

BUSAC Diving Safety Guidelines including SOLAS info

- All diving within a BSAC Branch should comply with BSAC's Safe Diving Practices. If you don't know what they are, see www.bsac.org.
- The DO needs to know trip plans and details
- Divers must have BSAC third party insurance (i.e. be current members) or own personal insurance (e.g. Divemaster Insurance) if you are not a BSAC member.
- Divers who have not trained with the club should show their BSAC qualification books to the Diving Officer and have a check-out dive with an experienced diver.
- Please obey the Dive Marshall's instructions.
- Try to have one Advanced Diver or one 2003 Dive Leader per trip. If not possible, discuss plans with DO: pre-2003 Dive Leaders or divers who have been on PRM, O2, DPM courses, etc. will be useful.
- Club or Ocean Divers can organise a trip, but they will not be able to marshal one.
- Club or Ocean Divers cannot dive without the consent of the DO.
- The depth limit for Club Divers is 20 metres, and 35 metres for Sport Divers.
- If you are taking the boat always take at least two boat handlers, having one on the boat at all times
- Each trip should have two O2 administrators, having one on the shore or the boat at all times
- A VHF licence holder should be on each boat trip, and must brief other boat handlers on distress messages, unless they also hold the licence.
- Decompression diving can be done by Sport Divers, but you are recommended to practise stops beforehand.
- Six divers in the boat maximum, unless trip is less than half a mile offshore, e.g. shuttling to Portland breakwater from Ferrybridge or Balaclava Bay, etc.
- Delayed SMBs should be used at the end of the dive if possible, most important over popular wrecks, unless divers are capable of returning to and ascending the shotline.
- SMBs to be used on drift dives and where there is low sea vis. (fog)
- When entering the water from the boat, swim directly to the shot buoy or your buddy. Try to swim away from the boat as soon as possible; do not descend directly beneath the boat. This will avoid people being run over!

When boat handling:

- SOLAS Regulation V/35 prohibits misuse of any distress signals. These are critical to safety at sea and by misusing them you could put your or someone else's life at risk. Do not fire a flare or use any distress signal unless life is in imminent or grave danger. Anything else is not a distress situation.
- SOLAS Regulations V/31, V/32 and V/33 require you:
 - to let the Coastguard and any other vessels in the vicinity know if you encounter anything that could cause a serious hazard to navigation, if it has not already been reported. You can do this by calling the Coastguard on VHF, if you have it on board, or by telephoning them at the earliest opportunity. The Coastguard will then warn other vessels in the area.
 - to respond to any distress signal that you see or hear and help anyone or any boat in distress as best you can
- SOLAS Regulation V/29 requires you to have access to an illustrated table of the recognised life saving signals, so that you can communicate with the search and rescue services or other boats if you get into trouble. You can get a free copy of this table in a leaflet produced by the MCA. You can also find it in various nautical publications. If your boat is not suitable for carrying a copy of the table on board (because it's small or very exposed), make sure you've studied the table before you go boating. Larger boats should keep a copy on board.
- SOLAS requires you to have a radar reflector on board. Don't forget it.
- SOLAS requires you to have a voyage plan on board, that you have checked the weather forecast, the tides, that you aren't going anywhere that is not suitable for the boat, and that the people on board are adequately kitted and prepared for trip. Also make sure you are familiar with any navigational dangers you are likely to encounter on the trip. Always have a contingency plan.

