

EFFECTIVE  
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# MINIMUM COURSE CONTENT FOR INTRODUCTORY SCUBA EXPERIENCES

As Approved By


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**Recreational Scuba Training Council  
(RSTC)  
Minimum Content  
for  
Introductory Scuba Experiences**

**1. Scope and Purpose**

This standard provides minimum program content requirements for introductory scuba experiences in recreational diving. These requirements, under no conditions, are considered standards for certification in the use of scuba. Instead, these requirements are used to introduce the non-diver to recreational scuba diving via a supervised, controlled dive experience, and to encourage the participant to seek further training. The experience may be conducted anywhere a controlled, enjoyable introduction to diving can be provided. Because the introductory diving program does not result in certification, but is experiential in nature, in-depth knowledge of diving academics and skills is not necessary. Participants are taught only what is necessary of them to experience scuba diving under direct supervision.

Program standards require that participants are taught specific information, concepts and scuba skills. The requirements of this standard are meant to be comprehensive, but general in nature.

Although the information categories outlined are given in what appears to be a logical sequence, the outline should not be viewed as a lesson plan. That is, the order in which the information is presented in this standard, while logical as a framework for the basic requirements of this standard, does not necessarily define the sequence of the program lesson plan. Similarly, the requirements presented in this document do not indicate the emphasis which should be placed on a particular subject area, or the manner in which these subjects are taught. Rather, the outlines, lesson plans and other training aids prepared by training organizations responsible for recreational diver training are used as guidelines for the sequencing and emphasis of program content requirements presented in this standard. Decisions as to sequencing and emphasis are at the discretion of the instructor within the requirements of the instructor's training organization, and are made within the context of environmental factors, participant characteristics and other relevant considerations.

Completion of an Introductory Scuba Experience does not entitle or allow the participant to procure air, scuba equipment, or any other scuba diving services, nor does it allow the individual to engage in recreational diving without direct supervision by an instructor (see definitions). It is the intent of this standard that Introductory Scuba Experience participants will be introduced to the limited academic and skill portions of the experience by an instructor.

## 2. Definitions

**certified assistant.** An individual who is currently certified by a training organization to assist an instructor. By the intent of this standard, all activities of a certified assistant shall be under the supervision of an instructor. Completion of formal training in planning, management and control of diving activities, first aid, cardiopulmonary resuscitation, and diver-rescue techniques is required before a certified assistant may assume responsibility for any participants during open water dives, as defined in this document. The certified assistant shall also have passed a written examination demonstrating certified assistant-level knowledge, as required by the training organization. (See the RSTC Recreational Dive Supervisor and RSTC Recreational Assistant Scuba Instructor Certification standards for details).

**confined water.** Any body of water that offers conditions similar to those of a swimming pool.

**instructor.** An individual who is currently certified and sanctioned by a training organization to conduct introductory scuba dives, teach entry-level scuba diving and to authorize the issuance of entry-level certification. To be sanctioned, the instructor meets the annual renewal requirements of the sanctioning organization. An instructor has completed formal training in lesson preparation, planning and delivery of lecture, pool/confined water skills and open water skills teaching presentations, in addition to completing the training requirements of a certified assistant (see definition). The instructor has also passed a written examination demonstrating instructor-level knowledge, as required by the training organization. (See RSTC Recreational Scuba Instructor Certification standards for details.)

**introductory scuba dive.** An open water scuba dive made under the direct supervision of an instructor to introduce participants to the fun and adventure of recreational diving. The dive does not result in certification. The dive includes the following minimum components: 1) a briefing, 2) preparation to dive, 3) an entry, 4) an underwater tour, 5) a maximum depth not to exceed 40 feet/12 metres, 6) an exit, 7) a debriefing.

**minimum instructional diving system.** The equipment required to be worn by the participants includes: fins, mask, cylinder and valve, regulator/air delivery system, buoyancy control device with low-pressure inflator, back pack, submersible pressure gauge, weight ballast system (if appropriate), exposure suit (if appropriate).

**participants.** Individuals who want to experience scuba diving by making introductory scuba dives and not receive certification.

**supervision.** The following levels of supervision apply as outlined in Section 5.

**direct supervision.** Visual observation and evaluation of participant skill introduction and development during diving activities by an instructor or certified assistant. Direct supervision requires personal observation and evaluation of the skills introduced and developed in the program. During skills introduction and development, direct supervision requires the participant to be accompanied underwater. During the initial introductory scuba dive, direct supervision requires an instructor to accompany the participant underwater and be in control of the participant. Subsequent dives may be led by a certified assistant with reduced ratios as required by the training organization..

**indirect supervision.** The overall control, general observation, evaluation and direction of the participant skill performance and participant diving activities. The instructor must be personally present at the dive site and be prepared to come to the aid of a participant.

### 3. Eligibility for Participation

(1) **Age.** The minimum age for participation is determined by the training organization.

(2) **Medical History/Statement.** Participants in the experience shall complete the medical history/statement form required by the training organization prior to in-water activities. Participants shall comply with all stipulations thereon before in-water activities. It is required that participants who answer yes to questions on medical history be recommended, without conditions or restrictions, by a licensed medical practitioner prior to engaging in water activities. In no event will medical approval be accepted when the person signing the approval is the participating individual.

