



ANXIOUS SWIMMER LESSON PLANS

Lesson #4

Anyone out for the first time today? How many of you got into the lake in this last week?

A quick review—in the first session, we practiced a recovery position, the popup drill; In week 2 we talked about 4 important nuances of breathing and practiced related techniques; Last week we regrouped and reviewed, and some managed to try some sighting techniques, trying to integrate that with breathing.

Today we are going to do teach you about a couple of things before you all have an opportunity to do some distance, and some deeper water exposure.

- 1) **Goggle failure**
- 2) **Swimming in a crowd/contact swimming, and drafting**
- 3) **If possible: Swimming in chop and waves**
- 4) **Increasing distance**
- 5) **Swimming in deep water.**

Lets get in the water, acclimatize, and get a few strokes in.

Dealing with leaking or fogged up goggles.

Remember to have a new pair of goggles set aside for the event—newer goggles are less likely to fog up. Alternately, using an anti-fog product may work as well, but practice this first. Some say spit works the best!

Not being able to see well while swimming is not only unhelpful to swim straight, but can be anxiety provoking. So what do you do if your goggles leak, affecting vision?

Drill #1: the Open Water Fix of Leaky Goggles

Lift your goggles off your face an put them back... badly. Now swim a few strokes, and realize that it is irritating and hard to see with the goggles like this, roll onto your back while kicking lightly, lift the goggles off your face to clear the water out of them and seal them with light pressure securely over your eyes. Then adjust the strap behind your head if necessary.

Drill #2: Swim without goggles!

Occasionally, you may lose your goggles in open water, or the strap may break, or your cap peels off and your goggles go with it. Can you swim without goggles? Of course you can, and practicing it is just a simple way to reduce your anxiety if this should happen. Remember goggles were illegal in the Olympics until 1976! Surfers never wear goggles, and some of them are in the water all day. We have people do the ATLS every year “au naturale”, commando style--without goggles on.

Put your goggles around your neck, and swim 25-50 meters without your goggles on.

2) Swimming in a crowd

Unlike pool swimming, open water swims have mass starts, sometimes in the thousands, raising the anxiety of swimmers who are not used to this. Although contact is inevitable, there are ways to minimize this, such as lining up off to one side, or just hanging back. This is called “self-seeding”—knowing where to place yourself in the beginning of a mass start.

Drill #3: Getting used to swimming in a crowd.

Explain the whole drill ahead of time, stating that “we are all friends out here!”, and we will be reversing the process so everyone gets the same experience. Number the group alternating ones and twos, then have all the ones line up in a space about 10 m wide at the 0m buoy, and the twos line up just a meter or so behind them. Ask the ones to start swimming very slowly, methodically, toward the 50 m buoy. As soon as they have started, have the twos start right behind them, and ask them to try to swim through the first group. There will be contact, but hopefully everyone can stay on top of their breathing. If you need to, you can stand up anytime.

One way to protect your breathing somewhat is to swim “catch-up” style whenever in tight quarters. This uses your arms to protect your head and therefore, your breathing a little better.

Jennifer: Swimmers can assert and establish a zone around them without hurting another swimmer.

3) Sighting and breathing in chop, waves, and swells (This lesson is dependent on suitable conditions) With mild chop, or when needing to see over a swimmer in front of you, you may need to lift your head slightly higher out of the water to find your target, or consider looking for a more distant landmark that is in line with your swim goal, such as a tree or building on land, or a mountain peak.

Whenever possible, sight and breathe at the top of a wave. This is where **breathing flexibility becomes critically important**—you cannot maintain a regimented stroke in these conditions. Sighting gets harder in wavy water, or when there are swells. You have to learn to feel if you are in a trough or on the crest of a wave or swell, and time your sighting to maximize your ability to see what you need to see. Otherwise you will only see water.

Determine if the waves are with you, against you, or aside of you. You may need to consider breathing on just one side; you may need to ride (body surf) waves that are following you (increasing your arm cadence with each wave), and dive through waves that you are swimming into head on.

4) More distance practice

Time to use your sighting and breathing techniques to the test, buoy by buoy for the 800m loop. See if you can read each buoy's meter measure as you swim by it, and without breaking your swim rhythm.

5) Swimming in deeper water.

Instead of following the metered buoys, swim farther out toward, and just inside, the "guard buoys" with the blue collars on them. The water is deeper there, and it is harder to see the bottom. Doing a wider loop like this will give you some extra distance and help get you comfortable in water where you can't see bottom.

Reminder: **Practice on your own this week!**