

Swim Serpentine

Two-mile pool training plan

If you're planning to train for the Swim Serpentine two-mile event in a 25m pool, you'll need to complete 128 lengths (3,200m) to cover the distance.

There are a variety of training sessions and skills sets for you to try below. If you're new to swimming or looking to improve, it's also a good idea to find out if your local pool holds any adult swimming sessions. These sessions are often welcoming and a great way to progress your technique and fitness quickly, especially if there are swimming coaches on the poolside providing set sessions for you.

A swimming session should consist of a warm up, main set, contrast set and warm down.

WARM UP

Gradually warm up your arms and lungs as you increase your pace over some short distances.

MAIN SET

Typically, a target distance broken down into shorter distances with short recovery times to help you work on your pace. For example, the target may be 1,000m, so a simple session would be to swim 10 x 100m with one-minute rest between each four lengths (in a 25m pool). This way you can swim faster for the duration of the 100m than you would be able to over a straight 1,000m swim.

CONTRAST SET

After a main session, the contrast set throws in some drills with perhaps some kick or stroke work.

WARM DOWN

A reverse of the warm up, reduce your speed and think about technique.

At other times you may go into the pool to complete a long-distance swim – for example, to swim one mile non-stop and time yourself.

You can also try the following sample sets and drill suggestions when training for Swim Serpentine.

Sample main sets

Pace Set	
WARM UP	200-400m
MAIN SET	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 25m relaxed, 25m at a faster pace, 50m relaxed, 50m at pace, 75m relaxed, 75m at pace, 100m relaxed, 100m at pace, then one minute rest 25m relaxed, 25m at pace, 10 sec rest, 50m relaxed, 50m at pace, 15 sec rest, 75m relaxed, 75m at pace, 20 sec rest, 100m relaxed, 100m at pace, then one minute rest 25m relaxed, 10 sec rest, 25m at pace, 10 sec rest, 50m relaxed, 15 sec rest, 50m at pace, 15 sec rest, 75m relaxed, 20 sec rest, 75m at pace, 20 sec rest, 100m relaxed, 30 sec rest, then 100m at pace 25m relaxed, 25m at a faster pace, 50m relaxed, 50m at pace, 75m relaxed, 75m at pace, 100m relaxed, 100m at pace
Total distance: 2,000m	
CONTRAST SET	8 x 50m as a 25m drill, 25m kick (you can do arms in front with a short breast pull to breathe), 10 sec rest. Make sure you try sighting during your drills
WARM DOWN	200m swim down

Pyramid Set	
WARM UP	150m of any stroke then a 50m drill, then 150m of any stroke and another 50m drill
MAIN SET	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Swim 100m, 15 sec rest, swim 200m, 15 sec rest, swim 300m, 15 sec rest, swim 400m, 15 sec rest, swim 300m, 15 sec rest, swim 200m, 15 sec rest, swim 100m On the way up the pyramid, aim to sight on every fourth length. On the way down the pyramid, sight on the first length of each swim segment
Total distance: 1,600m	
CONTRAST SET	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 x 25m drill (fists) to work on feel of the water, then 10 sec rest 4 x 50m as a 25m drill and 25m relaxed swim, followed by 10 sec rest
WARM DOWN	200m swim down

Mega Main Set	
WARM UP	Swim 200m-400m
MAIN SET	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Swim 50m, 10 sec rest, swim 50m, 15 sec rest, swim 50m, 20 sec rest, swim 50m, 30 sec rest. As you get more rest between segments, try to swim faster Swim 100m, 10 sec rest, swim 100m, 15 sec rest, swim 100m, 20 sec rest, swim 100m, 30 sec rest Swim 150m, 10 sec rest, swim 150m, 15 sec rest, swim 150m, 20 sec rest, swim 150m, 30 sec rest Swim 200m, 10 sec rest, swim 200m, 15 sec rest, swim 200m, 20 sec rest, swim 200m, 30 sec rest Swim 150m, 10 sec rest, swim 150m, 15 sec rest, swim 150m, 20 sec rest, swim 150m, 30 sec rest Swim 100m, 10 sec rest, swim 100m, 15 sec rest, swim 100m, 20 sec rest, swim 100m, 30 sec rest Swim 50m, 10 sec rest, swim 50m, 15 sec rest, swim 50m, 20 sec rest, swim 50m, 30 sec rest
Total distance: 3,200m = two miles	
CONTRAST SET	200m kick
WARM DOWN	200m swim down

Timed Swim	
WARM UP	Swim 300m with a 100m kick drill
MAIN SET	Time a mile of continuous swimming (1,600 m) then rest for two minutes and time another mile. Try to swim the same mile in the same time as (or faster than) the first mile
CONTRAST SET	25m kick drill, 25m drill, 25 swim, 10 sec rest. Repeat three more times
WARM DOWN	200m swim down

Broken Swims (Pacing)	
WARM UP	Swim 200m
MAIN SET	10 x 200m as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 200m broken – stop after 100m for a 10 sec rest, then try to do the second 100m faster than the first 100m, followed by a 30 sec rest. Repeat once 200m broken – stop after each 50m for a 5 sec rest, trying to get faster with each 50m, followed by a 30 sec rest. Repeat once 200m broken – stop after 150m for a 10 sec rest then try to swim the last 50m as fast as you can. Repeat once 200m broken – stop for a 5 sec rest after each 25m, followed by a 30 sec rest. Repeat once
CONTRAST SET	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 100m relaxed swim using another stroke 100m kick 100m drill
WARM DOWN	100m relaxed swim

Sample Basic Drills	
SINGLE ARM SWIM	Hold one arm out in front of you and swim using only the other arm. Think about getting a good pull through the water with each stroke. Alternate the arms you use for this drill.
SIX ARM SWITCH	Complete six single arm strokes on one side, then six on the other. The aim is the same as above – to get a good pull through the water with each stroke – but use your hips when switching from one arm to the other to create a body roll.
CATCH UP	Make sure one hand is always in the water out in front of you. The 'glide hand' in the water stays there until the 'moving hand' touches the water – then they switch. This is good for lengthening your stroke for long distance swimming. It should be nice and smooth as you always have one hand stretched out in front of you.
CHICKEN WING	As you swim, touch your right thumb under your right arm pit and left thumb under your left armpit. This helps create a high elbow when swimming.
THREE-POINT TOUCH (GOOD FOR WARM UP AND WARM DOWN)	Touch three points on each stroke: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Catch up as above. Touch your thigh with your thumb – this should be at the end of your stroke, as low as you can on your leg without twisting your body. Under your arm pit. With practice, this should be nice and smooth and a good way to get your stroke feeling better after a hard session.
CLENCHED FIST	Keep your fist clenched during the whole stroke. The aim of this drill is to use your forearm when swimming to appreciate the power your hand creates when pulling through the water. Try and keep this slow and think about keeping a high elbow throughout the stroke.
KICK ON SIDE	Placing your left arm in front of you, swim on your left side, kicking for one length, then change sides. The aim of this drill is to create good balance in the water and get used to rotating onto your side when swimming.