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Scuba Diving 101

Challenge your body—and your sense of adventure—with this hardcore underwater sport

by Jennifer Baggett



What's more bad ass than Sean Connery in *Goldfinger* when he emerges from underwater with a duck decoy on his head, pops out his scuba regulator, scales a wall, roughs up a guard, plants some explosives and smoothly pulls off his dive gear to reveal a perfectly dry white tux? Uhh, you, learning to do the same thing, of course.

Okay, so maybe getting scuba certified won't turn you into a world-famous secret agent and ladies man extraordinaire overnight—but it can help satisfy your inner adrenaline junkie, get you into awesome shape, teach you to stay calm and controlled under pressure and lead you to exotic locales all over the world. Here's what you should know about getting your 'license to dive':

Basic Training

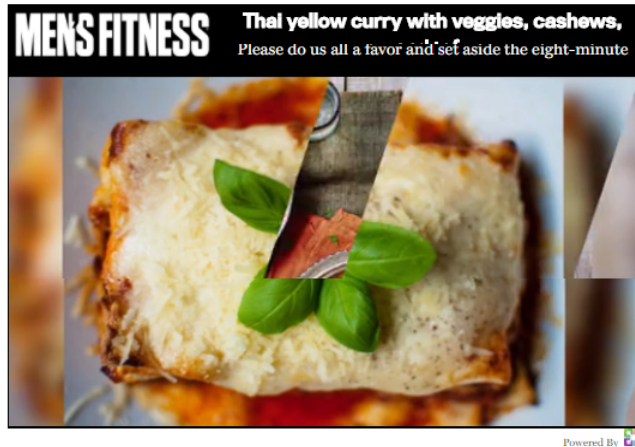


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Learning to scuba dive is easier than you may think. But like any sport worth doing well, it takes commitment and practice. The first step is completing an Open Water Diver course through a certification agency like The Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI)—the largest and most recognized in the world—which is accomplished in three phases:

- **Phase 1:** Learn the fundamental principles of scuba diving in a group class or through self-study and pass the required quizzes.
- **Phase 2:** Start your initial underwater training in a pool or other confined setting. Here, a dive master takes you step by step through all of the basic scuba skills, such as how to assemble your equipment, breathe through your regulator, clear your mask, control your buoyancy and what to do in an emergency.
- **Phase 3:** Apply what you've learned to an open-water setting (e.g. an ocean or lake) by successfully completing four dives with an instructor. This can be done locally or while you're away on vacation.

Once you've finished all three phases, you'll receive your official PADI Open Water certification card, which enables you to dive recreationally to depths of 130 feet anywhere in the world—and the certification is good for a lifetime.





Killer Benefits

Scuba diving is an excellent full body workout, which pushes your lower half the hardest—toning everything from your abs and glutes to your thighs and calves. Depending on your fitness level, weight and physical excursion underwater, you can burn an average of 500-700 calories per hour. And that doesn't even include the extra workout you get carrying your equipment on and off the boat and climbing in and out of the water with a tank on your back.

Other perks of the sport: You have a built-in buddy system of millions of experienced divers around the world to help you hone your skills and get the most out of your training. And once certified, you can start filling your log book with action-packed dives that come with some serious bragging rights—everything from exploring the inky depths of blue holes and discovering the sunken remains of abandoned battleships to floating through sun-speckled caves and swimming alongside schools of manta rays and nurse sharks.

Take the Plunge

Whether you're an overextended executive who struggles to squeeze in a workout or a guy who hits the gym daily, getting PADI certified is easier than ever with affordable and flexible options to fit every time frame. Go at your own pace with online courses through PADI's e-Learning (you have a full year to complete your bookwork and tests) and do the dives at your leisure. Or if you're planning a trip to a popular diving destination, opt for an accelerated session at a nearby scuba center that combines your classroom and pool work, and finish your four dives when you're away. To find a course that fits your style and your schedule, visit PADI.com or contact your local dive shop.

Up the Ante

Find yourself craving greater challenges and adventures beyond Open Water (as many divers do)? You can add a range of skills and PADI certifications to your underwater repertoire, including:

- **Advanced Open Water:** Take your skills to the next level. This course include five adventure dives: underwater navigation, deep water and three of your choice (e.g. wreck dive, night dive, diving with underwater scooters).
- **Digital Underwater Photography:** One of the most popular specialty dives, this course teaches shutterbugs how to select underwater equipment and the principles of snapping quality photos at depth.
- **Cavern Diver:** Master the techniques for navigating complex cavern systems, the special equipment used and emergency procedures.
- **Rescue Diver:** Learn self rescue techniques, emergency management and equipment and rescuing panicked or

unresponsive divers.

- **Open Water Instructor:** Help others to follow in your (fin)steps by getting certified to teach—credentials that could make you employable all over the world.
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