

SSL Diving Information

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Diving With The SSL

So, you want to dive at with the Space Systems Laboratory... what do you need? Well, here is a quick overview of what you need/should expect along your diving Journey!

Pre-requisites

First and foremost, you *must have and SCUBA open water certification*. This can be acquired from any professional SCUBA organization, like PADI, BSAC, AAUS, etc. If they are recognized and provide SCUBA open water certifications, then they are good!

Getting certified with UMD

The University of Maryland offers SCUBA certification classes that you can sign up for using the Eppley Recreation Centers website. You can find it [here](#)

There are several classes you can take with Eppley, however before you can begin your SCUBA journey, you must take the **E-Learning and Confined Water** class, and then take the **Open Water Certification** class.

+ Discover Scuba
+ ReActivate Scuba Refresher
+ Step 1 - Open Water Diver - eLearning and Confined Water
+ Step 2 -Open Water Certification Dives
+ Advanced Open Water Certification Dives
+ Speciality Certifications
+ PADI Divemaster Course
+ Registration-How to
+ Equipment & Materials

Confined Water and E-learning Portion

While this information can be found on the website, we'll provide some extra context as well. The E-learning portion is a set of several sections of learning + quizzes for each section, with a final exam that you **MUST** take *before* your first confined water class. These quizzes are pretty straightforward and easy, and let you have multiple attempts to complete them (and also let you review the material while taking them). **HOWEVER** do NOT skip out on these classes, as they are **very** important to your survival, and your fellow divers survival. Just don't be stressed taking the course, it's forgiving and heavily emphasizes learning over getting 100% first try

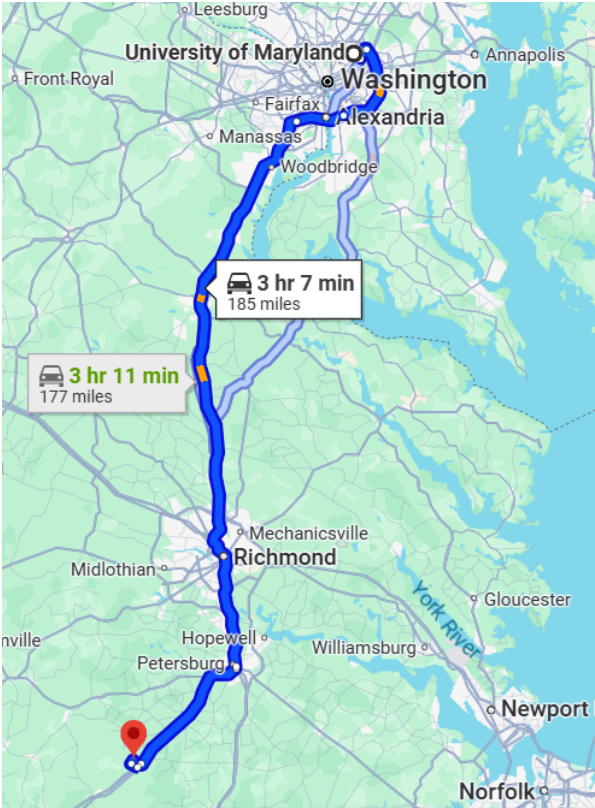
The final exam can be about 100 or so questions long, and you need at least a 85% on it to pass the e-learning course. These questions are pretty much ripped straight from the quizzes too, so it's not too bad! However, while you have extra tries, you only have a certain amount of tries before it makes you retake the course from the beginning, so try to get it all right on the first try, you can do it!

The confined water sections consists of several dives (depending on which day you choose) in Eppleys pool. All equipment will be provided for you, except for a swimsuit and towel (which you need to bring). The SCUBA teachers are all great, and want to make sure you're comfortable and confident in your diving abilities, so again, very low stress.

Open Water section

For the open water section, you need to prepare for a few things.

First, you will be diving at some open body of water far from UMD campus. The SCUBA teacher *might* be able to provide you transporation, if they are nice and you ask early on, but don't count on it. You'll need to organize some sort of transporation to the dive location. Most of the time, the dive occurs at Lake Phoenix, Virginia (a very cool dive location!) - which is about a 2-3 hour drive from UMD. If that is your dive location, you'll need to sign their dive waiver, as well as plan sleeping accomodations as the open water checkout dive is a two-day affair. They provide campsites, cabins, and other on-site sleeping arrangements, or you can book a hotel off-site. Just know that Lake Phoenix is in the middle of nowhere! There website can be found [here](#)



Second, you will need you some of your own equipment. You can either borrow equipment if you know someone with SCUBA stuff, or you can buy your own. All you need for your open water checkout is a set of **fins**, **snorkel**, a **mask**, and **boots**. You can buy them at any local dive shop, though I (romeo) have had good luck with Blue Planet Scuba in washington DC (I live on campus and don't have a car). It's pretty close to both Red Line and Green Line



stations, so you can get there from UMD rather easily.

