

The Handbook of the Okanagan Masters Swim Club



Intro

Welcome to the Okanagan Masters Swim Club!

This handbook is a collection of information that you, the prospective member / new member / renewing member can use to get an idea of what Okanagan Masters Swim Club is all about.

The OMSC family would like to ensure that joining with OMSC will prove to be one the best decisions you have ever taken!

As a member of the club there are things you should know that can help you become one of the team, an active participant in Masters swimming, and to reach your full potential. Every swim club has its own style and circumstances, so even if you are a seasoned Masters swimmer, there are still things to learn about our set-up, how we try to keep it interesting and entertaining, and the things we like to do.

We also want to make it easier for you to understand how we fit into the Okanagan aquatic scene, and for you to get the highest level of satisfaction and benefit from your association with OMSC.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact any member of the board. We live by the Masters swimming mantra “*Fun, Fitness, Friendship and Participation*” and promise to help make your transition from new member to swimming colleague and friend, as enjoyable as possible.

You can reach any member of the board at any time. Our contact information is posted our website at www.okmasters.com under ‘Contact Us’

Thanks for choosing OMSC as your new swimming home!

Yours in swimming

OMSC Board

president@okmasters.com

www.okmasters.com

President – Greg Harris
Vice-President – France Burke
Secretary – Liz Haid
Treasurer – Brent Hobbs
Registrar – Sandra Ballan-Brown

Communications – Phred Martin
Coach Liaison – Carol Taylor
At Large – Pam Johnson
At Large - [Christy Woodward](#)

About Us

We offer one of the most attractive Masters programs available.

Membership varies from season to season and year to year. Some swimmers train all year round, others take time off during Summer, and some head for a warmer climate during our winter. We plan our swim program and lane requests to match member requirements as closely as possible.

OMSC is the largest year-round tenant club at our home pool, the H₂O Adventure & Fitness Centre, and has been since it first opened in April 2009. Membership includes all ages from 18 and above.

Total number of active swimmers	95-120 depending on the season
Number of coaches	5
Age range of membership	18-93
Average member age	47
Gender profile of membership	typically 60% female, 40% male

OMSC takes a commitment for pool usage months ahead of the start of the season, based on historical and expected future usage patterns and lane availability, and lane allocations must be assigned by the operator equitably considering all users of the pool. Starting in September 2014, OMSC entered a partnership with the YMCA of Okanagan, the operator of the H₂O Adventure & Fitness Centre.

Okanagan Masters Swim Club registered as a Society with the BC Registrar of Companies on December 30, 2004 – reg. number S48521. The club's home pool from 2004 to 2009 was the Athans facility in Rutland (now known as the "Rutland Family Y"). In April 2009, the H₂O Adventure & Fitness Centre opened its doors and OMSC moved across to become its first adult swim club tenant.

OMSC is managed and funded by membership fees. We occasionally raise funds through competitive swim meets, and other related activities, and manage the affairs of the club with a board of nine members plus other volunteers.

Social

Masters swimmers around the world have been known to eat heartily, drink beer and wine, and have a seriously good party. We are no different in that respect. We try to arrange social events from time to time, so members can get to meet each other outside of the pool environment. We are creatures of habit: you would be surprised how many members have never met 'the other half' of the club. This is because half of us swim in the mornings and half of us like to swim in the evenings. The other half ... well, who knows what they do! A social event is a way to bridge that gap, so we would encourage you to join the party any time we arrange one.

Communications

Our primary form of communication with members is by email, advising of notable events and happenings, swim meets and other events that might interest our members. Please make sure you keep your address current and your eyes open for emails from the club. These are distinctive and OMSC branded, so they will not be easy to miss.

Email communication@okmasters.com to be added to the newsletter distribution list.

We have a very active [Facebook page](#) - and a [Facebook OMSC Chat Group](#) for members only. Please like us for valuable information and swimming tips.

Annual General Meeting

We hold our Annual General Meeting in the fall, usually late October / early November. We would encourage all the members to attend and find out about the club and what we are up to. This is also a suitable time to put your name forward to serve as a volunteer member of the board.

