

THE DIVER'S CODE OF CONDUCT

More and more people are taking to the water. Some for recreation; some to earn their living. This code is designed to ensure that divers do not come into conflict with other water users and sets out some guidelines which should be observed alongside the regulations relating to Marine Nature Reserves.

Before leaving home

Contact the nearest BSAC Branch or the dive operator local to the dive site for their advice. Seek advice from them about the local conditions and regulations. If appropriate, have the correct chart and tide tables for the area to be dived.

On the beach, river bank or lakeside

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 dive 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 a responsible person, where you are going and tell them when you are back.
3. Stay away from buoys, pots, and pot markers. Ask local fishermen where not to dive. Avoid driving through rafts of seabirds or seal colonies etc.
4. Remember ships have not got brakes, so avoid diving in fairways or areas of heavy surface traffic and observe the 'International Regulations for the Prevention of Collisions at Sea'.
5. Always fly the diving flag when diving, but not when on the way to, or from, the dive site. Never leave a boat unattended.
6. Do not come in to bathing beaches under power. Use any special approach lanes. Do not disturb any seal or bird colonies with your boats. Watch your wash in crowded anchorages.
7. Whenever possible, divers should use a surface marker buoy.

On conservation

1. Never use a speargun.
2. Shellfish, such as crabs and lobsters, take several years to grow to maturity; over-collecting in an area soon depletes stocks. Observe local Byelaws and restrictions on the collection of animal and plant specimens. However the BSAC recommends that you do not collect shellfish, but if you must collect, only take mature fish or shellfish and then only what you need for yourself. Never take a berried female

(a female with eggs), this is stock for future years. Never sell your catch or clean it in public or on the beach and do not display your trophies.

3. Ascertain and comply with seasonal access restrictions established to protect seabirds and seals from disturbance. During the seabird breeding season (1st March-1st August) reduce noise and speed near seabird breeding sites. Do not approach seal breeding or haul-out sites. Do not approach dolphins or porpoises in the water.
4. 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.
5. Take photographs and notes - not specimens.

On wrecks

1. Do not dive on a designated wreck site without a licence. Protected wrecks are indicated on Admiralty charts and marked by buoys, or warning notices on the shore nearby.
2. Military wrecks should not be disturbed or items removed from them. This includes the debris field. The debris field is the trail of wreckage that comes away from the main body of the wreck during the sinking process. This trail can consist of parts of the ship, the cargo and the personal possessions of the crew.
3. Do not lift anything that may be of archaeological importance.
4. If you do discover what might be an historic wreck do not talk about it, but contact the Receiver of Wreck (023 8032 9474), who will advise you about your next steps. If your find is important you may apply for it to be designated a protected wreck site. You can then build up a well-qualified team with the right qualifications to investigate your site with the assistance of a qualified archaeologist.
5. If you do lift any material from the sea-bed, it is a legal requirement to report it to the Receiver of Wreck as soon as reasonably possible, even if you own the wreck that the material has come from.
6. Avoid the temptation to take souvenirs. Go wreck diving to enjoy the scenery and life, or get involved in projects. If you must take something, try photographs or measurements, and records of marine life.
7. Know and understand wreck law. If you remove material from wreck, which you then sell for profit, you are diving for reward, which is outside the scope of sport diving and you must conduct your dives in strict accordance with HSE regulations. A sound knowledge of wreck law will prevent you breaking the law, perhaps even ending up with a criminal record where no crime was intended.

Members are reminded that in the light of this policy following any conviction of any BSAC member for an offence in relation to wreck the member will be liable to have his or her membership withdrawn for bringing the BSAC into disrepute.

Don't let divers down - keep to the diver's code

The Divers Code of Conduct that is set out immediately above was developed by the BSAC many years ago, and is still relevant to all divers today. However environmental issues are of greater concern to all water users today than ever before, particularly when this Code was developed, and so the BSAC will be actively developing its environmental presence by the development of the following policies:

- To provide education in environmental awareness, understanding and enjoyment.
- To promote Branch participation in environmental schemes and events.
- Highlight current environmental issues, and work with other environmentalists in order to provide a united approach to deal with these issues.
- To further develop and update the Divers Code of Conduct.

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