

RULES HINTS and ACRONYMS APHORISMS



the list is endless!

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Certain rules are necessary to maintain some form of social order and safety otherwise we'd have a chaotic free-for-all. And when it comes to sport - imagine what rugby, soccer or hockey might be without rules!

It's no different with diving and I'm sure we can all recall a few of those earlier rules we learned – like the generally accepted most important rule of scuba diving: not holding one's breath, or any of a bunch of more specific ones such as one relating to PADI's RDP: if you end up as a Y or Z diver at the end of a dive, you must have surface interval between all subsequent dives of at least three hours.

Rules and Hints

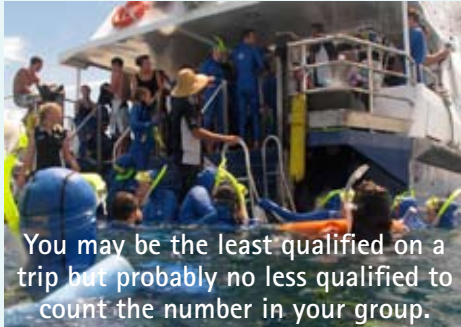
From that very first dive course, certain other rules are drummed into us that often go along the lines of: stay fit and healthy, use correctly fitting and maintained equipment, don't dive anywhere unfamiliar without proper orientation by a local (and preferably a professional diver). These are the sorts of printed rules and recommendations that are often found and repeated in one form or another in various diving texts and magazines.

PADI's statement of understanding of safe dive practices form offers a nice tidy list of dos and don'ts to which every PADI diver is obliged to read and sign at the beginning of every dive course – beginner to instructor – because it's not just beginners that need to follow basic rules.



Although that's not a bad list of rules to observe, there are other suggestions that perhaps more heed should be taken of, with a few of them possibly being stressed a lot more. Here are a few that I'm sensitive to:

1. Count heads. You may be the least qualified diver on a dive trip but probably no less qualified to count the number in your group. One of my early trainees had to point out to a 'Trip leader' on the way back from a dive site that they had started with 12 divers and he could only count 11. Sure enough, they'd left one behind. That recently qualified trainee (way back then) was only qualified as a basic scuba diver. All of the other divers had no less than an instructor rating; a higher level of qualification doesn't automatically dispense with the need to use common sense. Let me hasten to add that this scenario did not play out recently!



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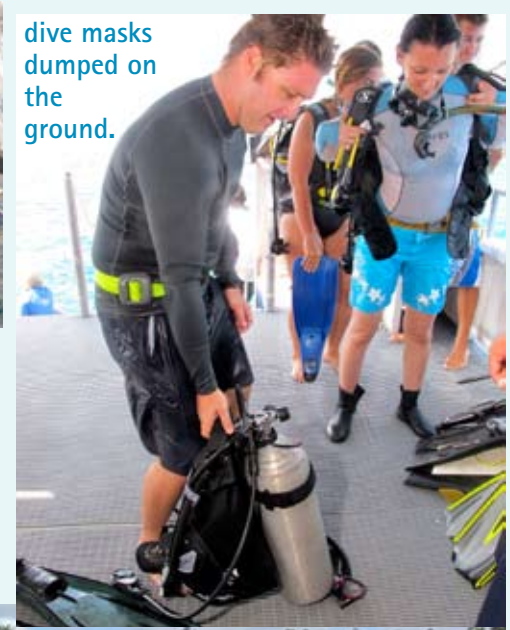
2. Have a surface marker buoy (SMB) or similar device to mark either where you are and/or where you would like to come back to. If you're after scallops you can check them down there and come back and lift them up later. Don't attempt to haul up a bag full just using your BCD. There have been too many 'scallop deaths' attempting just this.



3. Put masks and other brittle items where tanks won't modify them. I'm still amazed by the number of dive masks dumped on the floor of dive boats and then watching as divers clumsily steer around them while disassembling equipment. Some instructors hark on about a mask on the forehead being a signal of distress but if there's a problem with this it's more often than not losing the damn thing by either swimming backwards or through wave action. Makes diving a bit blurry.

4. As well as an SMB, have an audible and visual means of gaining attention. For most diving professionals, this is a requirement of their training organizations. However, all divers should be equipped like this.

5. Listen to briefings. Who cares if you dived the Maldives or Seychelles last week! We're here now and being addressed by a local who is doing a job of indicating the do's and don't's of the area and this



dive masks dumped on the ground.

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particular dive. Stop bragging to your new dive buddy and listen up! I've yet to meet a diver that's so experienced that they don't need good local advice.

Then there are simple hints or acronyms that help with remembering important steps in getting ready for and doing the dive.

Acronyms

This is where we use a catchy phrase where the first letter of each word relates to an

item to be checked. For buddy checking prior to a dive we can use such as PADI's *'Begin With Review And Friend'*. The **BWRAF** translates into **BCD**, **Weightbelt**, **Releases**, **Air** supply and **Final** okay. I think from a couple of the recent entries I've seen the **F** should stand for **Fins**! Some prefer *'Big white rabbits are fluffy'* or one of a variety of more politically unacceptable sayings such as *'Bangkok women really are fellas'*.

Then there are entry checks, descent and ascent checks. I always smile when I

hear divers worldwide using the acronym **SORTED** before descent; A young lady at an IDC in 1988 floored us with a modification of the '5-point descent' procedure to: **S**ignal, **O**rient, **R**egulator in, check **T**ime, start **E**qualising and **D**escend/**D**ump air. Yes, it's six points but I've always considered it to be an improved checking device.

There's 'reach for the **STARS**' on ascent: **S**ignal, check **T**ime, **A**rms up, **R**otate, **S**wim.

I haven't a useful acronym for entries but hope someone can write in with a catchy one we can use!

Aphorisms

Almost like moral statements to make decision-making easier. Good examples are *'Haste makes waste'* and *'Two heads are better than one'*. These particular sayings give good nutshell advice to avoid mistakes through rushing things (like racing into the water before the engines stop) or if we need advice from someone on a direction to take (like listening to a briefing). Unfortunately, other aphorisms such as *'A stitch in time saves nine'* (do a buddy check) and *'Too many cooks spoil the broth'* (shall we dive here or there, or there, or there, or there...) indicate the opposite and suggest contradictory advice: even though you are rushing, a quick and temporary fix may save the day and getting too much advice on which direction to take, you'll probably go nowhere.

Whichever aphorism is suggested as a way to direct you in any certain situation, there's nearly always a contrary one that can lead you in the opposite direction. That's where those rules and checklists come in. No ambiguity and with observation and repetition, the simple rules and checks that are taught (and hopefully learned) become part of a safe diver's practise.

In our earlier years, those who looked out for us attempted to teach us rules that would keep us safe and happy. It didn't stop as we got older though did it? Rules, regulations, codes of practice, checklists, hints, suggestions; a never ending list of habit-forming procedures. In their place, most have been created to achieve the very same objective – to make things safe and ensure our happiness. To avoid or ignore them is what usually leads to hiccups and we now should know that *'worse things happen at sea'*!

Listen up! I've yet to meet a diver that's so experienced that they don't need good local advice.



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