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# OPEN WATER SWIMMING

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## Marion Marlins Masters' Swimming Club



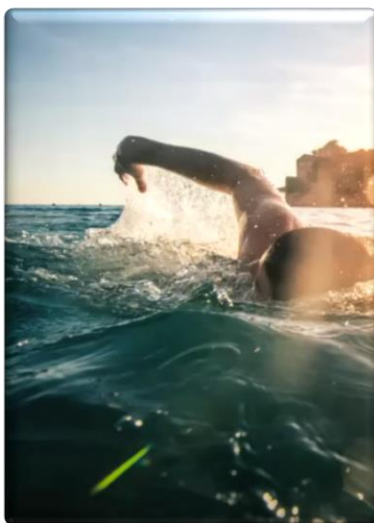
Some of our Marion Marlin members who frequently enjoy sea swims for fun and in competition.

I'm one of the coaches for Marion Marlins and last year completed an open water swim coaching program with the World Open Water Swimming Association, run by renowned Australian ocean swimmer, Shelley Taylor Smith.



Swimming in open water is one of the fastest growing sports in the world, be it for enjoyment, health (mental and physical), triathlons or competitive open water swims. Currently, there are over 4000 events across 89 countries (60% of these in the ocean), with one new event added somewhere in the world every day – average age is 36 years, with 36% female, although that percentage is growing.

## Why open water?



Isn't it just like swimming in a pool, but in sea water? Yes and no. It does require swimming, but in every other way, it is different. For starters, there is no black line: you navigate by what you see above the water, not below. And conditions are unpredictable: no ocean swim is ever the same. You are part of the elements, and how you work with and adapt to these elements, determines your success and enjoyment in the open water.

**Every ocean swim is different:**

Expect the unexpected

Variables include weather, temperature (water and air), tides and currents, wind, waves, creatures (eg. stingrays), other water users (eg. paddlers, boats) and pollution. Open water training helps us anticipate possible conditions, work out how to adjust to those conditions, and enjoy the experience, safely.

## Open water training & clinics

During summer, the Club's pool training includes working on fitness, skills and tactics to help swimmers perform at their best in the open water.

We also run clinics at Brighton Beach to start or progress your confidence in the open water. We help you better understand beach conditions (currents, waves and tides), and work on skills like how to start, how to sight, getting around buoys, swimming with confidence and finishing well. We recognise common fears and give you the tools you need to know the risks, minimise them and ensure your safety while embracing the joys of open water swimming.

Specific skills we learn to help build our open water speed, confidence and endurance are:

- Breathing both sides, to adapt to different courses
- Sighting / navigation, to swim the shortest distance
- Learning how to work with waves/conditions to conserve energy
- Practicing starts, turns around buoys, drafting off competitors and finishing fast
- Building confidence and mental toughness when challenges arise.

## Taming our fears

It's important to keep in mind that our biggest fears (sharks, stingers) are not the biggest risks (hypothermia, medical episode, rips).

Safety is always paramount. We take a variety of precautions to minimise risks:

- Always swim with a buddy
- Don't go too deep or too shallow
- Be aware of weather and how it might change
- Be aware of critters (when they're present and how you'll respond)
- Follow instructions from support crew/coach
- If you don't feel right, let someone know
- If you get out/leave beach, let someone know
- Equipment – good goggles, wetsuit?
- Bright cap so we can see you.

Remember, take all precautions, and if it doesn't feel safe, get out. **Never compromise on safety.**

## SA's Open Water Swim Season

During the summer swim season from December to March, Masters' clubs in South Australia run a series of open water swims along our coastline over a range of distances, from 800m up to 5km or even 10km. A typical season:

**January** - State Championships at Somerton; Jetty to Jetty, Grange to Henley

**February** - Brighton Jetty Classic, run by Channel 7; Henley Beach

**March** – Port Elliot and Noarlunga.

**Many Marion members enjoy ocean swimming all year round, with the hardier souls even swimming without wetsuits during winter. Others have tackled famous long swims like the Rottnest Channel crossing (20km) as a solo, duo or quad, or arranged holidays around ocean swims in Queensland, Fiji or the Whitsundays. The possibilities are endless. Ask other swimmers or one of our coaches if you'd like to have a go!**

### Could you be an open water swimmer?

*Open water swimming appeals to people who are hard-working, like longer distances, are up for a challenge and are free-spirited. They may not be the fastest, but they are tough. And enjoy a coffee after!*

*Ocean swimming is free, easily accessible, immerses you in nature. and... no one asks your best time!*

