

Abbreviated

Glossary of Scuba Diving Equipment Terms



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About This Glossary

You probably know that SCUBA is an acronym for Self-Contained Underwater Breathing Apparatus. But what equipment do today's scuba divers need to breathe underwater and protect themselves from the environment?

This glossary contains the top ten definitions describing the gear used by recreational scuba divers, who safely dive at a depth up to 130 feet.

For additional terms about equipment and scuba diving, see Web sites such as:

<http://www.mtsinai.org/pulmonary/books/scuba/sectionq.htm>

<http://www.scuba-doc.com/glossry.html>

air tank

See tank.

BC

See buoyancy compensator.

boots

Protection and warmth for your feet and ankles—underwater and on land.

Usually made of neoprene (about ¼" thick, spongy material), boots prevent chafing from wearing fins. Boots also help keep your feet warm when you are underwater by trapping a thin layer of water between the boots and your feet. On land, the boots' rubber soles protect your feet when you walk around on shore or on the dive boat. *See also* fins.



buoyancy compensator (BC)



Vest that secures your tank so that it rests on your back and helps you adjust your depth when underwater.

To descend underwater from the surface (or slow a quick ascent to the surface), you can **release** slight puffs of air from your BC by pulling on a hose to release the air from the BC. Conversely, to approach the surface from underwater, you can **fill** the BC with air from your tank. If necessary, you can also inflate your BC orally. *See also* tank.

computer

See dive computer.

dive computer

Electronic device that provides information about your dives.

A dive computer measures information including:

- Current depth underwater (49 feet, as shown)
- Maximum depth during this dive (55 feet)
- Elapsed time during this dive (11 minutes)

It also provides ambient (underwater as well as on land) temperature before, during, and after your dives. Some models calculate the amount of nitrogen or oxygen you have absorbed; they send a warning if you are ascending to the surface too quickly so you can safely adjust your speed.

A dive computer helps you plan your dives by calculating the time you can safely remain at various depths underwater and displaying the surface interval time (your time on land between dives). One dive computer model resembles a wristwatch (as shown). You can integrate other diver computer models into a console attached to a hose to monitor the remaining quantity of air in your tank. *See also* tank.



fins



Like a fish's fins, this equipment helps propel your body through the water when you kick your legs.

Fins increase the surface area of your feet and make it easier to move underwater or at the water's surface.

integrated weights

See weights.

mask

Equipment that creates a pocket of air around your eyes so you can see clearly underwater.



regulator

Equipment that allows you to breathe your tank's air while underwater.

A regulator mainly consists of two components and a hose. The hose connects the **first stage** (component that attaches to the tank to reduce the tank's high air pressure) to the **second stage** (component that you place in your mouth to deliver the air you breathe from the tank). As you descend or ascend underwater, the regulator compensates respectively for the increasing or decreasing pressure so you can breathe easily. *See also* tank.



snorkel



Flexible, plastic tube that permits you to breathe air when you have your mouth submerged at the water's surface.

By attaching the snorkel to the left side of your mask (as shown), you allow room for your regulator's hose to your tank on the right side of your face. Underwater, you will have the regulator in your mouth and the snorkel hanging (as shown). When you are floating at the water's surface waiting to get on the boat after your scuba dive, you can remove the regulator from your mouth and insert the snorkel. *See also* mask, regulator, and tank.

suit, wet

See wet suit.

tank

Cylinder of compressed air at 3,000 pounds per square inch (PSI) that you breathe underwater.

The cylinder contains the air (that is, 21% oxygen, 78% nitrogen, and 1% other gases such as argon) that you actually breathe on land—just compressed. Your buoyancy compensator has a strap to secure the tank so that it rests on your back, and a hose connects the regulator in your mouth to the cylinder so you can breathe the stored air. *See also* buoyancy compensator and regulator.



weight belt

See weights.

weights

Lead blocks on a fabric belt (as shown, known as a weight belt) that compensate for the buoyancy of your body, wet suit, and other equipment underwater.



You wear a weight belt around your waist. Other models such as sacks of lead pellets can instead be integrated into a buoyancy compensator's pockets. *See also* buoyancy compensator.

wet suit

Snug outfit, usually of neoprene (about ¼" thick, spongy material), that protects and warms your body.

A wet suit insulates you when underwater by trapping a thin layer of water between itself and your body. Your body warms that layer of water to help protect you from getting cold.

Wet suits vary in thickness and are measured in millimeters. For example, 7-mil is seven millimeters thick, which is warmer than a 3-mil wet suit.



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