

A few useful tips (and rules) about using dive computers in recreational diving

Just bought your new dive computer and are all excited to use it? By all means do so, but keep in mind a few things that are important for you:

- ✘ Dive computers are like dive tables based on mathematical, theoretical models. They are exactly that – models that may replicate reality imperfectly. Through experience and research into dive medicine recommendations emerged over the years regarding conservative dive practices. However each individual differs in physique, fitness, age and many other factors. Therefore no model can predict your personal limits totally accurately. Although dive computers allow you more bottom time than dive tables (due to less rounding), they do use the same theoretical models
- ✘ Always dive conservatively, do not stretch the limits of your dive computer to or beyond the edge. Start your ascent slowly before your or your buddy's dive computer shows that you or your buddy (whichever shows first) only have a few minutes of bottom left before you go into decompression
- ✘ Be familiar with your dive computer (read the manual) and always follow the manufacturer's recommendations
- ✘ Sharing is nice – but not for dive computers. As you will have a different profile than your buddy (or in the worst case even might get separated) it is important for you to carry your own dive computer

Using a dive computer does not mean you are using a better model than using dive tables or that you are safer. It simply means that you are better informed about your dive data and can calculate your remaining bottom time more accurately. Therefore all the good diving practices that apply to any dive must be followed also when using dive computers:

- ✘ Always stay close to your buddy
- ✘ Dive only within your personal limits, abilities and training
- ✘ When diving in cold water or under conditions that may be strenuous, plan the dive assuming the depth is 4m / 10ft deeper than it actually is
- ✘ Plan repetitive dives so each successive dive is to the same or shallower depth. Don't follow a dive with a deeper dive. Plan your deepest dive first. Repetitive dives should be limited to 30m / 100ft or shallower. If you are planning multiple repetitive dives during a day, follow the minimum surface intervals of the dive tables (e.g. for ending pressure groups W or X 1 hour, for Y or Z 3 hours)
- ✘ The 42m / 140ft designation on the PADI Recreational Dive Planner is for emergency purposes only – do not dive deeper than 40m / 130 ft
- ✘ If you have accidentally descended below 42m / 140 ft immediately ascent (at a rate not exceeding 18m / 60ft / min) to 5m / 15ft and make an emergency decompression stop for 8 minutes (air permitting) if the no-decompression limit for 40m/ 130ft has not been exceeded by more than 5 minutes. Do not dive again for at least 6 hours. If the limit has been exceeded by more than 5 minutes, the safety stop should be at least 15 minutes, do not dive for 24 hours
- ✘ Ascent safely and slowly from every dive, not exceeding at a rate greater than 18m / 60ft per minute, but preferably even slower than that. Whenever air permits do a safety stop at 5m / 15ft for 3 minutes or more
- ✘ If you suspect decompression sickness or encounter other medical problems, always immediately consult a physician
- ✘ Wait a minimum surface interval of 12 hours prior to flying. If you have done multiple repetitive dives or dives that required decompression, do not fly for at least 24 hours

