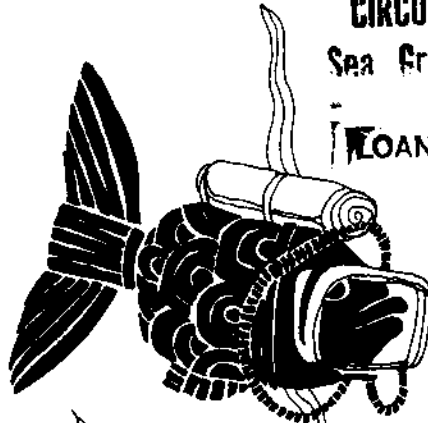


Scuba Diving

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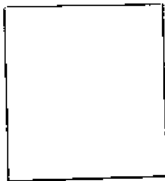
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Scuba diving is one of the most exciting of all sports. But it demands special preparation and precautions.

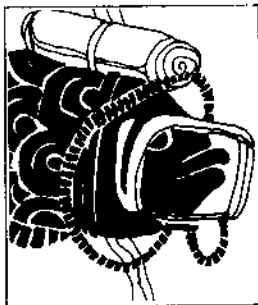
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Preparation



Conditioning You should be at least a moderate swimmer and feel comfortable in the water. More important, you should be in good physical shape. You will be safe in the water only to the extent of your abilities.

A complete physical examination is recommended and usually required before taking scuba lessons.

Lessons Lessons are of utmost importance. Attend an approved diving course with a certified instructor. Such courses are sponsored by NAUI (National Association of Underwater Instructors), PADI (Professional Association of Diving Instructors), and NASDS (National Association of Skin Diving Schools). The basic course will not turn you into an expert diver, but will teach you proper technique and safety.

Though the courses will vary, a typical one will meet for a series of seven to ten lessons and at least two qualifying dives. Course costs can range from \$60 to \$200, depending on the location of the qualifying dives and the equipment provided. If extended trips are included in the cost, the price will be more.

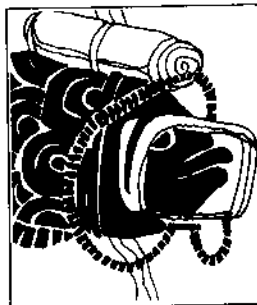
Periodically you should review all course books and notes, and attempt to keep current through diving publications available at most diving shops.

Equipment You should have your own basic equipment — a mask, swim fins, snorkel and possibly a slate and inflatable vest. A textbook, log book and dive tables are also needed for instruction. Most other equipment is usually included in the lesson costs and can later be rented.

Certification When you have successfully completed the minimum requirements set by a nationally recognized organization, you can become certified. This will *not* mean that you are prepared to experience the many aquatic environments and their hazards; rather, that you

are ready to be *introduced* to the underwater world by those who are more experienced. You will be issued a certification card that must be shown to get air for scuba tanks, to buy or rent gear and to enter some diving locations.

Diving



Buddies Always use the buddy system. If your buddy tends to be a loner, convince him or her of the importance of teamwork or find a new buddy.

Plan your dive with your buddy. Discuss all signals and plans, and check equipment. To avoid underwater hassles, decide in advance who is the dive leader. Display the diving flag.

If you are separated from your buddy, surface and remain surfaced until you are reunited. You will probably not be able to meet underwater.

Where? You can dive almost anywhere conditions permit. The ocean, freshwater lakes and rivers, springs, quarries and coral reefs are all available. With additional training, you will gain access to other areas. Cave diving, ice diving or wreck diving should never be attempted unless you are properly trained and equipped.

When you arrive at a site, observe the area from the beach. Note the wind, sea, current, tide, fishermen, boat activity, and piers or structures. Don't dive if conditions are unfavorable.

When heading out, observe the current indicated by sea growth and the bottom ripple pattern. These signs will orient you while diving and returning to shore. Keep track of depth and time.

Depth While learning, stay in the shallower ranges to 30 feet of water. After gaining experience you may want to explore deeper areas. However there are limits to the depths that you should dive; in addition, deep diving adds unnecessary risks to sport diving. Most of the colorful underwater scenery exists in the first 30 feet of water.

Temperature When diving for extended periods in water that is below 78 degrees F, it is recommended that you wear some type of environmental protection suit, usually a wetsuit. A wetsuit traps water between the suit and your skin, warming it and maintaining body temperature.

Glasses Since eyeglasses can't be worn under your face mask, you can have your particular lenses fitted by an optician in special frames or laminated on your face plate. You may also buy or order a mask with positive or negative correcting lenses already ground in. Contacts should not be worn because of possible eye discomfort and the risk of losing them if your mask is flooded.

Air You can get compressed, filtered air for your scuba tank from almost all dive shops. If you are getting air at other locations, make sure the compressor is proper for scuba tanks.

Ascension Don't drain your tank of air, even at shallow depths. Quit when pressure reaches 200 pounds per square inch. Air is cheap.

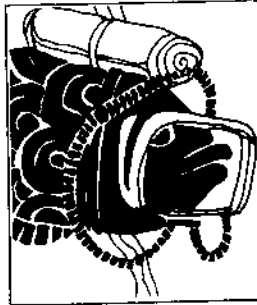
Ascend from depth no faster than 60 feet per minute, using watch and depth gauge. A dynamic pressure change is encountered while ascending, and your body must have time to adapt. Breathe normally while ascending — do not hold your breath.

Activities The number of possible underwater activities is extensive. It includes:

- Exploring and sightseeing
- Collecting shells
- Spearfishing, collecting crabs or lobsters
- Underwater photography
- Treasure hunting
- Commercial diving as a career
- Salvage and recovery
- Underwater archaeology
- Scientific sampling and data gathering

This publication borrows extensively from the copy in three excellent Florida Sea Grant brochures: "Getting Your Feet Wet," "Recreational Scuba Diving," and "Diving and Pregnancy."

Safety



Be careful The possibility of a dangerous situation arising is reduced considerably if you know your limits — both mental and physical. The best assurance you can have is proper knowledge, training and equipment. Panic and inexperience are

the major contributors to diving accidents. They can be avoided through proper instruction and careful dive planning. During your dive classes, you will learn what marine life and environmental conditions should be avoided while diving.

Health Never dive if you have a head cold, sinus congestion or a serious illness. Never dive if you are taking any medications, including narcotics or alcohol, which might affect your physical functions. Don't dive if you feel below par.

Emergency If you face an emergency, call for help if possible, but don't desert your buddy. If a diver experiences unconsciousness while or immediately after diving, he or she should be taken immediately to the nearest recompression facility.

Pregnancy If you're going to dive while pregnant, let your doctor know, and limit the duration and depth of dives. Researchers say any risks will be minimized if you dive no deeper than 60 feet and no longer than half of the Navy no-decompression limits (i.e., 60 feet for 30 minutes). Avoid strenuous dives, hypoventilation and chilling, and never use medication such as seasickness pills and sinus drugs while diving.

Just as a pregnant woman passes chemicals to her fetus, so too does she transmit gasses. As divers descend, pressures of the gasses they breathe increase, and the concentration of oxygen and nitrogen in the blood increases; when they ascend, bubbles can form. Such bubbles could be passed to a fetus. However, the risk of this appears to be less among women who dive at shallower depths.