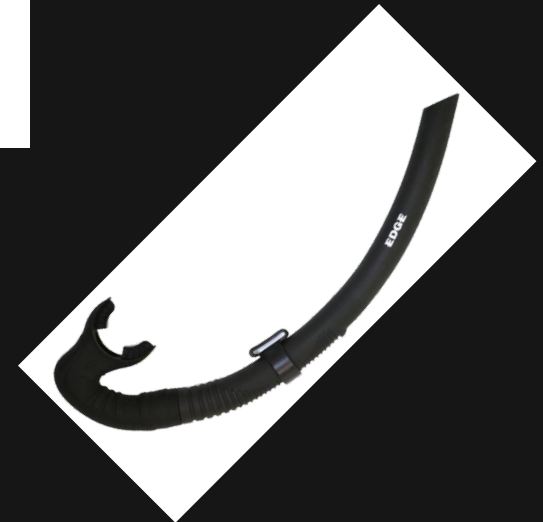
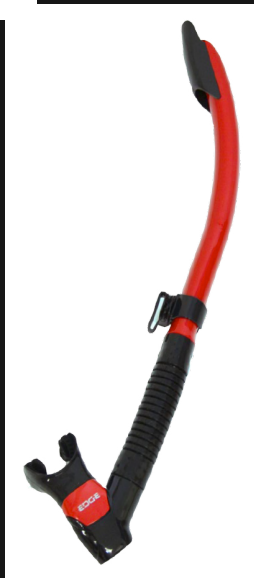
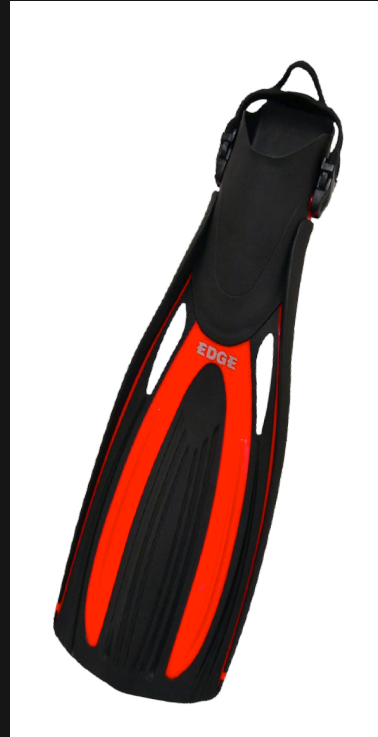


# Practical Guide to Dive Gear

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# Introduction

- This is a guide to purchasing gear for your scuba lessons.
- My suggestions are in your best interest not because I want to sell you expensive gear, but because I want you to be safe, comfortable, enjoy diving and not get ripped off!
- I am an authorized dealer for Edge and HOG brands of scuba gear, 500PSI mask defog, DAN dive safety products, Bigblue Dive Lights and PADI educational products.
- I may be able to help with other brands as well.

Save your money for this!



# Snorkeling vs. DIVING Gear

- There is snorkeling gear like you might pick up at Target and there is DIVE GEAR.
- DIVE GEAR is generally better constructed, more durable, more comfortable, and easier to use with better straps and buckles.
- The difference is most noticeable with fins. Diving fins are a bit heavier and larger for pushing a diver with weights and tank through the water, not on top of it.



**Snorkeling Set**



**Scuba Set**

# How do I tell the difference?

- Snorkeling gear often comes in a set with some sort of bag and costs as little as \$50.
- A scuba quality mask, fin, snorkel and dive boot combo will cost around \$150-\$200.



# Mask



- I suggest a non-purge, two lens, low profile scuba mask with a frame, clear lenses, and a soft flexible silicone skirt.
- Fit is important. If you have a small, very narrow, or very wide face, you will have a harder time finding a mask.
- Put the mask on your face without straps and gently inhale to ensure it forms a good seal.
- If you have long hair you may need a neoprene cover to go over the existing mask strap so putting the mask on and off is easier.
- People with short hair don't need this, the silicone is actually more secure.
- I do not suggest Velcro mask strap replacements.
- This is not an area to be cheap. If you don't see well or if your mask floods, diving will not be fun. Spend \$40-\$50 or more.

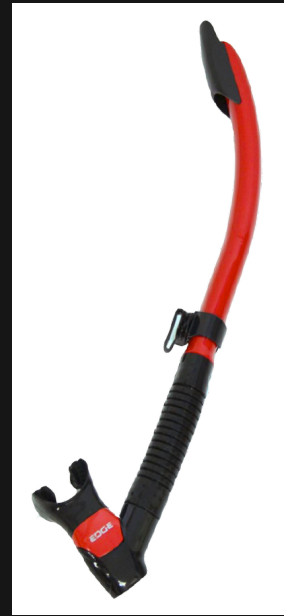
# Break in the mask!