Directors are elected for two-year terms, with certain portfolios staggered across alternate years. The board comprises up to nine directors, which at full complement would include the President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary, Registrar, Communications Director, Coach Liaison and two Directors at Large.

Swim Program

We have a continuous swim program year round with a training program geared to three main cycles – Winter-Fall (build up and competitive), Spring (Open Water/Tri) and Summer, during which we train with a slightly lighter program.

The swim season runs from September 1 to August 31 annually.

Contact the registrar with your inquiries at registrar@okmasters.com

Fees 2025-2026

Membership fees are broken into three parts.

1. Annual Fee – Payable to treasurer@okmasters.com
A once-a-year annual fee valid from September 1 to August 31. All our members must pay this fee, and we register all members with Swim BC and Swimming Canada as part of our service. This fee in part, insures our Masters Swimmers.

September 1 to April 30: \$118

May 1 to July 31: \$ 77

August 1 – 31: \$ 0

Annual Fee Breakdown:

\$15.50 Swimming Canada

\$50 SwimBC

\$11.50 MSABC

\$41 OMSC administration (cost of running the club, social activities)

2. YMCA of Okanagan Membership – Payable to YMCA

Our swimmers hold memberships with the YMCA of Okanagan (at the H₂O Adventure + Fitness Centre) and OMSC, therefore they have access to all the Y's facilities and programs in addition to OMSC's swim program.

H₂O monthly membership: \$33.60 - \$67.20 per month, visit the H₂O website for current rates.

[Individual Membership | YMCA of Southern Interior BC \(ymcasibc.ca\)](https://ymcasibc.ca).

3. OMSC membership – Payable to YMCA: \$35/month

Trial Swim

OMSC offers a one-week trial to see if we are a good fit for you. The cost of the trial is the H₂O facility drop-in fee for each session attended. If you already have an H₂O membership there is no cost for the trial. All sessions include space for any ability, If you feel confident you can swim 100 metres (4 lengths) continuously using any stroke, have a basic knowledge of freestyle, backstroke and breaststroke, give us a try. Contact registrar@okmasters.com to start your trial.

H₂O drop-in rates: [Visit H2O Adventure + Fitness Centre | Drop-in Rates \(ymcasibc.ca\)](https://ymcasibc.ca)

Masters Guest Swimmers

Masters swimmers registered in the current season with another Canadian or International club may join OMSC for drop-in swims. Email registrar@okmasters.com with your club registration number and the dates you wish to swim.

Cost is the H₂O facility drop-in rates.

H₂O drop-in rates: [Visit H2O Adventure + Fitness Centre | Drop-in Rates \(ymcasibc.ca\)](https://ymcasibc.ca)

Schedule

OMSC offers 12 sessions per week. Members may attend as many sessions per week as they wish. The schedule is posted on [our website](#).

The H₂O Adventure & Fitness Centre has understandably become popular with many aquatic clubs in Kelowna. Lane space is valuable and there will be days when OMSC will not have access to a scheduled session, such as on certain statutory holidays, and when another aquatic club or group has reserved space well in advance for a special event. The H₂O schedule is

planned prior to the season start. We will communicate with our members by email if a scheduled OMSC session is not available. The schedule is posted on [our website](#).

Cancellations & Holds

The H₂O Adventure & Fitness Centre membership may be managed by through their [online portal](#) or by visiting the front desk. The facility accommodates holds on their memberships for up to 4 months per year. Cancellations of this membership must be done through the facility, not the OMSC registrar.

Contact registrar@okmasters.com to cancel the OMSC monthly membership payments. Holds like the H₂O membership is not an option, but you may re-instate your membership by contacting the registrar.

Partner Organizations

Click on the links to learn more about our Provincial and National swimming bodies.

[Swim BC](#)

[Swimming Canada](#)

[Masters Swimming Association of British Columbia](#)

Facilities



The “H₂O” is an asset of the City of Kelowna, residents, and taxpayers. The facility is operated by YMCA Okanagan under contract to the City. The Aquatic Advisory Committee establish usage guidelines. OMSC is represented on the AAC as spokesperson for Masters swimming.