UMD will provide BCDs, wetsuits, regulators (second stages), and air tanks - you **DONT** need to buy these yourself.

Costs

The most painful part of getting your SCUBA Open Water certification is the cost. Surprisingly, UMD will provide you with your certification for a considerable discount compared to if you were to go to an outside SCUBA shop, so as students, it's best to take advantage of this! However, the cost is quite large. Generally, the cost breakdown is as follows (as of 2025):

- Confined Water and E-learning course: \$380 dollars for UMD students
- Open Water:
 - \$275 for UMD students
 - ~\$30 a day for registration at Lake Phoenix
 - Equipment Costs:
 - Mask: \$30-\$100+
 - Snorkel: \$10-\$60+
 - Fins: \$40-\$100+
 - Boots: \$25-\$100+
 - Travel Costs:
 - camping: \$15-\$60+
 - travel: ~\$50 (estimate)

Time Costs:

- confined water E-learning: ~6-10 hours (if take a lot of time)
- confined water dives: 16 hours
- open water: 48 hours (you're at lake phoenix from early day 1, and midday 2)

OVERALL COSTS

- Cost to be completely certified: **\$760** + camping + equipment (yeeeowch!)
- Time to be completely certified: **74 hours** (eh)

This is not an "all at once" cost, however - the time and costs are split up between several weeks and sometimes even months, depending on how fast you are trying to get your certification. You dont *need* \$800 on day one. This information is here to provide you with some **context**. SCUBA is an investment, and a life-long skill that you can utilize outside of the SSL for the rest of your life!

DAN (Diver Alert network)

No, not Dan Gribok, DAN: the Diver Alert Network. These guys are important for a few reasons: they provide safety courses like first aid that are required to dive (at least, depending on how advanced of a diver you are trying to be) and they also provide Dive insurance, incase you ever get injured or have an emergency while diving, DAN insurance can help cover costs the might occur because of the emergency. While recommended for SSL divers, it is not hard required. Still recommeneded though!

SSL Diving

Congrats! You are now SCUBA open water certified, and you want to dive with the SSL. There are a few more things that need to be done before you can be on the dive team

FIRST AND FORMOST, reach out to the SSL! You can reach out to Dive Safety Officer (DSO), A.K. Williams (ak2@umd.edu), or jobs@ssl.umd.edu (preferably both), or if you have a contact at SSL, just reach out to them (and send emails too).

Checkout Dives

To dive with the SSL, you need to be checked out by the Dive Safety Officer (DSO). The current UMD DSO is A.K. Williams (ak2@umd.edu). The SSL will normally organize these and reach out to you when one is available. These checkouts consist of similar techniques you learning in confined and open water, just re-tested while diving in the NBRF. You will also be told about how SSL dives normally work, the dive equipment SSL has, procedures, etc.

Equipment

The SSL has equipment for its divers, including air tanks, regulators/octopus (second stages), BCDs, dive weights (normally in the form of weight belts), and divers can *borrow* fins, masks, and snorkels at first-come, first-serve. For fins, masks, and snorkels, there is scattered equipment owned by the SSL and previous divers, so they're not as managed as the more important equipment. It's best to bring your own stuff!!

As well, you don't *need* a wetsuit to dive at the NBRF, however you do need a swimsuit, and it's recommended (borderline required) to where underwater clothing, or at least clothing that you don't mind wearing underwater. Things like shirts, surfing wetsuits, or workout clothing (??? I think you get what I mean) are recommended to wear along with your bathing suit, as there can be some rough surfaces in the NBRF!

Physical

Finally, before your checkout, you MUST get a dive physical and fill out the paper work found in [In the SSL Diving Information](#) Folder.

The physical requires a urinalysis (pee-in-a-cup test), as well as an eye exam, on top of the everything else a normal sports physical entails (see the form for any other information). The SSL recommends getting a physical from the University Health Center, as there are a few doctors there that know what a dive physical requires and are used to giving them [INSERT DOCTORS NAME]. You can also go to the urgent care off-campus (Express HealthCenter) by the College Park Volunteer Fire Department.