

Ecology Specialty Programs Student-Level Programs

Ecology Specialty Programs

I. Intent

The SSI Ecology specialty programs provide students with basic knowledge and skills needed to identify various species of marine organisms and explains their role in the ocean's ecosystems.

a. Ecology Specialties

- Coral Identification
- Fish Identification
- Manta And Ray Ecology
- Marine Invertebrate Ecology
- Marine Ecology
- Marine Mammal Ecology
- Nudibranch Ecology
- Sea Turtle Ecology
- Shark Ecology

Note | These programs do not have mandatory in-water training requirements. SSI Professionals are encouraged to add in-water training to increase the value of the program. If in-water training is conducted, the standards must be followed based on the type of activity (scuba, snorkel, freedive).

II. Minimum Instructor Rating

An active status SSI Professional with the applicable certification may conduct the Ecology specialty programs.

III. Student Prerequisites

If in-water training is conducted:

Snorkel students

- Minimum age | 6 years old.

Have the following SSI certifications or equivalent from a recognized training agency:

- Snorkel Diver

Scuba students

- Minimum age | 10 years old.

Have the following SSI certifications or equivalent from a recognized training agency:

- Referral Diver

Note | Students may enroll in SSI specialty programs and complete all academic and pool/confined water sessions. Open water training dives for all specialties cannot be combined with open water training dives for entry-level programs, and must be conducted after completion of all in-water training for the entry-level program.

IV. Duration

- Recommended hours for completion | 3–6.

V. Depth Limitations

If in-water training is conducted:

Snorkel students

- Maximum open water depth limit | 5 meters.

Scuba students

- Maximum pool/confined water depth limit | 5 meters.
- Maximum open water depth limit: 30 meters.
- Maximum open water depth limit for 12- to 14-year-olds | 18 meters.
- Maximum open water depth limit for 10- and 11-year-olds | 12 meters.

VI. In-Water Ratios

15 years and older:

- The student-to-instructor ratio is 8:1.
- The ratio may increase to 10:2 with one (1) certified assistant.
- The ratio may increase to 12:3 with two (2) certified assistants.

12- through 14-years old:

- The student-to-instructor ratio is 6:1.

10- and 11-years old:

- The student-to-instructor ratio is 4:1.
- No more than two (2) participants per instructor or certified assistant may be under the age of 12, and none of the remaining participants may be under the age of 15.

Snorkel students

6- to 9-years old:

- The student-to-instructor ratio is 8:1.
- The ratio may increase to 10:2 with one (1) certified assistant.
- The ratio may increase to 12:3 with two (2) certified assistants.

VII. Proximity

- During in-water skill evaluations, the students must remain under direct supervision of the SSI Professional so that physical contact can be made at any time.

VIII. Requirements For Completion

- Complete all academic sessions and assessments outlined in the applicable instructor manual.
- Complete the program's final exam.

IX. Certification

- Upon completion of all academic requirements, the SSI Professional may issue the program's digital certification card.
- Certified SSI divers can dive with an equally- or more-qualified buddy in environments equivalent to their training and within the recommended depth limits of their certifications.
- Students younger than 15 years old will be certified as an SSI Junior Diver in the applicable program, and can dive under the direct supervision of a dive professional, or with a certified adult, in environments equivalent to their training and within the recommended depth limits.