

Getting Back in the Water

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In any group of divers there will be those that dive all year round, but also those who hang up their gear in April/May and don't get it out again until November/December.

So if you belong to the latter group, take some time to get ready to dive again, and make those first few dives simple ones. Here are a few checks you should make before your first dive.

Dive Equipment

Regulators and Tanks

- Check your tank(s) are in test.
- Check the O ring, is it perished or cracked? Are there thin bits of rubber "peeling off" from the O ring? If in doubt, replace it, but make sure it is the correct size! If you are unsure of the correct size, visit a dive shop and buy several, and keep a stock of spares.
- Attach the regulator to the tank and slowly turn the tank on. Make sure you place your hand over the top of the tank and first stage of the regulator, and make sure the SPG is facing away from your face.
- Check for spiders or other insects in your second stages. Give them a good shake.
- Purge both second stages in air and water.
 - Are either of the diaphragms sticking?
 - Are either free flowing?
- Check both mouth pieces for cracks or perished material.
- Take a few breaths. Do they both breathe freely?
- Spray soapy water over the first stage and look for bubbles. If you see them, remove the regulator and reseal it. If the leaks continue, have the regulator serviced.
- Leave the regulator on the tank and the tank turned on for several hours. Does it hold pressure? If not, that suggests a leak that should be located. If it only deflates very slowly that is OK. A slow leak could also suggest a leak from the tank valve O ring but that should have been detected with the soapy water. There may of course be leaks from the O rings attached to the individual regulator hoses.

Buoyancy Compensators

- Shake out the inflation mouth piece.
- Inflate and deflate the BCD manually. Is the button sticking or does it depress and release smoothly?
- Attach the SCUBA feed. Does it fit on and off easily? Inflate the BCD. Does the button depress and fully release easily or is it sticking? Any problems, get them seen to at a dive shop or SCUBA service business. You definitely don't want the SCUBA feed to stick underwater!
- Check you can "pop" the SCUBA feed off using one hand only.
- Fully inflate the vest and leave it for several hours. Check that it has not deflated. If it does, there is a leak somewhere. Immerse the BCD and inflation hose in water and look for leaks or use the soapy water spray again.

Wetsuit or Drysuit

- Check for spiders. I recently picked up my wetsuit jacket from hanging over my boat and put my arm into the sleeve . Quite a surprise when my hand met with a large huntsman spider. And my jacket had only been drying for about a week since the last time I dived.
- Check the suit still fits and the zips and Velcro still work.

You the Diver

Perhaps you have dropped in fitness over the winter period and maybe put on a little weight. It has been quite a long, wet and cold winter.

Remember, when everything goes right, diving is easy and not very physically demanding, BUT when things go wrong, it can be very demanding. So check your fitness level and do some sort of activity to bring your fitness levels up.

- Regular strenuous walking.
- Fin swimming in a pool.
- Exercise classes.
- Running, cycling, swimming.
- Assemble your gear and put it on. Make sure the "muscle memory" gets it right. Do you automatically know which way to fit the regulator to the tank? Is the BCD inflator hose in the correct position?

Covid Reminder

And if you have had Covid in the last few months, be even more careful. Remember Covid affects your lungs, and we need them to be functioning well while diving.

Check List

Why not print this article off and use the check boxes at the left to tick off when you have completed the checks.

Back in the Water

Take the time to do a couple of easy dives in favourable conditions first. Just get the feel of diving again. Make sure you feel comfortable before heading off to one of your favourite deeper or current prone dive sites. And gradually work up to deeper more demanding dives.

Once you get in the water, have your buddy check what you look like. Try not to look like the divers in the photographs below. Matthijs enjoys sending me horror pictures of divers he sees on the internet. Have a look at the photos. Can you see what is wrong.

Hint: Remove all danglies, and make sure all long hoses are controlled and not forming long loops that can catch on things.





And Finally.. Enjoy you diving season.