



Open water -What to expect.

Introduction

Moving from the confines of the swimming pool to the open water sessions, can seem daunting, but also exhilarating.

The Open Water lessons are the culmination of your training. These will confirm your ability to apply what you have been taught, in terms of both theory, and, lessons learned in the sheltered water Environment.

After all, the open water is where these skills are applied, and will become second nature.

Rest assured, the instructors would not progress you to open water, unless they are confident in your ability to do so.

Planning

Firstly, the open water sessions will be planned, with appropriate number of students to instructor ratio, diving waves confirmed, and emergency equipment / safety cover in place. This is all planned out before the day of departure by the Training Officer and verified by Diving Officer. The location, travel arrangements (including car sharing opportunities) and arrival timings will be well briefed, but don't hesitate to ask for any further advice or directions if unsure.

The Equipment Officer will have side marked your individual club equipment and will advise you when you need to collect it, or how it will be conveyed to the site. You can also consider looking at the 'Diving Kit Checklist' at: https://www.staffordscuba.co.uk/already_a_diver/resources/dive_kit_checklist.pdf. as a good guide. You should also have made arrangements for the use of a dry suit (purchase, loan or hire). A good fitting dry suit will enhance your diving experience and mitigate some of the known buoyancy issues associated with Ocean diver trainees, especially in the first couple of dives. It is also important that you record your weighting configuration from the pool sessions, and where possible, obtain smaller weight blocks to help fine tune your weighting if required. I would also suggest you bring along a change of clothing (in case of leak accidents), hat gloves, or anything else you feel appropriate to keep you warm whilst out of the water.

On Site

On arrival at the site, there will be a collective brief by the Dive Manager, or Lead Instructor. This will consist of a welcome, confirmation of attendees, Identity of key personnel, an overview of the training programme, and most importantly, a safety brief.

You will also be given an orientation of the site, highlighting changing areas, toilets, emergency access or contact points, route to waterside, Gas filling station, cafeteria, or any other interest or assembly point. You will then be split into your dive waves and handed over to your instructor who will from this point, coordinate your activity from kitting up, buddy check and briefing on the exercises and skills as per the training programme. This will be given to you as a SEEDS brief (something you should be familiar with from the sheltered water lessons).

After each open water lesson, you will receive a debrief from you Instructor on how the exercise progressed. This will be conducted during surface interval, noting elements that have gone well, and maybe not so well. But don't worry, where things may have gone a little array, your instructor maybe able to dynamically plan a revisit to that skill, or exercise later on. During the surface interval, this is your opportunity get to somewhere dry and grab something to eat or drink. A hot drink will be welcome, especially during the cooler months, but also it is important to keep hydrated, so where possible, drink a sufficient amount of water. Do take



advantage of any facilities that maybe available to keep warm and dry during the surface interval, but please adhere to any timings specified to return to your equipment area in order progress the training day.

The cycle of briefing, exercise and debrief will continue until completion of the Open Water syllabus. You may not necessarily receive instruction from the same instructor for all the lessons. This is not a bad thing, as this gives a different perspective to your learning, and each instructor will have their own way of delivering key points. The teaching standards and essential criteria will be consistent, regardless of Instructor, so do not feel you will be disadvantaged by any change. The Open water syllabus consist of four open water lessons. This is typically completed in two days. However, as mentioned, if a revisit to a lesson, skill or exercise is required, additional dives maybe planned at a later or date or time.

Afterwards

On successful completion of the Open water lessons, and assuming all other elements of the Open Water diver syllabus has been completed to a satisfactory standard, you will be awarded the diver grade of Open Water Diver. A great achievement, so well done.

It is important to remember, this is now the starting point of building your diving experience, and a little like removing the 'L' plates from your cylinder and replacing them with 'P' plates.

It is important that you continue to practice the skills you have learned. This will build your confidence and enable you to carry out these skills when they are least expected. You can only do this by going diving.

Being a member of Stafford Sub Aqua Club has the benefits of being involved in the busy diving and social calendar. Instructors and experienced divers in the club are more than happy to practice skills with you, and help perfect the techniques, so take advantage of what is being offered, or organised.

You will at some point wish to purchase your own diving equipment, and it will be beneficial to speak to other members in the club who have been on this journey. They can offer advice on the benefits, and the pitfalls of owning and maintaining your own equipment. The conversation may well present a 'retail opportunity', as they may have items for sale. However, the club will still have sufficient equipment to hire at a very competitive rate.

In short, that's it. Everything from this point on is building on the foundations you have created. Keep current, practice your skills, look at other development courses or exercises and learn to love all there is about the sport.

Safe diving.

Steve Behan

Diving Officer of Stafford Sub Aqua club (0867)

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