- When using the boat try to let someone ashore know where you are and what time you plan to return. Or make sure you have a VHF that works! Don't rely on mobile phones.
- When launching the boat, please try not to dunk the trailer wheels in the water. Use all available hands and lift it to the water's edge.
- Please try to keep a thorough look-out when driving the boat over crowded dive sites.
- Please be prepared to get out of the way, steer off course, reverse or stop to avoid collisions. Even if it is your right of way!
- Not all divers carry DSMBs, so to avoid running them over please watch for their bubbles over dive sites
- Don't drive over or near SMBs or divers' bubbles.
- Don't drop your shot onto a site at which divers are already diving.
- Always ask divers how long they will be so that you know when to expect them to surface. If they become overdue you should start to organise their recovery or a search.
- Never face into the sun when being boat cover: you won't be able to see anything; always look down sun.
- When driving from a boat, always think of the comfort of others – i.e. don't go so fast that people are falling out from the bow.
- Never let the boat fill up with water. If you are in a big sea keep going, don't stop. By letting the elephant's trunk down and motoring, you can get rid of some of the water.
- Switch your engine off when approaching divers. However, keep engine in neutral if picking divers up from site when boat is about to be blown on to rocks, then reverse out, telling divers to keep hold until boat is out of danger, then turn off engine once clear.
- Don't come along broadside...always point the boat into the wind or tide (usually wind) and slowly approach the divers. You will never get it right if you approach broadside on as the wind will blow the boat away and you poor old divers will have to struggle to reach it (overexertion not being a good thing after a dive).

Divers Code of Conduct

The BSAC Divers Code of Conduct is designed to encourage good behaviour at dive sites and when diving, and to ensure that divers do not come into conflict with other water users.

Before leaving home

Contact the nearest British Sub-Aqua Club Branch or the dive operator local to the dive site for their advice. Seek advice from them about local conditions and regulations.

On the beach, river bank or lake side

1. Obtain permission before diving in a harbour or estuary or in private water. Thank those responsible before you leave. Pay harbour dues.
2. Try to avoid overcrowding one site, consider other people on the beach.
3. Park sensibly. Avoid obstructing narrow approach roads. Keep off verges. Pay parking fees and use proper car parks.
4. Don't spread yourselves and your equipment since you may upset other people. Keep launching ramps and slipways clear.
5. Please keep the peace. Don't operate a compressor within earshot of other people - or late at night.
6. Pick up litter. Close gates. Be careful about fires. Avoid any damage to land or crops.
7. Obey special instructions such as National Trust rules, local bye-laws and regulations about camping and caravanning.
8. Remember divers in wet or drysuits are conspicuous and bad behaviour could ban us from beaches.

In and on the water

1. Mark your diving boats so that your Club can be identified easily. Unmarked boats may become suspect.
2. Ask the harbour-master or local officials where to launch your boat - and do as they say. Tell the Coastguard or responsible person where you are going and tell them when you are expected back.

Stay away from buoys, pots and pot markers. Ask local fishermen where not to dive. Avoid diving through rafts of seabirds or seal colonies etc.

Remember ships do not have brakes, so avoid diving in fairways or areas of heavy surface traffic and observe the 'International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea'.

Always fly the diving flag when diving, but not when on the way to or from the dive site. Never leave a boat unattended.

Do not come in to bathing beaches under power. Use any special approach lanes. Do not disturb seal or bird colonies with your boats. Watch your wash in a crowded anchorage.

Whenever reasonable to do so, divers should use a surface marker buoy. Obey all prevailing local Bye-Laws.

On conservation

1. Never use a speargun.
2. Shellfish such as crabs and lobsters take several years to grow to maturity; overcollecting in an area soon depletes stocks. Only take mature fish or shellfish and then only what you need for yourself. Never sell your catch or clean it in public or on the beach. Don't display your trophies.
3. Be conservation conscious. Avoid damage to weeds and the sea bed. Do not bring up sea-fans, corals, starfish or sea urchins - in one moment you can destroy years of growth.
4. Take photographs and notes, not specimens.

On wrecks

1. Do not dive on a designated protected wreck site. These are indicated on Admiralty Charts and marked by buoys or warning notices on the shore nearby.
2. Do not lift anything that appears to be of historical importance.
3. If you do discover a wreck, do not talk about it. Pinpoint the site, do a rough survey and report it to the BSAC Archaeological Adviser and the Nautical Archaeology Society who will advise you.

If you do not lift anything from the wreck, it is not necessary to report your discovery to the Receiver of Wrecks. If you do lift, you must report.

If your find is important, you may apply for it to be designated a protected site. Then you can build up a well-qualified team with the right credentials and proceed with a systematic survey or excavation under licence without outside interference.

Don't let diving down - keep to the Diver's Code.