

Ocean Gear
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Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)

This form has been assembled in an effort to answer the most frequently asked questions of both students and their parents. Every effort is made to hold to these policies and procedures. These question and answers are designed to help, but cannot possibly answer all your questions. You are encouraged to attend the Parent Meeting scheduled to take place before any certification fees would be due. Please do not hesitate to call our office, or email us at info@scubastuff.com. We will do the best we can to help.

1. What's going on?

Your son/daughter has volunteered to join our regularly scheduled SCUBA Diver class offered through their high school. This is a program that has been teaching the basics of Skin and SCUBA Diving in the High School system since 1976. It will last approximately three weeks, during which time our students will learn about the physics, physiology, marine environment and equipment needed to enjoy the activity in a safe manner. The program is instruction only, and does not require any ocean dives, significant expense, or additional travel. There will be a grade issued at the end of the course based upon the student's attendance, participation and written test score.

2. How does it work?

If you wish to become a SCUBA diver, you must first take a class. This program is offered at dive shops around the world. What makes our program unique is that we divide the certification process into three separate steps, allowing the student the maximum amount of comfort and control. The student must be enrolled in the first step before they can move into the second step, and so on. Completing all three steps will provide the student with a SCUBA Diver Certification Card (license).

Step 1 – Try SCUBA - \$ _____

This is a Physical Education Class. This program is offered for a small **Lab Fee** to our high school students. This program conducts training in both the classroom and the pool. All equipment necessary is provided without any additional charge to the student, school or district. The students are expected to exercise normal care when using the equipment. Students are always expected to pay for the repair or replacement of any SCUBA equipment they are responsible for damaging or losing. The student is under no obligation to participate any further. **No beach dives are allowed.**

Step 2 – Passport Diver Program - \$ _____

This portion of the class provides the student with a "learner's permit". By extending their instruction into the Passport Diver Program, they will be able to dive anywhere in the world with one restriction. They may only dive with a certified Dive Leader. In order to achieve this level of recognition, they must complete one After-school Session, one "Skin" Dive and two SCUBA Dives in addition to the Try SCUBA program described above. They must also receive a satisfactory score on a written exam. The fee for this program must be paid approximately half way through the high school program. Failure to pay the fee does not drop a student from our class; it merely limits the type of instruction they can receive and prevents them from attending any beach activity or other dive trip. Logbook and study guides are provided to these students. This portion of our program is not a school-sponsored activity and no School-based supervision or transportation will be provided.

Step 3 – Openwater/SCUBA Diver Certification - \$ _____

This is full certification – The License. Upon completion of all the elements of this program, our student is now a fully certified diver. The license is internationally recognized and is issued for life, requiring no renewal. The individual may dive any place in the world where diving is permitted with another certified diver. In addition to the elements of both Step 1 and Step 2, the student must attend one after-school classroom session (lasting about 3 hours), complete two (2) additional SCUBA dives and pass a written exam. There is an additional fee paid to upgrade from the Passport Diver Program to the SCUBA Diver program. A logbook, study guide and certification cards are provided to the students. This portion of our program is not a school-sponsored activity and no School-based supervision or transportation will be provided.

3. What does it cost?

Except for the "lab & materials" fee, there is no cost in the student participating in our **Try SCUBA** program. The only costs that come into play are if they wish to pursue either of the remaining steps in the certification program. Then they would be expected to pay the required tuition fees. Please refer to Steps 1, 2 & 3 above.

4. Do I have to buy any gear?

NO! There is no equipment purchase necessary. The use of the SCUBA equipment is provided in the High School portion of the program, at no additional charge. Traditionally, new students would have to purchase their own mask, fins, snorkel, boots and gloves (“personal gear”). We will not make any such requirement. We do strongly recommend that Dive Boots and Gloves be purchased by all Passport Divers and believe that students wishing to become fully certified should seriously consider the proper mask, snorkel and fin combination. All these items will be available for purchase at the initial beach dive. (Mask, snorkel and fins are available for rent. Refer to question #5.)

5. Are there any additional expenses?

Only one, and only if the student participates in Openwater (ocean) training. If a student has no SCUBA gear at all, they must rent gear for their ocean dives. The student will pay \$20 for their first Skin Dive. When they return to make their SCUBA Dives, they will make two dives per day. The rental rate for that activity is \$35 per day (and now includes a SCUBA tank and regulator). Rates include rental quality mask, snorkel and fins. Boots & Gloves cannot be rented. If divers provide any of their own gear (equipment must be approved by the instructor-in-charge of the activity), the rental rate is reduced accordingly.

6. Are there any special discounts offered?

Absolutely! While equipment purchases are not required, we know that students will dive more often and be more comfortable if they own some of their own equipment. If our students purchase their own Mask, Snorkel, Fins, Boots & Gloves from Ocean Gear they will not only receive a “package price” saving an average of 25% off the Suggested Retail Price, but will receive their first day of gear rental **FREE**. That is up to an additional \$20 savings. In addition, Ocean Gear will meet or beat any advertised price from any authorized dealer of the products we carry.

