

PADI Open Water Course and Scuba Diver – Certification

The PADI Open Water Diver Course leads to two possible certifications: PADI Scuba Diver and PADI Open Water Diver.

Open Water Diver certification is a *full entry* level certification you earn by successfully completing the entire Open Water Diver course. The PADI Open Water Diver certification qualifies you to:

- Dive independently (with a certified diving buddy) while applying the knowledge and skills that you learned in this course, within the limits of your dive training and experience. **You shall be licensed to dive to a depth of 18 meters.**
- Procure air fills, scuba equipment and other service for scuba diving.
- Plan, conduct and log open water no stop (no decompression) dives when equipped properly and accompanied by a buddy in conditions which you have training and or experience.
- Continue your diver training with a specialty dive in the PADI Advanced Open Water program, and or in PADI specialty course.

The PADI Scuba Diver Qualification is earned by completing only a portion of the Open Water Course. The Scuba Diver course is a *pre-entry* level certification and qualifies you to:

- Dive under the in water supervision of a PADI Divemaster (or someone with a higher professional rating) while applying the knowledge and skills that you learned in the course, within the limits of your training and experience. **You shall be licensed to dive to a maximum of 12 meters.**
- Procure air fills, scuba equipment and other service for scuba diving whilst under direct supervision.
- Plan, conduct and log open water no stop (no decompression) dives when equipped properly and accompanied by a buddy in conditions which you have training and or experience.
- Continue your scuba dive training to the PADI Open Water Diver certification and some selected specialty courses.

Pre-requisites:

To become a Scuba Diver – you need to be comfortable in the water and have basic swimming skills, so your instructor will have you do some swimming and floating (nothing extreme – 200 meter swim at you leisure and a 10 minute float on the surface (any way up)). This is just enough to determine you have the basic swimming abilities. You don't need to be an athlete, but you should be generally in good health particularly your respiratory and circulatory systems. Mentally you need a mature attitude and the self-discipline to follow the guidelines and principles required for safe diving.

Before any confined water dives (in the swimming pool or an environment similar to a swimming pool i.e. an enclosed and sheltered bay) or skills, your instructor will have you complete a medical statement. The information that you put on this shall be entirely confidential. Because the statement identifies conditions that may be affected by diving, for your safety it is important to complete it entirely and accurately. If any of the conditions apply to you, as a prudent precaution, your instructor will ask you to consult a physician before participating in any of the water activities.

The minimum ages for scuba certification are 12 for the Junior Open Water or Junior Scuba Diver certification (adult supervised diving), and 15 for the Open Water Diver or Scuba Diver certification. These certifications show that you successfully completed the course according to the training standards and requirements established by PADI. Dive centers and reports require a person to be a certified diver or in training before they will rent or sell you scuba equipment, fill scuba tanks for you, or let you participate in scuba activities. There is a "Discover Scuba Diving" (DSD) program which allows you to dive one day under the direct supervision of an instructor for the experience without the certification but the diving is extremely limited.

Open Water Diver Course Structure:

The PADI Open Water Diver course consists of 3 segments: Confined water dives, knowledge development and open water dives. Each plays an important role in learning to dive in meeting the performance objectives you need to qualify as a diver.

The fun begins in the confined water dives, during which you will apply dive principles, and learn and practice dive procedures and skills. You'll do this either in a swimming pool or in body of water with pool like conditions under your instructor's guidance and supervision. There are 5 confined water dives that correspond with 5 knowledge development sections (**the 1st 3 correspond to the Scuba Diver Course**).

Knowledge development establishes the principles and basic information that all divers need to have fun diving safely. It's divided into 5 bite sized segments that you'll complete primarily on your own time or in the classroom alone by using the PADI Open Water manual and video to guide you. For each segment your instructor reviews and elaborates on the material, applying what you're learning to your specific needs and the local dive environment. A short quiz at the end of each section in the manual confirms that you have picked up the information that you need from that section.

Section One covers:

- The under water world
- Dive Equipment

- Scuba Systems
- The Buddy System (Your partner in the under water environment)
- Confined water dive preview

Section Two covers:

- Adapting to the underwater world
- Respiration
- Dive Equipment
- Buddy System communication and procedures. There are many hand signals that you need to learn for communicating under the surface of the water. These are generally:
 - OK signals on the surface, on the surface to the boat or shore, OK with gloves on, OK on the surface when you have one hand occupied.
 - STOP signal.
 - Something is wrong.
 - Distress signal on the surface and the danger signal to your buddy.
 - Going up or ascend.
 - Going down or descend.
 - Low on air.
 - Out of air.
 - Buddy breathe or share air signals.
 - Come here.
 - Me, or watch me.
 - Under over or around obstacles.
 - Level off at this depth.
 - Go that way.
 - Which direction?
 - Ears not clearing/equalizing.
 - I am cold.
 - Take it easy or slow down.
 - Hold hands.
 - Get with your buddy.
 - You lead and I'll follow.

The above are just some examples of the general signals that need to be learned but each dive destination might have a unique and different set of signals that you'll learn over and above these. For example the signal for a certain fish variety or current direction. Your instructor and divemaster will guide you through these and generally most are common sense.

- Confined water dive preview.

Section Three covers:

- The Dive Environment
- Dive Planning

This would be the basics of gathering your equipment, safety procedures, gaining a buddy, dive conditions etc.

- Boat Diving
- Problem Management
- Confined water dive preview
- General Open Water Skills
- Open Water Dives 1 & 2

Section Four covers:

- Dive accessories
- Health for diving
- Breathing Air at Depth
- Confined water dive preview

Section Five covers:

- Special Dive Table and Computer Procedures
- Using the Dive Table (RDP – Recreational Dive Planner)

The RDP displays to you how to easily manage the planning of your dive safely, showing you how to stay within the limits of time and depth underwater without going into decompression diving. This means that you'll know exactly how deep you can go and for how long before you have to surface maintaining a safe dive profile. As recreational divers we ensure that we can safely surface at any time without having to make decompression stops.

- Basic Compass Navigation
- Confined water dive preview
- Open Water Dives 3 & 4 and optional Skin Dive
- Dive Safety Practices Summary

You may find that the sequence of these is changed very slightly but all of the main elements are here and shall be viewed at some stage. The great thing about the PADI system is that it is very logical and runs very smoothly allowing you maximum enjoyment whilst learning the fundamentals of scuba diving.

At the end of the knowledge development section there is a 50 question examination (in leisurely conditions) which covers all of the 5 knowledge review sections and your instructor will go through this with you for "reinforced" learning.

The Open Water Dives complete your training as an entry-level scuba diver by applying all that you have learned and further developing your knowledge and dive skills in a dive environment under your instructors supervision and direct guidance.

You'll make at least 4 Open Water Dives and perhaps an optional skin dive, during this part of the PADI Open Water Dive course. Prior to certification, you'll

meet specific learning objectives that you'll read about in the Open Water Divers manual.

You'll learn in a sequence that establishes skills and knowledge from simple to the complex, with later skills and knowledge building on what you learn first. For this reason it is important to successfully complete each section before moving on to the next.

The Open Water course is generally conducted over 4 days with the first and second day in the pool and classroom. The third and fourth days will be in the ocean conducting your open water dives. THIS CAN BE shortened to 3 days if time is a deciding factor. The course is still within all standards and can be easily achieved at this rate. We sometimes find that students on holiday would like to complete the training in a shorter period with time restrictions and also this will allow for an additional day pleasure diving before departing back home.

Now that you are certified as an Open Water Diver you are able to dive to a maximum recommended depth of 18 meters with a buddy of equal or higher scuba training to yourself...

...happy diving!