

# *Because Diving is a Social Sport.....*

**Good diving etiquette is important** in building and maintaining trust with your diving companions. Your training may have covered basic dos and don'ts, but it never hurts to have a refresher. Whether you're taking a giant stride off the back of a boat or making a shore entry, here are some tips on appropriate diving behavior and dive-buddy etiquette to make sure you put your best fin forward.

- **Know your dive preferences:** What's your dive style? Do you fin fast or slow? Do you want to look around or take pictures? It's important to be sure you're comfortable with the dive plan and aren't pressured into diving outside your limits.
- **Discuss your dive location:** Be sure to check weather conditions, currents, etc. If possible, check on local events that may affect travel to the dive site or how busy the dive site will be. If you're diving off a boat with set destinations, make sure your skill level meets the requirements for the dives. Feel free to ask questions politely, however.
- **Don't talk during the briefing:** However, ignoring the briefing is disrespectful and distracting to other divers who are trying to listen, so you're potentially putting yourself and others in danger.
- **Check your breathing gas:** Check your air pressure when you pick up your tank. If you're using nitrox, check the percent mixture before you leave the shop.
- **Remember that diving isn't a competition:** It's important to keep track of your breathing gas consumption, but there's no value in bragging about it. Divers breathe different volumes of gas for a variety of reasons. Be respectful of other divers' usage.
- **Be mindful of your environment:** Be aware of your surroundings and respectful of other divers, both underwater and on the surface. Dive resorts and dive boats often designate dry areas. Don't place wet gear in or walk with wet gear into these areas. If other divers are relaxing in a common area, keep your noise level down. Whether you're diving locally or internationally, be conscious of cultural nuances and respectful of other divers' physical limits.
- **Use correct terminology:** Like any sport, scuba has its own lingo. For example, you should understand the difference between air, gas and oxygen in relation to diving. Air is 21% oxygen, 78% nitrogen and 1% other inert gases, while breathing gas may refer to nitrox, heliox, some other mix or air. Oxygen is used for decompression at shallow depths and should be used only by divers trained in decompression diving. Other often-misused terms are "goggles" and "flippers"; goggles are for swimmers and flippers are for dolphins.
- **Manage your time:** Whether you're shore diving or boat diving, you should show up as scheduled. Give yourself enough time to prepare, dress and assemble your gear, as you don't want to feel rushed — that can create stress that may affect your performance. Generally, it's best to be neither the first nor the last one ready. One tip is to watch the instructor or crew, and suit up when they do.
- **Keep your equipment together:** Bench space for shore diving is often limited and elbow room on a boat even more so. Keep your equipment confined to your designated space so everyone has room to don and remove gear; you'll also be less likely to lose gear or grab someone else's equipment accidentally. And keep in mind that a rocking boat can make balance challenging; keep gear out of walkways so it doesn't impede passage. Space concerns should also guide how much gear you bring with you. If you know space will be tight, consider bringing fewer dive toys.

- **Place heavy objects on the ground:** You've probably heard an instructor call out, "Don't leave your tank standing up!" And while gearing up, it's important not to place heavy objects like weight belts on elevated surfaces. An unexpected bump can flip a standing tank onto its valve and damage it or cause a heavy item to fall and break the gear (or foot!) it lands on.

- **Hone your buoyancy:** Maintaining optimal buoyancy helps you manage your breathing gas consumption and affects your trim. Holding onto another diver can be problematic. If that individual isn't prepared or able to assist you, it may create anxiety, affect that person's buoyancy or maneuvering capability or inadvertently drive the other diver into marine life.

- **Maintain proper trim:** Keeping your fins slightly up reduces downward thrust during finning. Maintaining proper trim reduces fin impact with the bottom, preventing silting and unintentional contact with marine life. Good trim also minimizes your swimming effort by reducing drag and improves your buoyancy, mobility and air consumption.

- **Use the right rinse bucket:** Many dive operations provide fresh water for rinsing masks, cameras and other gear. Check which buckets are for which gear. Don't introduce your spit or defog solution into a bucket used for expensive camera equipment. And if you spit into your mask instead of using a defogger, use a cup or your hand to take water from the rinse bucket to clean your mask. Also, no one wants your wetsuit in the water used to rinse regulators.

- **Take out what you brought in:** Be sure to gather all your belongings and clean up after yourself. It's common courtesy to take your trash with you or deposit it in containers provided by the dive operator. Remember, trash left behind may make its way into the water.

- **Coordinate your communications:** Not all divers are trained by the same agency, and not all agencies have the same hand signals. Coordinating communications is part of a good dive plan.

- **Be a courteous photographer:** Whether you're in a class or on vacation, be aware that not everyone wants to be on your Facebook page or in your Twitter feed. Within reason, ask or warn people before you take pictures. It gives them a chance to opt out, turn away, smile — or photobomb your shot!

## Did you Know?

Wearing too much or too little weight can affect buoyancy and cause divers to work harder to maintain proper trim, increasing gas consumption. Maintaining proper trim, buoyancy control, and efficient and minima movements will likely improve air consumption.