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How to Shave Down for a Swim Meet



Imagine it's time to shave down for a swim meet. You start shaving down your body, only to cover yourself in cuts and gashes. No good! If you're feeling clumsy or unsure, this guide is filled with helpful advice. If you don't know how — or where on your body — to begin, here are some steps to help you along.

Use an Electric Razor First

Many swimmers make the mistake of using a regular, bladed razor on long or thick hair. If you do this, you'll have to unclog the blade and change it frequently. If you haven't shaved in a while, use an electric razor first. Trimming the hair down will make it easier when it comes time to use a razorblade on the stubble.

Shave Your Legs

Start by covering your legs in shaving cream to help you achieve a close shave. Never shave over goose bumps! This is very painful and will create red bumps all over your legs, taking away the smooth effect that you're trying to achieve. Use warm water, and shave in a warm place to prevent goose bumps.

Calves

When shaving your legs, start near the ankle. Move the razor upward in a straight line toward your knee. If you turn the blade or don't go in a straight line, you might cut yourself.

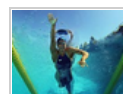
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Be careful!

Stop right before your knee. Take the razor up off your leg, and place it back near your ankle. Repeat the same stripe next to the starting location that you just shaved.

Repeat this pattern all around your calf. As you reach the back of your leg, flex your foot to tighten your calf muscle. This will make the skin smoother and easier to shave.

Thighs

After you've shaved your calves, repeat the same pattern on your thigh. Shave from above the knee to your upper leg. Shave your whole leg — even the part of the leg that is covered by a suit. Hairs can stick through the suit. Any missed hairs can increase drag.

Ankles & Knees

Once you've shaved your thighs, you're ready for the tricky part. It's time to go back and touch up, shaving your knees and ankles. Be careful shaving these areas. This is because the skin is not flat. It's really easy to cut yourself in these places. Take it slow. When shaving your knee, bend your leg so the skin on your knee is taut. Then — very carefully — move the razor over your knee in a straight vertical line.

For shaving the back of your knee: Stand up and straighten your leg. Once again, you want to tighten the skin as much as possible so the razorblade glides right over a flat surface.

Hot Tip: Frequently Change the Blade

You want the closest shave possible. This means changing out the blade frequently.

Even if you think that you don't need to switch it out, do it anyway. The smoother you feel, the better you'll feel in your race.

Feet & Toes

Skip shaving your feet and toes. Similar to the underside of your forearms, you want to grip and feel the water with your foot. Also, shaving your feet can be really difficult. With the sharp angles and multitude of bones, you might end up looking like you got into a fight with your razor. Cuts and scabs will not only be uncomfortable — they can be distracting during your big race as well.

Shave Your Arms

Similar to the way you shaved your calves, you can shave your forearm from wrist to elbow. This is a simple way to do it, and you get a fairly close shave.

For a Closer Shave

For a closer shave, start at your wrist and shave in the opposite direction from the hair growth. To prevent bumps and ingrown hairs, you've probably been told to shave in the same direction that the hair grows. If you want the closest shave possible, though, then you need to shave against the growth of the hair.



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Start on the inside of the wrist, and shave outward in a straight line. Repeat the same stripe right above the spot you just shaved.

Avoid the Underside of Your Forearm

Make sure you only shave the top of your arm. Keep the hair on the underside of your forearm; where your arm catches the water. You want to grip the water, not let it slip past you. Leaving any hair will help you get a better feel for the water. This way you can tell if you're gripping the water correctly on your pull.

The Rest of Your Arm

After you've shaved the lower half of your arm, shave from elbow to shoulder. Just like the knees, the elbows are very hard to shave. Make sure you tighten the skin by bending your elbow. As always: Be careful!

Other Body Hair

When shaving down, sometimes it's hard to know what to shave and what not to shave. At swim meets, you've probably seen just about everything: Especially shaved heads and chests on men. You should be aware that with advancing technical swim gear, common practices are changing.

Heads

Because of advancing swim cap technology, head-shaving is starting to become a thing of the past. Sure, some swimmers still do it. But it's certainly not as common as it used to be.

Today, cap material minimizes drag in the water just as much as — or more than — shaving your head. For many, using a swim cap is a better option than shaving your head. Then again, there's nothing like the sensation of a smooth head gliding through the water!

If you decide you'd like your head shaved, have someone help you. Shaving your own head is really challenging — especially if you're trying to achieve a close shave. Start by having a friend buzz your hair off with an electric razor. Next, apply plenty of shaving cream. With a razorblade, start to shave from the base of the hairline on your neck to the crown of your head. Shave in vertical stripes around your head.

To get the top of your head, shave from the hairline on your forehead to the crown of your head. Once again, shave in stripes until the hair is gone.

Chest Hair

Once again, shaving body hair reduces drag. If you have a lot of chest hair, you might want to consider shaving. Even if you're wearing a suit that covers your chest, technical suits are incredibly thin. Hairs can easily poke through the fabric.

In order to shave the chest thoroughly, you'll need to stand or lie in a position that allows your skin to stretch. This will make it easier, and the process will run a lot smoother. Cover your chest in shaving cream. Then shave in horizontal stripes, starting low and working your way up.

When going over your pectoral muscles, watch out for your areolas. You don't want to shave over them! This can be extremely painful and cause a lot of bleeding. Instead, carefully shave around them as closely as you can.

It's Worth a Try

There's always been discrepancy about whether shaving actually makes you swim faster. Sure, shaving off small hairs reduces a miniscule amount of drag. If you want to do

anything you can to swim faster, though, you should shave down.

Even if it doesn't make you significantly faster physically, you'll feel completely different in the water. This can have a strong mental impact. This psychological effect alone can make you swim faster. So give it a shot: All you have to lose is your hair!