The pool is 50m long and eight lanes wide with two moveable bulkheads. During certain periods it is set up as a long course pool (50m), mostly as two short course (25m) tanks, and occasionally as three tanks (12.5m, 25m and 12.5m). The Aquatic facility also has a river run, water slides, wave rider, wave pool, hot tub, and gym.

Okanagan Masters Swim Club is allocated lane space at the H₂O Adventure and Fitness Centre in accordance with its partnership with the YMCA of Okanagan.

Equipment

We advise our members to purchase certain equipment for personal use:

- | | | |
|-------------|--------------------------|--------------|
| 1. Swimsuit | 4. Paddles | 7. Swim cap |
| 2. Goggles | 5. Water bottle | 8. Pull Buoy |
| 3. Fins | 6. Mesh bag for swim kit | 9. Kickboard |

We will hand you a fashionable and sought-after, complimentary OMSC branded swim cap when you join our club.

Pull buoys and kickboards may be available at the pool as the H₂O provides certain swimming equipment for public and general use. However, there is no guarantee this equipment will be available when you might need it.

Most serious Masters swimmers have their own fins, pull buoys, paddles, and mesh bag. All the equipment listed above can be purchased at leading swimming goods outlets. OMSC has a club account with [Team Aquatic Supplies](#), a Canadian-owned supplier, for the benefit of its members.

Club Discounts

Equipment can be purchased directly online from [Team Aquatic Supplies](#) at an OMSC *team, family and friends* club discount of 10%, by entering **discount code "OKA092BQ20"** at checkout:



We have an OMSC club 30-50% discount on all **Magic5** gear.

Access the Club VIP

Portal: <https://themagic5.com/collections/club-partnership>

Enter your Team Passcode: **OMSC**

Reach out to ng@themagic5.com if you are having trouble logging in.

Swim Club Branded Suits and Shirts

OMSC has also designed great-looking, good quality OMSC branded items that members can order from Q Swimwear.

https://qteamstore.com/collections/okanagan-masters-swim?ls=gwIEcoChLgd1H_T_OchmG



Women's classic strap \$90



Women's skinny strap \$90



Men's Jammer \$70



Men's Brief \$65



Women's long-sleeve shirt, \$85

Women's short-sleeve shirt, \$65

Men's long-sleeve shirt, \$85

Men's short-sleeve shirt, \$65

Workout Hieroglyphs

The following list may help you make sense of swimming lingo and the swim workout. The coach is there to help you understand it, but please familiarize yourself with the following terms:

The Workout

Fr = freestyle

Fr = front crawl

Bk = backstroke

Br = breaststroke

Fl = fly

a x b (a = number of times, b = distance, e.g. 5 x 100m free)

The pool is 25 metres long at most workouts and 50m long at other times. To swim 100 metres you would swim 4 lengths of 25m.

5 x 100 means you would swim 4 lengths, take a rest and repeat 4 times.

Ch = choice (your choice of stroke other than Front Crawl: i.e. Fly, Backstroke, Breaststroke)

Dr = drill (focuses on specific aspects of a stroke)

K = kick (kick only, no pulling with arms)

P = pull (swim with Pull Buoy, arms only, no kick)

10 sec = 10 seconds rest

SC = stroke count. The number of full strokes to swim a lap (25m or 50m)

IM = Individual Medley, swim fly, followed by backstroke, breaststroke and front crawl for the total distance indicated

MI = reverse-order Individual Medley: front crawl, followed by breaststroke, backstroke, and fly for the total distance indicated.

Build = get progressively faster in the swim

↓ = Descending (descending lap time, increasing speed, same as build)

↗ = Ascending (ascending lap time, decreasing speed) *[you will not see this very often]*

Warm-up = the period of the workout where you get your body warmed up

The Cool-down = the period of the workout where you slow your body down to finish the workout.

