

Entry-Level Programs

Open Water Diver (ISO 24801-2) | Indoor Diver | Referral Diver

I. Intent

The SSI Open Water Diver program provides students with the knowledge and training necessary to dive autonomously with an equally- or more-qualified buddy, in environments equivalent with their training and to depths shallower than 18 meters.

The SSI Indoor Diver program provides students with the training necessary to dive autonomously with an equally- or more-qualified buddy, in environments including aquariums and purpose-built artificial diving facilities, to depths equivalent with their training.

Note | The Indoor Diver program must be conducted using the instructor materials, depth limits and ratios of the Open Water Diver program, except that the indoor training dives are conducted in an approved artificial diving facility as defined in the General Training Standards.

A student that completes all the academic sections and pool/confined water sessions for the Open Water Diver program can be issued the Referral Diver digital card with the intent of completing their open water training dives at a later date, and/or with another SSI Training Center.

II. Minimum Instructor Rating

An active status Open Water Instructor may conduct the Open Water Diver program.

III. Student Prerequisites

- Minimum age | 10 years old.

IV. Duration

- Recommended hours for completion | 16–32.
- Minimum total bottom time for open water training dives | 80 minutes.

V. Depth Limitations

- Maximum pool/confined water depth limit | 5 meters.
- Minimum open water depth limit | 5 meters.
- Maximum depth limit for Open Water Training Dives 1 and 2 | 12 meters.
- Maximum depth limit for all remaining open water training dives | 18 meters.
- Maximum depth limit for 10- and 11-year-olds | 12 meters.

VI. In-Water Ratios

a. Pool

- 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.

b. Confined Water and Open Water

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.

10- through 14-years old:

- The student-to-instructor ratio is 4:1.
- The ratio may increase to 6:2 with one (1) certified assistant.
- The ratio may increase to 8:3 with two (2) certified assistants.
- 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.

VII. Minimum Supervision

- An active status Assistant Instructor may directly supervise all academic sessions, pool/confined water activities (with the exception of emergency ascent skills), and surface skills during open water training dives under the indirect supervision of an active status Open Water Instructor.
- An active status Open Water Instructor must introduce and directly supervise all emergency ascent skills during in-water training.
- An active status Open Water Instructor must directly supervise all open water training dives.
- A certified assistant may directly supervise a maximum of two (2) students during the excursion portion of any open water training dives after the completion of Open Water Training Dive 2.
- If navigation training is being conducted during Open Water Training Dive 4, the instructor may choose to indirectly supervise these skills.

a. Equipment

- If dry suits are used during training, the Open Water Instructor directly supervising the program must also be an active status SSI Dry Suit Diving Specialty Instructor.

VIII. 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.

IX. Requirements For Completion

a. Open Water Diver | Indoor Diver | Referral Diver

- Complete all academic sections and assessments outlined in the instructor manual for Open Water Diver.
- Complete an Open Water Diver final exam.
- Complete all pool/confined water sessions and skill evaluations outlined in the instructor manual for Open Water Diver.
- Complete the Student Water Fitness Evaluation outlined in the SSI General Training Standards.

b. Open Water Diver

- Complete at least four (4) open water training dives on scuba and all of the skill evaluations outlined in the instructor manual for Open Water Diver.

Note | Open Water Training Dives 1 and 2 of the Open Water Diver program may be completed in indoor diving facilities as defined in the General Training Standards.

c. Indoor Diver

- Complete at least four (4) indoor training dives on scuba and all of the skill evaluations outlined in the instructor manual for Open Water Diver.

X. Sequence

- Student Water Fitness Evaluations must be completed before participating in any open water or indoor training dives.
- Open Water Training Dive 1 or Indoor Training Dive 1 may be conducted prior to completing the academic requirements and pool/confined water requirements for the program. This dive must meet the requirements of the Open Water Training Dive from the Basic Diver program.
- Open Water Training Dive 2 or Indoor Training Dive 2 may only be conducted after all requirements and evaluations for Academic Sessions 1–3 and Pool/Confined Water Sessions 2-3 of the instructor manual for Open Water Diver have been met or exceeded.
- Open Water Training Dives 3–4 or Indoor Training Dives 3–4 may only be conducted after all requirements and evaluations for Academic Sessions 1–6 and Pool/Confined Water Sessions 4-6 of the instructor manual for Open Water Diver have been met or exceeded.
- The skills from Pool/Confined Water Session 1 may be combined with any/all in-water training sessions, but must be completed prior to certification.

Recommendation | SSI recommends conducting additional experience or training dives when possible.

XI. Certification

a. Referral Diver

- Upon completion of all academic and pool/confined water requirements, including the Student Water Fitness Evaluation and final exam, an Open Water Instructor may issue a digital Referral Diver certification card.
- Certified Referral Divers can dive autonomously with an equally- or more-qualified buddy, in a pool environment equivalent with their training.

b. Indoor Diver

- Upon completion of all academic and in-water requirements, including the Student Water Fitness Evaluation and final exam, an Open Water Instructor may issue the Indoor Diver digital certification card.
- Certified Indoor Divers can dive autonomously with an equally- or more-qualified buddy, in environments including aquariums and purpose-built artificial diving facilities and within the recommended depth limits.
- Students younger than 15 years old will be certified as a Junior Indoor Diver and must 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.

c. Open Water Diver

- Upon completion of all academic and in-water requirements, including the Student Water Fitness Evaluation and final exam, an Open Water Instructor may issue the Open Water Diver digital certification card.
- Certified Open Water Divers can dive autonomously with an equally- or more-qualified buddy, in environments equivalent to their training and within the recommended depth limits.
- Students younger than 15 years old will be certified as a Junior Open Water Diver and must 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.

XII. Upgrades

To upgrade to an Open Water Diver, a Referral Diver must:

- Complete all four (4) open water training dives outlined in the instructor manual for Open Water Diver.
- If it has been more than six (6) months from the issue date of the Referral Diver certification, the student must complete a Scuba Skills Update to make sure they are sufficiently proficient to continue to the open water training dives.
- If it has been more than twelve (12) months since the student's last in-water session, the student must complete a Scuba Skills Update and retake the Open Water Diver final exam.
- The SSI Professional completing the open water training dives must upgrade the student in MySSI in order for them to receive their digital certification card.

To upgrade to an Open Water Diver, an Indoor Diver must:

- Complete two (2) additional open water training dives on scuba and the skill evaluations outlined in Open Water Training Dives 1–4 of the instructor manual for Open Water Diver in an open water environment.

Note | All skill evaluations can be combined and performed in one or more of the required dives.

- The SSI Professional completing the open water training dives must upgrade the student in MySSI in order for them to receive their digital certification card.