

HiTek Scuba

Purchasing Your “Personal” SCUBA Equipment



Most dive stores that teach scuba classes require you to either “provide” your own personal gear or purchase it from their store prior to your first pool session. Usually this cost is NOT included in the advertised course cost. The reason for this is three-fold. The main reason that you need to buy your own “personal” stuff is for health reasons. It’s very difficult to keep items like booties, snorkels, and masks disinfected between each class use. I don’t know about you, but I would rather not put on a pair of boots against my bare feet that just came from another class. The second reason is that because we humans come in all different shapes and sizes, it would be almost impossible to carry enough rental gear to accommodate everyone for those types of items. The third reason is that those personal items we’re talking about require a very good “personal” fit in order to function. The items we are referring to are: mask, snorkel, fins, boots, and gloves. Improper fit or style of those items would mean that the diver would not be comfortable underwater; a situation that new divers want to avoid at all costs. If your personal gear doesn’t work for you, then you won’t be having fun. Fun and safety is what it’s all about....right?

So what should you do? Well, first begin by reviewing the material from your PADI Open Water Diver Manual on equipment that begins on page 27. This is a good place to start. The material will help you become familiar with the different pieces of equipment, what they are used for, and what features to look for. Next you might go take a look at some of the gear in several dive shops to see what they offer. I wouldn’t buy anything yet, just look at stuff and maybe try stuff on. Finally I would talk to your dive instructor about equipment and see if there are any considerations that are relevant specifically to the locations that you plan on diving (warm water, cold water, etc.).

HiTek Scuba has put together some packages that have worked very well for most students in the past, and based on experience we definitely know what minimum features you’re going to need. Since we are not a store, we sell it basically for what it costs. We have no intention of making money by selling equipment. This is a very personal thing though, so if you want to “customize” your basic equipment (one piece from here, one from there) then feel free to go “collect” your own stuff. Especially if you happen to be one of those people that has a hard time finding stuff that “fits” right.

Other wise you can ask us about buying “personal gear packages”, and we’ll be happy to provide you with information on what we offer.

Regarding your mask purchase

The mask fit is the single most important fit in scuba diving equipment. If the mask doesn't fit right then it could leak, pinch, or worse, generally making diving miserable. Cost of the mask has nothing to do with fit. Personally I have not tried on that many different masks primarily because I found one that fit me very well back in 1989 and I've worn it ever since. In my many years of experience however, I've noticed that the mask that I use fits a very wide range of people and faces very well. That doesn't mean that there aren't a lot of other masks out there that will also fit your face. There are many different shapes out there now, basic square, tear drop, rounded, multiple windows, single window, and variations of all those. As far as the teardrop shape goes, the disadvantage that I see with students that buy one of these is that exhaust bubbles from your regulator are more likely to try to catch and push the mask away from your face causing it to leak. The single window type is not conducive to changing or replacing the lenses if they get scratched or damaged, and you cannot use prescriptive lenses if you should need them at some point. The *TUSA Liberator Plus* and masks that are similar have the advantages of a low volume profile, dual removable lenses, and a rectangular design that seems to stay on a divers face. The *TUSA Liberator X-Ten* is another good mask with excellent vision, designed for those with a slightly wider face but it isn't as low a volume mask as the *Liberator Plus*. Low volume, as it states in the PADI manual, is important to make clearing of the mask easier. When you have to exhale into your mask to clear it, the less effort expended to do that, the better.

Regarding your Fins purchase

Fins are all about thrust to effort ratios. Long, or fins made of heavier material require more leg strength to make them work. If you don't have the leg strength, then you will get leg cramps, sore muscles, and leg fatigue in the process. Also if the fins are real long, then they tend to hang down behind you unless you keep them in constant motion. This stirs up the bottom, damages fragile marine life, and makes your dive buddies hate diving with you. If, however, you are pretty strong swimmer, and can handle long or heavy fins, then you will be able to travel faster, swim against a stronger current, and control where your fins go with more purpose. So you need to evaluate yourself, the kind of diving you will be doing etc. and then make a decision. I recommend any of the fins that I list in the packages that are offered. The *X-Ten* fins from *TUSA* are great starter fins they are light, maneuverable and require very little leg strength to operate. The amount of thrust is the least of all the fins that I recommend, but it is still plenty for most diving situations that you will encounter in your entry level experiences. The *Expert Zoom* split fins are definitely a bit more expensive, but they have the advantage of providing more thrust than the lighter fins with about the same amount of effort, therefore they have a good thrust to effort ratio. The *Imprex* fins are much cheaper but a bit more work to manipulate. Because of the heavier material they provide more thrust than the *X-Ten* fins, they are a bit longer as well. The downside of course is that the extra thrust with this style fin requires stronger muscles to manipulate. Again, for the most part cost should have little to do with your choice of fins, it's more about what type of diving your doing, and what body type will be trying to use those fins.