HT = Hot Tub. This is not part of the workout, but ideally it would follow your swim session. It provides an ideal opportunity to relax your hard-worked muscles and brag about the amount of Fly you managed during the session, also to 'monitor cooperative reputations and so maintain widespread indirect reciprocity'. (Wikipedia: 'gossip').

Lane Etiquette

It is a strange fact that guidelines for lane etiquette are often not written or well communicated to members of Masters swim clubs. It makes life easier when we are all aware of what is expected and what constitutes 'good manners' in Masters swimming. To assist members, we have decided to add a **website article on lane etiquette**.



OMSC has anywhere from 15 to 40 swimmers swimming at workouts. With 4 to 8 lanes this means up to 6 swimmers per SC (25m lane) and up to 10 swimmers per LC (50 m lane). There must be order to how people swim together. Usually, the developmental or slower swimmers are in the lanes with the lower numbers, and we gradually progress to the faster lanes with improved technique. If you are not sure where you should swim or have not

swum for a while, talk with the coach, who will help you select a lane compatible with your speed and fitness level.

Remember: we were all beginners at one point. There is nothing to be embarrassed about if you start in a slower lane or ask questions. Our coaches are there to help get you to your prime again, and your fellow swimmers will be happy to help a new member of the family.

Many of the rules of swimming etiquette are unwritten, which can be awkward, especially if you're unknowingly breaking any of the important ones. You've heard of '**road rage**', well there's also something called '**lane rage**', and you can avoid it by following some important guidelines and rules.



1. When you enter the water, **never dive, jump, or push off into oncoming swimmers**. Wait until they have made the turn and pushed off the wall.
2. **Introduce yourself to the people in your lane**. This is the social part of our club. People in your lane become your friends, can help you decipher the workout and encourage you along your fitness track.
3. **Lane Directions**
 - If there are two swimmers in a lane, you can agree whether one keeps to one side of the lane and the other to the opposite side, or whether you want to circle swim. This is called splitting the lane. For safety reasons splitting the lane is not allowed during

the warmup, just in case there are late swimmers to the lane, we do not want any head on collisions.

- If there are three or more swimmers in a lane, they must circle swim. The custom is to swim with the lane rope on your right shoulder ('anti-clockwise'), unless you are swimming adjacent to another lane, in which case it is best to agree direction beforehand with adjacent lanes, as follows:
- If one lane is swimming counter-clockwise, the next lane should swim in the opposite direction (egg-beater style). Swimmers in adjoining lanes should agree on swim direction before they enter the water. This will help reduce the incidence of "colliding" arms.
- Note: the rules of etiquette for passing are written for anti-clockwise circle swimming. If your lane happens to be swimming clockwise, exchange 'left' for 'right' and vice versa.

4. **Make sure everyone understands the section of the workout** before you start out. Each lane develops its own leaders, usually determined by the speed of the individual swimmers. Each person has their own stroke strengths and weaknesses. It will take you a few sessions to figure out where everyone belongs. Do not get discouraged, you will work it out.
5. **If you arrive late** at workout, it is up to you to determine where your swim mates are in the workout/warmup and join in at that point. It is disruptive for someone to show up late and break the rhythm of the swim already in progress. It is also discourteous to the coach and fellow swimmers to arrive late, or to leave early, so try to avoid doing it if you can.
6. If you do arrive late, wait until the swimmers are resting at the wall to **announce your arrival**. Do not surprise them by just hopping in and swimming behind them. This often leads to collisions.
7. **Passing**: If you need to pass a swimmer, pass on the left. Preferably tap the foot of the person in front of you before passing. If you are overtaken at the turn, stop, and wait until the other swimmer has pushed off. **It is best to make the pass at the wall rather than in the middle of the laps**, as follows:
 - *Passer*: Gently taps feet of Passee.
 - *Passee*: At the next turn, pulls over to the right-hand corner, stops and waits.
 - *Passer*: Makes flip turn at left-hand corner of wall.
 - *Passee*: Starts swimming again, behind the Passer.
8. If you need to stop for a rest / clear your goggles / adjust your fins / gasp for air, **squeeze into the corner to the right** of incoming swimmers, so they will have sufficient room to turn on the left.

