstorm
 - v. all swimmers are to wear highly visible swim caps and to carry suitable tow floats when in the water;
 - vi. anyone younger than 17 must have a parent or guardian present for the duration of their swim;
 - vii. entry to and exit from the reservoir are to be via the beach area using in and out lanes as indicated by the Swim Manager



swim area shown coloured blue



2. NOWCA (National Open Water Coaching Association)

- a. All swimming at the club will be conducted under NOWCA rules;
- b. All swimmers must be pre-registered with NOWCA and wear electronic arm bands while swimming;
- c. NOWCA members who are not existing club members are granted temporary club membership during their swim provided that they have complied with the booking and safety requirements; as such, they may use the club house (including changing rooms and galley) and car park;
- d. Any swimmer who has not provided suitable evidence of identification when collecting their wristband will not be permitted to swim.