

The Unofficial Guide to Scuba Diving

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Reasons for Diving

There are as many reasons for diving as there are divers. The primary motivation should be a drive to learn a new skill, experience the wonders of nature and to have fun.

The purpose of this guide is to share some of the advice and experiences I have had during my diving training and answer common questions.

My experience has been exclusively with the dive shop **In2Deep** in Santa Monica. This guide does not represent official PADI guidelines nor does it outline the only pathway for your diving career. It is a testament to the great experience at In2Deep I have had during the rewarding path to becoming an experienced diver.

SCUBA is an acronym for Self Contained Underwater Breathing Apparatus. It was developed in part by Jacques-Yves Cousteau. I spent my early youth watching his television programs and reading his books!

If you can swim and have an urge to finding out what the vast majority of our watery planet is all about, Scuba is for you. There are mental and physical challenges, from reading diving tables to solving problems to treading water. As a wise person once said, nothing worth doing is easy- but it can be fun and rewarding!

How to Begin Your Adventure

Most new divers align themselves with a diveshop, the diveshop such as **In2Deep** can provide the following:

1. **Provide diving courses:** Most divers today use PADI, the Professional Association of Diving Instructors, as the basis for their training. PADI offers a structured hierarchy of diving courses to allow one to gain knowledge and experience through textbooks, e-learning, pool sessions and open water sessions. There is a pathway that diverges depending on whether or not one wishes to be an amateur diver or a diving professional.
2. **Provide rental equipment:** Most dive shops provide rental gear, this will give you an opportunity to try different equipment without having to commit a lot of money at the beginning.
3. **Provide equipment to buy:** Dive shops can be very helpful in determining what gear is right for you based on your needs and budget. At in2Deep, it is likely that your instructor will help you decide what gear is right for you based on his or her observations.
4. **Provide sound advice and guidance:** Dive shops will supply the instructors for the various courses provided by PADI. They will recommend reading and videos. Carrie loves to answer questions. At in2Deep, you can rest assured that you will be among world class professionals with a "safety first" attitude.
5. **Create a Diving Community:** A lot of SCUBA knowledge is passed from person to person, a dive community allows divers to dive with others with similar goals and the same safe training philosophy. Being part of a dive community means new friends, ideas for your next dive, the chance to see different equipment and get good advice. A dive community provides a large group of dive buddies at (or above) your level of training. Let's face it, would you rather dive with relative strangers?
6. **Provide Scuba Vacation Opportunities:** Many trips to fit different budgets, interests and goals. The esprit de corps at the shop makes for a great trip. Trips to Catalina are available nearly every week as are dive boat adventures on the Giant Stride. A day trip

diving makes any weekend a mini-vacation! After diving in Catalina, in2Deep divers head for pizza and burgers if there is time before the ferry leaves and to tell the stories (often embellished) of the day.

Learning Trajectory

There are different courses available to include “skin diving”, essentially diving with a mask, fins and snorkel. There are “age appropriate” and refresher courses as well. This trajectory is reasonable for a new young or older adult diver:

Step one is to come into the store and talk about your goals with the staff. No question is out of bounds, remember, this should be fun!

The basic equipment you need to purchase before beginning your training is:

1. Mask
2. Fins
3. Snorkel
4. Booties
5. Gloves

It is recommended that you buy the equipment at or in conjunction with the dive shop, therefore, you and your instructors will be on the same page with respect to what you will need for the training environment. Although there is a significant outlay of cash, generally “bargain” and “scuba” should not be used in the same sentence. You are paying not only for the equipment but the experience of the shop and the quality of the instruction.

The wetsuit, regulator, tanks and weights are generally rented through the Advanced Open Water course.

The introductory courses also provide DAN insurance. It is an insurance policy specific to scuba diving and is well worth having after the policy provided by the shop has expired. Having a policy with DAN also provides you with a subscription to AlertDiver. PADI offers a magazine as well, Scuba. These magazines have tips for every level of diver and gear reviews as well as travel ideas.

The first level of training is the Open Water course. Like most of the courses, there is a e-learning portion that you complete on your own. Depending on the course, you can do the water skills either before or after completing the e-learning. There are both pool days and real ocean dives. Nothing compares to the first time one descends into the ocean!

The second level is the Advanced Open Water Course- essentially more skills than the basic course and the ability to dive deeper. There is e-learning and ocean sessions, generally there is a fun dive to end the course after the skills are completed. There are five skill set that you can choose in this course; everything from fish identification, underwater photography to wreck diving. They are mini-courses that you can expand upon later!

After this course, it is recommended that you purchase equipment, it is an easy decision to decide at this point if Scuba is for you!

If you are eager for more, the next level is Rescue Diver- a challenging but fun course. You will be a safer diver and a better buddy after you finish this course for sure. Part of passing this course is e-learning, an Emergency First Response course including CPR. Did I mention that there is an exhausting but awesome day at the beach doing shore dives and practicing skills?

At this point, you can “go” for the highest amateur rating in PADI- Master Diver or the lowest rung on the professional ladder Divemaster (or both). You will need to complete the Rescue Diver course and complete a set number of dives to start and finish these courses. If you get to this point, you do not need this introduction anymore.

In my relatively short time as a diver, I have seen many different Scuba students with different backgrounds begin their scuba career at in2Deep. The shop works well for all these goals, diverse as they are, I have trained with:

1. A fireman getting training to apply for the LAFD Search and Rescue team
2. A Boy Scout earning badges
3. A budding scientist wanting to do primary underwater research
4. A scuba enthusiast wanting a career as an instructor
5. A nature photographer expanding their portfolio

Anyone with a sense of humor, an appetite for a new adventure and a passion for safety and loves “gear” is a good candidate for Scuba!

Good luck, see you at the shop!