9. **Do not leave early from the wall.**

If the lane is going 5 seconds or 10 seconds apart, do not leave earlier than that. In no time at all, you will be on the feet of the swimmer in front, and that is annoying.

10. **Allow others to finish their set** by moving to the corner of the lane.

Usually the way this works is at the end of a set the first person touches in on the far-left side of the lane. The second person touches in the centre and remains there. The third person touches to the far right, and then immediately moves away from the wall to the centre of the lane. Now the fourth person can touch in on the far right. It seems complicated, but it works if everyone plays along. With more than four swimmers, each additional person needs to move to the centre of the lane after they touch on the right. NB: it is annoying for a swimmer coming into finish if there is no space for him/her to touch the wall. Touching the wall is part of the finish.

11. **At all times be aware of what is going on within your lane.** Try not to kick or swing your arms into another lane or across your own lane especially when near to another swimmer.

12. Keep your **toenails and fingernails trimmed.**

13. Do not stand in front of or obscure the **pace clock** when others are still doing the swim set or trying to read the next set.

Open Water Swimming and Triathlon

Our members have varied interests including competitive swimming, triathlon, and open water swimming. Since many of our members compete across all three sports, our coaching program caters for skills levels from developmental through to advanced competitive, including a focus on the type of training needed as we approach various provincial and national events.

Whether your goal is to participate in the annual Across the Lake Swim (2100m), or to swim across the English Channel, our Club provides its members with expert open water coaching during the spring/summer swim season (in the pool).

Although we are not currently offering on-going lake training sessions, we work with other organizations including the [Across The Lake Society](#) to support open water clinics.

[Learn about the Gyro Swim Loop](#) – an 800-metre swim loop at Boyce-Gyro Beach in Kelowna.

Safety Advice

- Always have a safety plan when swimming in open water.
- Choose a familiar location and know its hazards. Temperature, weather forecast, tides & currents, motorized boats, submerged rocks and logs, distance, and layout of checkpoints are considerations.
- Let someone on shore or home know your plans.
- Swim with a buddy or group and discuss your swim plan for the day.
- Agree on a signal to alert your swim partners. If you decide to turn back, alert at least one person in the group.
- On long swims, use a high-visibility swim buoy (carry a cell phone, snacks, and your car keys!). Wetsuits add buoyancy, which makes swimming easier for many and provides warmth, which many swimmers appreciate in BC waters.

Open Water Swimming Resources/Results

Check out [MSABC's Open Water page](#) for resources. Let openwater@msabc.ca know if you have completed a marathon swim that has yet to be recorded in their results section.

OMSC Open Water History

We have coached and supported several athletes to conquer the English Channel. This is a challenging 40km crossing without the aid of a wetsuit. Swimmers include our own Brent Hobbs (2008) and Emily Epp (2018), colleague Rod Craig (2010) from North Vancouver Masters and Allison Donelon (2010) from Canmore, Alberta. All four performed qualifying swims in Okanagan Lake with the support of OMSC.

In summer 2011 OMSC members Rhonda Talbot and Jennifer Leach-Trask (the "Georgia Girls") successfully battled through a small craft warning to complete a four-person relay swim of Georgia Strait (30km crossing between Sechelt and Nanaimo).

In March 2013, OMSC member Paul Duffield achieved status as Canada's Ice Swimming Ambassador to the IISA. Paul: "The board of the International Ice Swimming Association appointed ten ice swimming ambassadors. I am thrilled and honoured to have been named as one of them."

In summer 2013 our own 'OMSC Lake Monsters' Channel Crossing Relay team completed the 40km crossing in a comfortable time of 11 hours 41 minutes. The team comprised five swimmers with a varied swimming history: Denise Cesselli, Leora Dahl, Phred Martin, Mike Stamhuis and Tracey Sutton.

In June 2025 former club member Aerin Bowers with her OMSC support team of Brent Hobbs, Emily Epp and Phred Martin completed the English Channel.