

## Learning to Dive

### **Q. How long does it take to learn to dive?**

**A.** Ocean Diver training generally takes 4-5 months to complete, weather permitting. You must be prepared to commit a fair amount of your free time to training during your course.

### **Q. What does the training consist of?**

**A.** Ocean Diver training involves some 7-8 hours of theory instruction and 5-8 hours of practical lessons. This is followed by 5 dives in the sea to complete your qualification. The aim of this training is to teach you to be competent in the safe and correct use of all appropriate open water scuba diving equipment in a sheltered water training area and then to introduce you to open water diving under the supervision of a BSAC Nationally Qualified Instructor.

### **Q. Where do I learn?**

**A.** Training takes place on Wednesday evenings at either Totnes Pool at 7.30 p.m. (wet sessions) or at Meadowbrook Community Centre in Dartington at 8.00 p.m. (theory lessons). Open water training takes place on Saturdays and some weekday evenings.

### **Q. How old do I have to be (or am I too old)?**

**A.** The minimum age we will accept someone for training or diving is 14. However, for 14-17 year olds we do require that a parent or guardian is also a diver and is present during all training and diving or a qualified diver is designated 'in loco parentis'. At the other end of the scale, one is rarely too old to start scuba diving there are many active divers in their 70s in the UK.

### **Q. How much does it cost to learn to dive?**

**A.** Pool work, course materials ("The Diving Manual", Student Notes and Qualification Book), air, use of equipment and lectures cost £250, but this payment can be spread over 3 months. You must also complete the 5 open water dives, which you pay for as you go (the current charges are: shore dives - free; boat dives - £12.00-£16; air fills £2.25 or 5 for £10) and you will need to join the Branch (£9.00 per month) and BSAC (annual membership, including insurance, is currently £55.50 or £28.00 for students). As Meadowbrook Community Centre is a private members club you will also need to become a member to use the facilities. However, this only costs £15.00 a year (£10.00 for senior citizens and juniors), and the drinks are cheap! Membership of the Branch and BSAC gives you access to the club equipment; cheap diving; free use of the pool during our Wednesday evening "wet" session; discounts at some of the local dive shops; 12 monthly copies of BSAC Scuba magazine; and Public Liability Insurance cover up to £10 million.

### **Q. Do I need a medical?**

**A.** You must complete a Medical Self-Declaration before commencing pool training. In particular circumstances we may require you to consult a medical referee to confirm your fitness to dive.

### **Q. What equipment do I need?**

**A.** Initially we can supply all necessary training equipment for pool sessions. For your sea dives you will need to buy or hire your own 7mm wetsuit/semidry, mask, fins and snorkel. Once you have completed Ocean Diver training you will need to buy all your own kit and you will be told all about this during your training.

**Q. How much does diving equipment cost?**

**A.** As with most things you can spend as much or as little as you like on kit but you should be able to get a reasonably good quality mask for £25-35 whilst a set of fins will set you back anything between £30-80. You shouldn't spend more than £10 on a snorkel. We will be giving you advice on what to buy when you start the course so you don't need to worry about it too much at the moment. However, before you go in the sea you will need to have a good wetsuit, ideally 7-8mm thick and, once you have completed your Ocean Diver training, you will hopefully want to get your own gear and continue diving with us. If you buy new some guide prices for the essentials are: semi-dry wetsuit ~£175 (or drysuit ~£350-£750), boots ~£25, BCD jacket ~£150-£350, regulator & gauges ~£270-£500, 12ltr air cylinder ~£190, knife ~£25, weight belt ~£40, watch ~£50 and torch ~£15-150(!). However, there tends to be a healthy supply of good safe second hand equipment available. Even hardly used equipment is often half the price of the new item. With a little luck and patience you may be able to buy most of what you need for £600 or so.

**Q. Do I have to be an expert swimmer?**

**A.** Not at all. A good basic level of swimming ability is all that is required.

**Q. Do I have to be super-fit?**

**A.** No. A reasonable level of fitness is enough.

**Q. Is there anything that might preclude me from diving?**

**A.** There are very few cases where someone is unable to dive. Conditions like severe asthma or ear problems, lung or heart disease, epilepsy and diabetes could possibly prohibit you entering dive training. All prospective divers are required to complete a medical self-declaration form, prior to commencing training.

**Q. Is it dangerous?**

**A.** It can be, but that's why you need proper training. To put things into perspective, although there have been several deaths each year, given that there are many tens of thousands of active divers in the UK, making hundreds of thousands of dives each year, the headlines in the papers can be mis-leading. Like any adventure sport diving is as dangerous as you personally want to make it, you are probably at more risk driving to the dive site than actually diving.

**Q. Can I dive abroad with my BSAC qualification?**

**A.** Yes. The qualification is recognised world-wide.

**Q. Would it be quicker to learn to dive elsewhere?**

**A.** There are organisations which do offer diving courses over the course of a single week or a few weekends. Such courses are generally available through Dive Shops or Centres.

**Q. I need vision correction. Is that a problem?**

**A.** Not at all. Many divers wear contact lenses and prescription masks are also available.

**Q. How can I be sure of being properly trained?**

**A.** Scuba diving is a potentially dangerous sport and therefore high quality training is our club's top priority. All our instructors have themselves undergone vigorous training by BSAC and have passed theoretical and practical exams. They all have internationally recognised qualifications.



**Q. What if I have an accident or am injured in some way while diving?**

**A.** Safety is of paramount importance in TSAC. All trainees are taught to dive defensively and within safe limits. Accidents do occasionally happen, as with any sport, and it is advisable to take out insurance cover for personal loss or injury through your own insurers.

**Q. How soon can I get started?**

**A.** We usually run an Ocean Diver course once a year, starting in January. However, please talk to the Training Officer who may be able to arrange other suitable dates.

**Q. What does it mean to be certified?**

**A.** It means that you've learned basic scuba diving skills from a nationally qualified instructor, and are qualified to dive in open water with a buddy. Dive operators will require your certification card and your diving log book before they take you for a dive.

**Q. After I finish my Ocean Diver certification, what can I do?**

**A.** The best thing you can do is to go diving and build-up some experience, and then think about doing your Sports Diver certification.

**Q. For how long will I be certified?**

**A.** Your certification does not expire, but if you don't dive regularly your skills can become "rusty" and it is highly recommended that you keep in practice.

**Q. How deep can I go?**

**A.** The maximum depth for a BSAC Ocean Diver is 20 metres.

**Q. If I only want to dive on holiday in warm water is training with a UK Club for me?**

**A.** Possibly not. The conditions are very different in the UK from most holiday destinations and the training has an emphasis on the skills you need for this. However, that said, if you can dive in the UK you can probably dive in most places. The training is also geared around integrating you into the dive club and takes place over a period of 3-4 months. It might be better to go you a local dive school where you can learn in only 1-2 weeks. You can always come back and dive with us once you've learnt if you get the diving "bug".

**Q. Whilst I'm to learning to dive, is there anything my children can participate in?**

**A.** Yes, they can learn to snorkel in the pool.