- If you buy a new mask, it must be broken in.
- Masks are notorious for fogging especially when new.
- Follow manufacturers recommendations for preparing your mask.
- Usually this means using a special mask conditioner or abrasive household cleanser to relentlessly scrub the glass and every inch of the silicone skirt and strap with your fingers to remove all traces of silicone mold releasing compound.
- I can't stress how crucial this is to do before the first confined water session.
- Even after this you will need a defog agent every time you dive. Commercial defog products like 500PSI or travel size bottle of baby shampoo will work fine.





# Snorkel



- A tube you breath from- keep it simple.
- There are lots of fancy gimmicks here to avoid.
- I suggest either a simple “semi-dry” snorkel with a valve at the bottom to let water out or a simple J snorkel.
- Try to avoid “dry” snorkels with heavy clunky valves at the top they cause drag and trap air.
- Some prefer a plastic clip attachment while other prefer a simple rubber snorkel keeper.
- I personally prefer the plastic clip.
- There is no need to spend a lot on a snorkel!





# Fins

Must be a fairly large fin designed for pushing divers fully submerged, not a cheap lightweight snorkeling set.

I prefer simple fins without splits down the center of the blade because I believe they allow you to turn and maneuver better, but if you are not strong or have bad knees a split fin may work better.



# Fins

- The best all around fin is an open heel fin that is sized to go with a 3-7mm neoprene dive boot. This way your foot is fully protected while entering and exiting the water and warm in cool water.
- Full foot fins (black) are best for warm water boat diving only.
- Be sure to select the correct size fin for your foot size.



# Fins



YES

YES

NO

- Bungee or spring heel straps are superior to complicated buckles.
- Simply stretch the strap over your heel to put on and off. Easy on- easy off.
- This is very useful in waves or while exiting a boat ladder!
- Bungee or spring heel straps may come with the fins or purchased separately.

# Dive Booties

- If you only get one pair of booties, I suggest a 5-7mm high top zippered neoprene boot.
- These offer a lot of protection for jetty or lake diving.
- They are warm for winter diving, but can also be worn in the Caribbean.
- Booties must fit the fins you choose! Buy them together.



# Wetsuit

- One of the first things you learn in diving is that water conducts body heat very efficiently and you will chill after being submerged for a while even in warm water.
- In addition to providing warmth, wetsuits provide protection from scrapes, stings, and sun.
- For these reasons, I almost always wear a full wetsuit when diving.



Shorty- for summer or Caribbean.

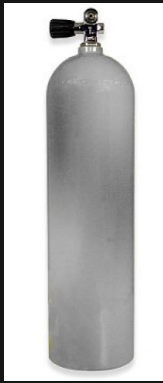


Full Suit is usually best .

# Wetsuit Thickness



- Wetsuits come in 1mm, 2mm, 3mm, 5mm, or 7mm.
- Thickness depends on the temperature of the water and how easily you get chilled.
- If we will be completing open water dives in a spring fed lakes or river such as Spring lake or the Comal (72° F), or if the lake temperature is under 75° F you will need a 5mm or thicker wetsuit and hood (I can usually provide a hood).
- If we will complete lake dives in summer, a 3mm full suit is a usually a good choice.
- If we are completing open water dives in the Caribbean, then a 1-3mm full suit or even a shorty would be fine, but a shorty offers no arm or leg protection, so I highly recommend a full suit to avoid cuts, scrapes, and stings.



# Scuba System

- I provide all other equipment during training.
- Tank, weights, dive computer with compass, BCD, regulator set, signaling device.
- My equipment is very high quality and regularly serviced not junky rental gear.
- I provide premium balanced adjustable regulator, weight integrated BCD, and air integrated computer with compass.
- If you chose to use your own equipment, it should be new or you must show that it is in good working order and has been serviced within the last year (receipt).
- This is for everyone's safety!



# Scuba kit

- If you provide your own scuba system you should have all the components:
  - First stage regulator, second stage regulator, alternate air source regulator, SPG, depth gauge, timing device, and compass (or combination of equivalent devices such as an air integrated computer with compass), BCD, low pressure inflator hose, weight belt (if not weight integrated BCD), a whistle or other signaling device.
  - I will still supply tanks and weights.



# **If you provide your own scuba system**

- You must demonstrate that the gear has been serviced within the last year by a qualified scuba equipment service technician or purchased new.
- Provide these receipts to me prior to the first pool session.
- This is for the safety of you and all divers.

# Surface Marker Buoy and Reel

- SMB- Many dive sites require a surface marker buoy as an added safety measure to signal the boat.
- Finger Spool- Allows the SMB to be deployed during the safety stop. This is particularly useful in places like Cozumel where live boat drift diving is practiced.