(3) **Acknowledgment and Assumption of Risk.** Participants are informed of the risks of scuba and sign appropriate forms acknowledging and assuming those risks prior to participating in water activities. These forms may include, but are not limited to: liability release, waiver and release of liability, affirmation and liability release, limitation of liability, assumption of risk, safe diving practices, standards for safety, statement of understanding. Parental or legal guardian signature is required on the appropriate form(s) when the participant is a minor.

(4) **Scuba Skills.** The participant will satisfactorily demonstrate to an instructor the scuba skills required by the training organization and as outlined in 4.4. The instructor shall follow appropriate in-water training parameters in conducting the scuba skills, as required by the training organization and outlined in Section 5.

### 4. Minimum Course Content

The Introductory Scuba Experience consists of topics and skills required by the training organization and as outlined in this section.

**4.1 Introduction.** The following information should be made available to participants before the program.

- (1) Limitation of program
- (2) The need and value of seeking further training.
- (3) Risks of scuba diving

**4.2 Equipment.** Introductory information on the use of the following equipment items.

- 4.2.1 Mask
- 4.2.2 Fins
- 4.2.3 Buoyancy control device/buoyancy compensator
- 4.2.4 Regulator/air delivery system
- 4.2.5 Submersible pressure gauge/air monitor
- 4.2.6 Alternate air source (octopus/safe second)

**4.3 General Knowledge.** Introductory information to diving and the diving environment.

- 4.3.1 Reasons for breathing continuously during the introductory dive
- 4.3.2 Equalization techniques
- 4.3.3 Avoiding hazardous aquatic life
- 4.3.4 Hand signals
- 4.3.5 Necessity for seeking further training, and where to obtain it

**4.4 Scuba Skills.** The following scuba skills shall be required to be introduced to and demonstrated by participants in pool or confined water prior to the introductory scuba dive.

4.4.1 Underwater breathing

4.4.2 Mask clearing

4.4.3 Mouthpiece retrieval

4.4.4 Mouthpiece clearing

4.4.5 Ear clearing/equalization techniques

## **5. Pool/Confined Water Training Parameters**

It is consistent with Section 1, Scope and Purpose, that during any in-water training activities the instructor must be present. Participants shall be introduced to and must demonstrate the skills listed in 4.4. All scuba skills shall be directly supervised by the instructor. The instructor shall conduct the final evaluation to determine the participant's performance is satisfactory to participate in an introductory scuba dive.

5.1 The minimum equipment to be worn by an instructor while conducting pool/confined water training consists of the equipment listed in Section 2 under the definition of "minimum instructional diving system," plus an alternate air source.

5.2 The maximum number of participants for pool training is eight per instructor. The maximum number of participants in confined water is four per instructor (4:1) or six per instructor (6:1) with a certified assistant. Although additional assistants may be used, no additional participants may be added to the responsibility of the individual instructor.

5.3 All introductory scuba skills shall be conducted during daylight hours, in a swimming pool or in confined water shallow enough for the participant to stand up in. When water shallow enough to stand up in is not available, these skills may be conducted from a device such as a descent line or platform within six feet of the surface with reduced ratios as required by the training organization.

## **6. Introductory Scuba Dive Parameters**

It is consistent with Section 1, Scope and Purpose, that all initial open water introductory scuba dives shall be directly supervised by the instructor.

6.1 The maximum number of participants for introductory scuba dives is four per instructor (4:1) or six per instructor (6:1) with a certified assistant. Although additional assistants may be used, no additional participants may be added to the responsibility of the individual instructor.

6.2 All introductory scuba dives shall be conducted during daylight hours, at depths not to exceed 40 feet/12 metres and in water that allows direct vertical access to the surface.

6.3 During any introductory scuba dive, the instructor has the option to delegate responsibility for direct supervision to a certified assistant for the purposes of escorting participants during surface excursions and exits.

6.4 The minimum equipment to be worn by an instructor while conducting introductory scuba training in confined water consists of the equipment listed in Section 2 under the definition of “minimum instructional diving system,” plus a dive knife/diver’s tool (unless prohibited by law or regulation at the dive site), alternate air source, and an emergency-signaling device. When appropriate, the use of a surface support-station with dive flag is also encouraged.

6.5 During the initial introductory scuba dive, while the instructor is attending to the needs of one participant, certified assistants may temporarily directly supervise the remaining participants.

6.6 During any introductory scuba dive, instructors may not engage in any activities other than direct supervision. If other activities such as video or photography are conducted, then a separate certified assistant is to be used for those activities.

**For more information, contact:**  
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# Appendix A

## RSTC Members

### IDEA

International Diving Educators Association  
P.O. Box 8427  
Jacksonville, FL 32239 USA  
1-904-744-5554 Fax: 1-904-743-5425  
Email: info@ideascuba.com

### PADI

Professional Association of Diving Instructors  
30151 Tomas Street  
Rancho Santa Margarita, CA 92688-2125 USA  
1-949-858-7234 Fax: 1-949-267-1266  
Email: Julie.taylor.sanders@padi.com or jeff.nadler@padi.com

### PDIC

Professional Diving Instructors Corporation  
1015 River Street  
Scranton, PA 18505 USA  
1-570-342-9434 Fax: 1-570-342-6030  
Email: info@pdic-intl.com

### SDI

Scuba Diving International  
18 Elm Street  
Topsham, ME 04086 USA  
1-207-729-4201 Fax: 1-207- 729-4453  
Email: worldhq@tdisdi.com

### SSI

Scuba Schools International  
2619 Canton Court  
Ft. Collins, CO 80525 USA  
1-970-482-0883 Fax: 1-970-482-6157  
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