

## **"Tank Head's" List of Helpful Tips (Version 4 - 4/16/2013)**

Welcome to the Grapevine SCUBA training program and your first step into the wonderful world of SCUBA diving. It's very likely that you already purchased your mask, snorkel, and fins and are well into your course materials. You are working with some of the best divers in the state of Texas. They dive several days a year and often do 3 or more dive trips each year to dive locations you may be visiting soon. Don't hesitate to ask them for suggestions or advice about diving and dive locations. You will often see the staff using gear that makes diving more easier and as a result more fun. This list introduces you to a suggested set of items to include when going to the lake or on dive trips. Please don't expect it to cover anything & everything. However, it does include several suggestions to make your diving experience more enjoyable, especially as you go thru the Open Water and Advanced courses. Pick and choose the items that make sense for you.

Good luck.

"Tank Head"

Grapevine SCUBA Staff

### **Gear Additions in general:**

**1. Dive Mask back strap (\$10-15).** For any diver, but especially those with longer hair, including the guys. Most dive masks come with rubber straps. They work fine, but often tangle with hair during skills like mask removal. The shop has excellent replacement straps that are padded and stretch. They are easier to work with than the rubber straps.

**2. Snorkel keeper. (\$5)** The shop has a double-button keeper that was "invented here". It prevents the snorkel from slipping out of place and is very simple to get on and off the mask strap. These work well with the replacement dive mask straps.

**3. Mask Defogger - (Under \$10)** Everyone has their favorite; mine is 500 PSI. Note: before using the mask for the first time, clean the mask lens several times (5 or 6) with mask lens cleaner or mild toothpaste. Rinse well after each cleaning and repeat the process. This removes a thin film that's on the mask, which promotes fogging. You can expect your mask to fog (even with defogger) if you skip this process.

**4. Dive Box - (\$15 Target/Walmart)** Pick up a large storage box. This allows you to organize your dive gear in one safe place and offers some level of protection to items like your mask, snorkel, and other items. It also makes it easier when you head to the local dive site.

**5. Dive Bag - (\$15-60)** The shop has several styles. I recommend one that has a dry pocket on it. This provides you with a place to stash items including the zip lock bag mentioned below. I like a bag that opens from the top AND down the side. They offer better access to gear.

**6. Your own personal regulator mouth piece.** I just finished a trip with someone that had a few bad dives because their mouth hurt. Why? Poor fitting mouth piece. Regulators come with a "standard" rubber mouth piece. "One size fits all". That's not the case. Get your own and fit it (using directions). Cost - less than \$25. If you plan to spend a few days diving multiple dives, you won't regret it.

**7. Dive Hat or "SCUBAdoo" rag - (\$15 - 25)** You can find these at the shop or even some motorcycle shops. For individuals with very little hair, they help avoid sunburn on top. For those with long hair, they help keep the hair organized and away from your mask.

**8. Hyperflex Shirt - (\$35-45)** Fast dry. Good pre/post dive shirt on dive boat. Offer warmth and protection from the sun. Also provides protection from BCD when diving without a wetsuit. They can also be worn under the wet suit for added warmth.

**9. Inflatable Safety "Sausage" - (\$15-50)** This item is required at many dive locations so bring one with you, just in case. (They cost more in the islands.) The shop has safety red, orange, and yellow. They can be manually inflated or attached to your BCD and self / auto / inflated. Depending on the dive location and situation, they are deployed when you surface and are awaiting pickup by the dive boat.

**10. Safety whistle for signally.** Every BCD should have a whistle mounted on the inflator/deflator hose, or some place easily accessible to the diver. These are mounted on all Grapevine SCUBA BCDs, but not always on those you might find in the islands.

**11. "SCU" ( Salt, Chlorine, UV).** Simple to remember. Not the same, but they are the first 3 letters of SCUBA. Net: in any combination they can shorten the life of your gear. Proper maintenance helps. Keep your gear clean (Sink Stink) and covered when possible. It's critical to take care of your gear and YOURSELF.

**12. Put together a simple bag** (1 quart zip lock bag or one of the more durable water proof bags (\$15 - 20) sold in the shop). Include: ear drops, eye drops (visene), 12 Hour Sudafed (reds only, NO antihistamine), aspirins, Advil (helps avoid cramps), Neosporin or other antibiotic cream for cuts/scraps/bites and vinegar for stings. When you finish diving for the day treat cuts and use ear and eye drops so you will be ready for the next day of fun in the water.

**13. Flashlight -** The shop has several good lights to choose from. It comes down to preference and budget. Advanced divers are required to have a primary and backup light for any night dive. Advanced divers are also required to have a compass. If you are using your own gear instead of rentals, make sure you have a compass and lights and know how to use them. PRACTICE with them (especially the compass) before going to the lake.

**14. Sink-the-Stink (sink stink) (\$3-12) -** Great for cleaning wet suits and doing just as the name implies. Use it for almost anything you wear diving including hoods, gloves, boots, etc.. Don't hesitate to bring it on trips and make use of it after each dive.

**15. Gloves -** handy when the water is cold, but seldom used in the summer or diving the tropics.

**16. Dive Knife -** Check first. Most dive locations (Clear Springs and marine preserves like Cozumel, Bonaire, etc.) prohibit their use except by instructors, dive masters and staff.

**17. DAN -** If you plan to dive frequently (especially out of the country) you should consider the benefits of DAN membership. Review them carefully and select the plan that best suits your needs. They have excellent insurance plans for individuals, couples, and families that include your gear (lost, stolen, damaged), medical treatment, and transportation to deco facilities, including private jets equipped with mobile deco chambers at no charge to members.

## **The Lake**

**Clear Springs SCUBA Park -** Located about 7 miles NE of Terrell, TX. More info at:  
[www.clearspringsseubapark.com](http://www.clearspringsseubapark.com)

**1. Tarp -** a 5x7 or larger tarp to place gear on at the lake. It helps to keep the gear out of the grass, mud, and ants. Bring one and remember SUCK.

**2. Bring your student materials,** dive table, pen, etc.

- 3. Cooler** – There is a snack bar at the lake, but it's usually a hike from the dive spot. Bring plenty of water, fruit, snacks, lunch, etc. (Always add extra snacks for your Divemasters. :-)
- 4. Sun Screen** – water proof variety.
- 5. Advanced Students** – Compass (comes with rental regulator/console), Primary Flashlight, and backup light with extra batteries for night dive.
- 6. Folding chair** for breaks.
- 7.** There isn't much shade at the lake, but there are shelters and tables at each dive site. If you have a portable / collapsible shelter for shade, you might consider bringing it.
- 8.** \$s for camping (\$5/night/person), 4 air refills (\$8/each), access to the park (\$20/daily) Net: Cost for the weekend can run approx. \$35/day... \$70-80 for weekend. (This could change.)
- 9. Restaurants in Terrell** – There are several, including BBQ, TexMex, etc. You will usually find the dive staff at Cole Mountain on the main drag..
- 10. Hotels** – Several chain hotels are located near state 34 and I-20 intersection, including Days Inn, Comfort Inn, Best Western, etc.. Some "locally owned" hotels are in Terrell as well. The lake is roughly 7 miles from Terrell.