

How to Swim with Sharks

These instructions are written for the benefit of those, who, by virtue of their occupation, find they must swim and find that the water is infested with sharks:

1. **Assume all unidentified fish are sharks.** Not all sharks look like sharks, and some fish that are not sharks sometimes act like sharks. Unless you have witnessed docile behavior in the presence of shed blood on more than one occasion, it is best to assume an unknown species is a shark.
2. **Do not bleed.** It is a cardinal principle that if you are injured, either by accident or by intent, you must not bleed. Experience shows that bleeding prompts an even more aggressive attack and will often provoke the participation of sharks that are uninvolved or, as noted above, are usually docile.
3. **Counter any aggression promptly.** Sharks rarely attack a swimmer without warning. Usually there is some tentative, exploratory aggressive action. It is important that the swimmer recognize that this behavior is a prelude to an attack and takes prompt and vigorous remedial action. The appropriate countermove is a sharp blow to the nose.
Some swimmers mistakenly believe that an ingratiating attitude will dispel an attack. This is not correct; such a response provokes a shark attack.
4. **Get out of the water if someone is bleeding.** If a swimmer (or shark) has been injured and is bleeding, get out of the water promptly. The presence of blood and the thrashing of water will elicit aggressive behavior even in the most docile of sharks.
5. **No useful purpose is served in attempting to rescue the injured swimmer.** He either will or will not survive the attack, and your intervention cannot protect him once blood has been shed. Those who survive such an attack rarely venture to swim with sharks again, an attitude which is readily understandable.
6. **Use anticipatory retaliation.** A constant danger to the skilled swimmer is that the sharks will forget that he is skilled and may attack in error. This memory loss can be prevented by a program of anticipatory retaliation. The procedure is essentially the same as described under rule 3: a sharp blow to the nose. Here, however, the blow is unexpected and serves to remind the shark that you are both alert and unafraid. Swimmers should care not to injure the shark and draw blood during this exercise (see rule 4).
7. **Disorganized and organized attack.** Usually sharks are sufficiently self-centered that they do not act in concert against a swimmer. This lack of organization greatly reduces the risk of swimming among sharks. However, occasionally the sharks may launch a coordinated attack upon a swimmer or even upon one of their number. While the latter event is of no particular concern to swimmer, it is essential that one knows how to handle an organized shark attack directed against a swimmer.