7. When & Where do I dive?

All diving is done on the weekends at local Orange County beaches or on our regularly scheduled boat diving weekends. Information regarding our regular weekend beach dives is given to each student in the form of our Beach Diving Outline. Please look the form over carefully. You can also review this information at our website – www.scubastuff.com. Diving is offered almost every Saturday & Sunday, dive conditions permitting and holidays notwithstanding.

8. How long does it take?

The course itself is only about three weeks long. The length of time it takes to complete the dives is entirely up to the diver. If you do not complete your dives within six months of training, you may have to do a little refresher work with an instructor, but this is fairly simple and always **FREE**. To become fully certified you will need three weekend days, Passport Divers only require two weekend days. This is the typical format. Individual divers may require additional dives to achieve the level of comfort we require in certified divers. All dives can be completed on one of our multi-day dive trips.

9. What kinds of trips are offered?

We offer local training beach dives every Saturday & Sunday (weather and holidays permitting). We also routinely take two-day boat trips to Catalina Island. During our longer high school vacation breaks we take weeklong trips to the island of Cozumel in the Caribbean as well as to other more exotic locations. Ocean Gear also maintains a relationship with a local dive boat for certified divers to enjoy a single day on a boat on most any weekend. Regularly scheduled dives include: Catalina (both front & backside), San Clemente Island, Santa Barbara Island, Local Oil Rigs and Shipwrecks. We can also assist with individual divers and families looking to travel to locations around the world. A simple phone call or email can start the process. A deposit is required to hold a spot for all but the local beach dives. **The deposit is non-refundable unless Ocean Gear cancels the trip.** There will be no exceptions. Additionally we offer an opportunity for our students to earn free Catalina trips. They simply need to become a certified SCUBA Diver and then come to the beach on the weekend beach dives to assist our staff in diving new students. **For every eight (8) days they work the student earns a free Catalina trip.**

10. How is transportation provided?

All students, in cooperation with their parents, are expected to provide all their own transportation. None of our diving activities are school projects. Ocean Gear’s liability does not extend to student transportation. It will be necessary, therefore, for all students to provide their own transportation and assume all responsibility in that matter. It is also the responsibility of the student and the parent to become familiar with our dive reservation policy. Each student will be required to make the necessary reservations to complete their diving duties. This procedure is explained in the form entitled “Beach Diving Outline”, which is available on our website.

11. What uniquely qualifies you to teach my child how to dive?

Our program has specialized in teaching high school-aged youths for nearly 30 years. We are required to follow the same guidelines for safe SCUBA instruction as any other Dive Operator. Additionally, we set additional rules and guidelines which are substantially more conservative. This will be better explained at the Parent Meeting, but a short list would include: smaller Student:Instructor ratios, shallower “maximum depth” dives, higher required test scores, more comprehensive swim evaluations, local on-site instruction (no special traveling to classes during the school week) and a specially designed teaching method created to make their learning both fun and desirable.

12. Does the written test have to be passed before dives can be made?

No. The test must be passed before certification can be issued, but that can happen before or after the dives are made. The test can be taken online, but it is password protected and timed. The test can be taken as many times as necessary to pass (only 3 times online). Our students will receive as many additional tutorial sessions as necessary or desired until they pass the exam. We will be happy to continue to teach and train. Our students must be prepared to travel to our office for additional training, but all training is provided without any additional costs.

13. What if someone else wants to take a class?

Ocean Gear has developed an extremely effective “Home Study” program, which will allow family members and friends from all over Southern California to learn to SCUBA dive. This program is a true multi-media guide through recreational diving. With the help of a textbook, workbook, DVD and audio CD’s, logbook and dive table, this program allows the student to start their course today and move as quickly as their schedule permits. There are 3 pool sessions, which must be completed at our pool in Huntington Beach.

14. What is your refund policy concerning classes or dive activities?

Our refund policy is simple. You can only be granted a refund if you present a written request, accompanied with a letter written by a doctor as to the medical reason you cannot continue your SCUBA training in the future. This request must be submitted within thirty (30) days of the completion of the **Try SCUBA** High School program. Any expenses of the program will be prorated from the original fee. Absolutely no refund will be granted under any circumstances once the student begins making their dives, for any reason. Unless the student is unable to pass the swim tests, there will not be a refund granted for the Lab Fee under any circumstances. Students and Parents are reminded to review the medical form prior to attending. Any questions regarding medical conditions should be directed to our office (714-375-0595) or the instructor at the school.

Please remember that you and the student enter into this agreement independent of the high school. You are given every opportunity to ask questions, and make inquiries prior to making a decision to participate in our program. Once you make that decision it must remain final. We appreciate your cooperation in this matter and will make every effort to see your trust is not misplaced.

I hope these questions have been of some help. Please remember the Parent Meeting is the very best source you have for current information. All items will be discussed, including dive dates, trips, fees and equipment requirements. Our web site, www.scubastuff.com, is also a good source for both information and communication. We look forward to meeting you soon.

Sincerely,

John Sims, NAUI #11274
Course Director
Ocean Gear Dive Center