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Brian
2 years ago.



Have been swimming in masters with the more traditional racing speedo. Although somewhat I suppose a personal question I wonder if many serious swimmers bother to shave the whole groin area? I did once and the price of some abrasions in a sensitive area hardly seemed like it could possibly be outweighed by the possible promise of a faster performance. Thoughts?

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I Am The Beast Sssotlohiefmijn
2 years ago.



When I use the public pool for regular swimming exercise, I often shave down for courtesy to other people and like the same from men and women, head hair can be left long as long as a secure cap is worn but I do not enjoy the caps so I prefer to shave it clean. The eye brows are a bit extreme to most people but I see no wrong in it., I am sure many women would not desire such a rule.

The writer seems to be a pansy, saying not to shave goosebumps. I shave them as well maybe I possess a superman gene cause it do not cause bad action on my skin. Beware of nicking your skin, use a clean razor sharp razor and soap in the shower. Simple!

Women look a lot better when they are shaved from the neck down in my view. I do not find hairy women to be attractive. I only love long hair on a women and natural eyebrows and lashes That is without Mexi SideBurns and Stache some girls seem to sport. I don,t know rather to make love or lay law to them?

Well a little oil or vasiline will sport some skin protection in the water but do not over use it as you do not want to be the cause of an oil slick in the water.

Shaving down is common for other activities, bike, climb, boxing,wrestling, in general any sports where slick skin is an asset to the sport in one or more manners. As in removal of handicap or for ease to treatment in traumatic injury.

Some guys are hung up on the idea that shaving down is female like. I think it is what you make it. For me it is a discipline of the sport and more manly to fully embrace it. I also greatly enjoy the cleanliness of shaving as I am slightly afflicted with a skin disease where my cells overpopulate faster then they shed normal and requires I scrub or shave the skin to assist the removal of the excess.

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Rayner
2 years ago.



Thanks for the great article! I have been shaving down for a year now and I love it. I even shave the soles of my feet the night before a meet. If you haven't tried it, you should. The removal of the dead cells on your soles feels great in the water. I only use Slippery Dolphin Shave Oil (www.slipperydolphin.com) as it makes the whole process easier and faster. It is made for swimmers and has always treated me well.

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Amanda
3 years ago.



My coaches told me not to use shaving cream or nair because they numb your legs and then you cant feel how fast the water is going past your legs. They told me that if you use it you will think you are kicking more or faster than you actually are. I am not sure whether or not this is true but I am going to listen to them.

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V Yotoku
3 years ago.



I have used both but I honestly prefer Nair (hair removal cream). You have to use a credit card or old hotel room key card & scrape the cream off. It will remove a more dead skin that a ravor & you can avoid ravor bumps too if you're prone to them like myself. But I can

still get them wear fabric rubs the skin a lot, like wear the swim suit draw string sits below the belly button.

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Bob P
3 years ago.

Why not use the cream that dissolves hair instead? Just a thought.

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Alexi
3 years ago.

Hi Bob,

One of the benefits of using a razor is that not only will it get rid of the hair that creates extra drag, but it will also remove a layer of dead skin cells, thereby increasing your sensitivity and "feel" for the water. Depilatories only get rid of the hair.

It's a pretty cool feeling actually, and if you've never shaved down for a race before it's definitely worth a try!

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Ingmar
3 years ago.

I don't agree about not shaving the feet. They can be very hairy and look bad especially if you are a man and you shaved everywhere else. A girl having light vellus hair there can get away not doing it instead, but not all girls are so lucky.

I also don't agree about areolas: The blade can glide over your areolas, is the tip of you nipple what you must watch out for.

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Paul
4 years ago.

I have always used shaving cream when shaving. After 24 years of swimming, I find that I am less likely to cut myself since the razor glides smoothly and I can see where the razor has been if I use shaving cream. I have never had an adverse reaction to shaving cream, like blocked pores or lack of blood circulation. When I shave down for a meet, I always do it to get rid of the hair, not skin cells. I find that the lack of hair gives me the best feeling in the water and not the fresh layer of skin.

I prefer the following order of events. I begin by using an electric clippers to get most of the hair off. Hop in the shower and like Cody said, make it hot and soak for a little while. I stay in the shower with the water turned off and cover one leg at a time with shaving cream and use the razor. It's the same thing I do on my face. The shaving cream keeps the skin from getting dried out and keeps it lubricated. After shaving, I steal some of my girlfriends moisturizer and slather it on. (I don't, however, use the moisturizer on my face).

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cody friedhoff
4 years ago.

actually, you are not supposed to use shaving cream when shaving your body for a swim meet. using shaving cream clogs your pores and it will reduce blood circulation, take a hot shower and use soap and clean your entire body. then dry off and use an electric razor to get most of the hair off. after that use a new razor to shave off all of the extra hair and dead skin cells. shaving for a swim meet is mostly about getting all the dead skin cells off.

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Sally
4 years ago.

Hi Cody, that's interesting that you don't use shaving cream. I've been swimming competitively for 23 years now, and I've never heard that you shouldn't use shaving cream. In fact, my coaches have encouraged us to use it. If you don't, then you can get really bad razor burn. This can cause your skin to get bumpy and irritated, adding drag in the water. It also takes away that smooth feeling that you're trying to achieve. Can shaving cream really reduce your blood circulation? I've never heard that before. That's interesting. I also use it because I'm less likely to get goose bumps...and we all know how awful shaving over goose bumps can be!

And true, you're trying to get rid of your dead skin cells as well as the hair. But I wouldn't necessarily say that that's the point of shaving down. Isn't the whole point to feel smooth in the water? Personally, I think shaving down is almost all mental. If you feel good, it'll help you swim faster.

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