



SAFETY is the key!

Ten tips to make you a safer diver

Image by Michael Hindley.

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Whether you are a new diver with new dive gear, or an experienced diver wanting to upgrade your old gear, before you jump into the water, DAN has a few safety tips to help make your dives memorable, fun and most of all, even safer. These tips and recommendations are not in any specific order.

1 Your health. Being fit and healthy is a key factor, not just on the day of the dive, but as a lifestyle. Diver fitness and visiting your local dive doctor for regular check-ups will ensure that you stay on top of your game in general, and especially when scuba diving.

2 Dive within your limits. You are in control of your dive; we all know that you should plan your dive and dive your plan. Therefore, it is important not to dive outside your comfort zone and training. Don't let other divers push you beyond your own experience. Rather wait and get the specific training for the new diving environment you wish to enter.

3 Continued education. Nothing is more important than expanding your

own competence as a diver through better diving skills and knowledge. Your local DAN business member will be more than willing to assist you with additional dive training. Many of the instructors at these facilities are also trained to offer DAN training courses to help hone your dive safety skills.

4 Practise makes perfect. Few divers are in the water every week of the year. Skills become rusty and many divers find that the first dive of a diving vacation is surprisingly stressful; much of it is spent on re-orientating themselves to the environment. This is quite an expensive and potentially hazardous way to achieve what a quick pool session would achieve in only a few minutes. Check-out dives in a pool are an investment; they are not an indictment of your skill, they are an opportunity to become “tuned in” again so that you can truly enjoy that first dive. Change your attitude towards skills practise.

Take the time to practise all the skills necessary when entering the water; you never know when you might need to use the skills you were taught. If you have been out of the water

for a while, make sure to follow the advice of a scuba instructor, and even complete a refresher course to revise your skills if necessary before diving – it is worth it.

5 Maintain your dive gear.

I'm sure you can still remember the excitement of purchasing your first set of dive gear. However, we soon fall into the habit of thinking about the gear like we do about our clothing. It is simply there to be used, and if a button pops, you have it fixed. Unfortunately, diving equipment is actually life-support equipment in a certain sense. Gear failure is not a trivial matter; regulator free-flow, power-inflators sticking, SPG hoses rupturing, and O-rings bursting are but a few of the maintenance issues that keep showing up in diving accidents. The best way to take care of your gear is to clean it after diving, always make sure that it fits and has no wear and tear or damage, and service it on a regular basis. Taking care of your gear will lessen the chances of malfunction while you are submerged.

6 Plan your dive and dive your plan.

Before travelling to a new dive site, know what to expect and plan for the dive conditions. A little research goes a long way. Get advice from experienced divers, it all adds to the experience and makes the diving safer and more enjoyable. A simple tip may change the whole trip! Make sure that you have the skills and gear to enjoy the dive safely. Also, don't forget your buddy! Plan your dive and dive your plan together, and stay within your dive limits. It's safer and great fun!

7 Remember your ABCs.

A) Air – it's important to continuously check your air supply while diving. The gulp on an empty tank is no way to end a dive! B) Buddy up on every dive and never dive alone. C) Clear your ears and sinuses to avoid barotrauma. S) Slow ascents – there is no rush to ascend the last 5 m of your dive. Take your time, do your stops, and just relax before ending your dive. You will find that it is safer, more enjoyable and more memorable if you do.

8 Visitors from another world.

The thrill of scuba diving is amongst the greatest experiences you will ever have. The excitement of discovering the underwater environment is truly amazing. To ensure that our future generations also have the opportunity to share these experiences, we need to respect the underwater plant and animal life. Therefore, it is essential for all divers to perfect their buoyancy to avoid damaging our reefs and underwater environments.

9 Awareness.

Stay in the moment. Divers can easily become distracted and think about other things other than the experience of their dive. Alternatively, others become so absorbed by the objects they are studying, or the photographs they are taking that they forget everything else. Remain alert and mindful when you dive. It's still a foreign environment for humans. In fact, the best divers are those who are aware of their surroundings, feel comfortable, and know where they are in the dive at all times. Make sure you know where the dive leader, dive group and dive boat is at all times.

10 Diving is fun.

We dive because it is fun and, for most of us, we wish we could dive more often. If, at any time, you are uncomfortable or unsure whether or not to join a dive group, rather call (i.e., cancel your participation in) the dive. You can always join another dive group or dive another reef on another day. When in doubt, don't! Using your best judgment and instinct will keep the sport both safe and fun. **AD**

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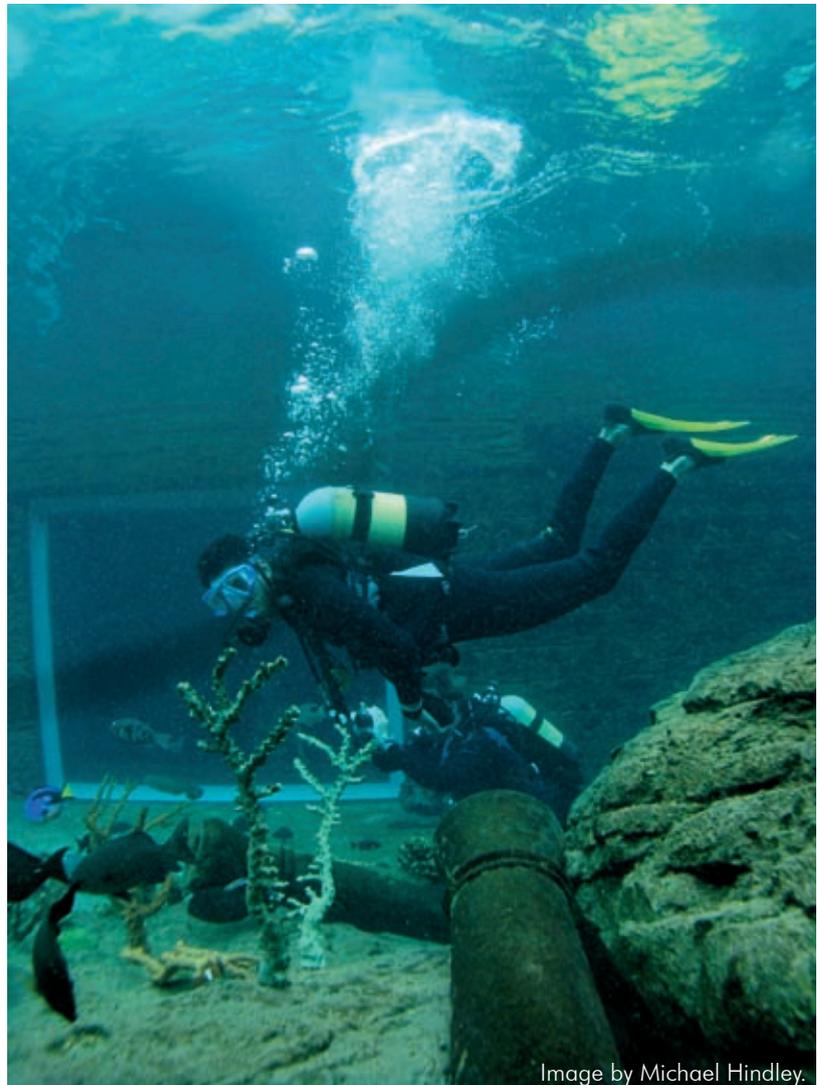


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