# Cameras



Bigblue Video Lights and Tray

- I do not suggest a using a camera until you are fully certified, have many dives under your belt, and your buoyancy control and trim is perfect.
- I do not allow cameras while training as they are a dangerous distraction to a new diver.
- A few times during training, usually on CW 5 and OW 4 I may take video so you can see how you look under water.
- Adding a camera system adds to the complexity of diving and adds to task loading which could cause problems.
- Focus on basic skills before adding the complexity of a camera to your dive setup.
- Never where a GoPro camera on your head.
- Taking quality videos/photos underwater takes skill, proper equipment, and powerful lights. See me for help.

# Knives

- Please do not bring a knife to the open water course.
- They are an unnecessary expensive to lose and hassle during the course.
- Many marine parks don't even allow knives.
- Some places, however, such as the Port Aransas Jetties require multiple cutting devices as there is a lot of fishing line.
- I recommend a simple small inexpensive stainless steel dive knife that can attach to your BCD not to your leg.
- In the event you drop and inexpensive knife into the abyss you won't be tempted to go after it.
- Even stainless steel will rust in salt water so apply some silicone grease, attach it to BCD and forget it until you need it.
- For Jetty diving add a line cutter such as EZ Cut Trilobyte or paramedic shears.
- Wait until after open water to buy a knife and cutting tool you know more about diving.
- Tip- A big honking leg knife will get you laughed at!



# Mesh Gear Rinse Bag

- Here is an accessory you actually need!
- This is the best way to keep all your gear together even when wet.
- Particularly if we are doing Caribbean checkout dives this will be used to carry your gear on and off the boat, dunk it in the rinse tank afterwards, and store it in a locker.



# Things to Avoid

- Self Contained Ascent Bottle such as Spare Air
- These may seem like a good idea, but most divers either practice proper air management and good buddy skills or use a pony bottle.
- Purchase a pony bottle greater than 19cf and a second regulator system if you want a fully redundant air supply.

# Where to Buy

- I am a pro dealer for Edge-Hog brands of recreational and technical dive gear, 500psi products, Bigblue Dive Lights, DAN dive safety products, and PADI educational materials and other products.
- To be competitive with online retailers and offer a great value to my students, I offer this gear at or below internet prices plus local sales tax. Please give me a chance to earn your business.

# Warning

- The most lucrative aspect of the dive business is in selling new expensive gear packages at full retail prices.
- Diving is a sophisticated business.
- It can often feel like a buying a new car from a veteran salesman or a multi-level marketing scam.
- There are many gimmicks, packages, warnings, half truths, stories, “club meetings” and other gambits designed to sell products.
- Examples to be aware of:
  - “Do you want to skimp on life support equipment?”
  - You must own your own equipment because...
  - Buy this gear and training is “free” or reduced.
  - “Free” parts for life if you buy this \$2000 scuba system regulator and pay \$120 for annual service for the rest of your life.
  - “Club meetings” about fancy equipment, held in a retail space surrounded by fancy equipment!
- Use caution. Mask, fins, snorkel, booties and 3mm full wetsuit should cost far less than \$300 new.

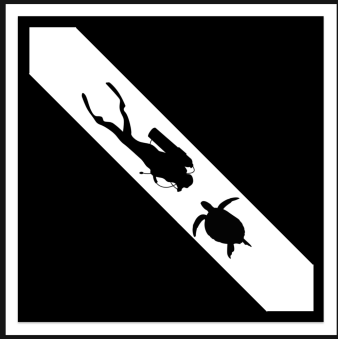


# Buying Used Gear

- Though no dive shop will ever say this, buying used gear from eBay can be steal (it can also be a total disaster). Buyer beware!
- Do your research and know what you are buying.
- Don't buy anything ancient or brands no longer in business.
- Look for signs of corrosion, fading, cracking, damage, or extensive wear.
- Expect to pay about 1/2 – 2/3 of the original cost. Quality well maintained dive gear tends to hold a fair amount of value.
- Look for a real person, not a dealer, that bought the equipment new, used it a few times, cared for it properly, stored it indoors, and then for whatever reason stopped diving. If they mainly did freshwater dives that is a plus.
- Remember regulators and BCDs must be serviced every 1 to 2 years. A regulator set will cost about \$130 including parts to service plus any shipping costs so add this to the overall cost.
- Check used or borrowed equipment very carefully. Often pool sessions are interrupted by rotten fin straps, broken buckles, and other problems with used gear. Replace any broken parts before the pool session.

# Brand

- Your training will tell you suitability, fit, and comfort are the most important factors and that brand does not matter.
- Established brands are all very good and usually “over engineered” and very safe.
- If a salesperson tells you one brand is superior to another its probably because s/he has a higher profit margin with that brand.
- There is a saying in the scuba industry, “The best brand of scuba gear is the one I am selling and the worst brand is the one the other guy sells!”
- Take everything with a grain of salt.



# Ask me

- If you see something new or used online or in a store, feel free to send me a picture or link and ask my opinion.
- I may be able to give pros and cons for the equipment you are considering that you might not think about.
- I am here to help you.
- I want your lessons to go smoothly.
- There are no “dumb” questions.