

3.1.3 Open Water Diver

3.1.3.1 Course Outcomes

GUE's Open Water Diver course is designed to provide non-divers with sufficient knowledge, skill, and experience to dive within the limits of similarly qualified scuba divers. Qualified GUE Open Water Divers are able to dive under conditions equal to or better than those in which they were trained with appropriate surface support and with individuals holding the same or a higher level of certification while using nitrox or air within minimum decompression limits.

The Open Water Diver who has not yet reached the age of 15 years is required to dive under the direct supervision of an adult who has, as a minimum, an autonomous scuba diver certification.

3.1.3.2 Prerequisites

Applicants for an Open Water Diver course must abide by [Training Prerequisites \(2.1.4.1\)](#), plus:

- a. Be a minimum of 12 years of age. Documented parental or legal guardian consent must be submitted to GUE HQ when the participant is a minor.

3.1.3.3 Course Content

The Open Water Diver course is normally conducted over five days. It requires a minimum of ten confined water sessions, six open water dives, and at least forty hours of instruction, encompassing lectures, land drills, and in-water work.

At the instructor's discretion, Scuba Divers may have a portion of their training counted toward Open Water Diver qualification.

3.1.3.4 Open Water Diver Specific Training Standards

- a. Student-to-instructor ratio is not to exceed 6:1 during land drills or surface exercises; it cannot exceed 3:1 during any in-water training.
- b. Can be run with one trainee.
- c. All in-water activities must be conducted in daylight conditions.
- d. All in-water drills must be introduced in confined water.
- e. Maximum depth of 70 ft/21 m.
- f. No overhead diving.
- g. All dives must be within minimum decompression limits (MDLs), i.e., no required stops.

3.1.3.5 Required Training Materials

GUE training materials and recommended study as determined by the course study packet available online or via download after GUE course registration.

3.1.3.6 Academic Topics

- a. Introduction: GUE organization and course overview (objectives, limits, training requirements)
- b. Diving physics supporting knowledge and ability to safely manage:
 - i. Breathing underwater
 - ii. Equalization and avoidance of barotraumas including DCI
 - iii. Buoyancy, trim, and balance; ascending, descending, and underwater propulsion
- c. Physical and mental stress while diving

- d. Scuba diving equipment overview and operation
- e. Breathing gas dynamics
- f. Decompression theory, including decompression sickness (DCS, AGE)
- g. Planning, including gas management, dive preparation, and pre-dive evaluation
- h. Nitrox diving and importance of gas analysis
- i. Team diving and underwater communication
- j. Environmental considerations while diving
- k. Conservation-minded diving techniques

3.1.3.7 Land Drills and Topics

The following land drills must be used to familiarize students with important skills before they are practiced underwater.

- a. Equipment fit, assembly and disassembly
- b. Propulsion and maneuvering techniques
- c. Gas analysis
- d. GUE EDGE and pre-dive checks
- e. Basic 5 scuba skills
- f. SPG check
- g. S-drill
- h. Valve operation
- i. Connect and disconnect LP inflation hose from BC (and drysuit, if used)
- j. Oral inflation of BC
- k. Surface marker buoy (SMB) deployment utilizing a spool
- l. Basic compass navigation
- m. Basic 5 rescue skills

3.1.3.8 Required Dive Skills and Drills

Students must demonstrate competence in the following skills to attain GUE Open Water Diver certification:

- a. Must be able to swim at least 300 yds/275 m in less than 14 minutes without stopping. This test should be conducted in a swimsuit and, where necessary, appropriate thermal protection.
- b. Must be able to swim a distance of at least 50 ft/15 m on a breath hold while submerged.
- c. Demonstrate a safe and responsible demeanor throughout all training.
- d. Demonstrate basic equipment proficiency and an understanding of the GUE equipment configuration.
- e. Demonstrate proficiency in safe diving techniques, including pre-dive preparation, in-water activity, and post-dive assessment.
- f. Demonstrate awareness of team member location and a concern for safety, responding quickly to visual indications and dive partner needs.
- g. Demonstrate proficiency in underwater communication.
- h. Demonstrate safe ascent and descent procedures.
- i. Demonstrate good buoyancy and trim, i.e., approximate reference is a maximum of 30 degrees off horizontal while remaining within a range of 5 ft/1.5 m from target depth.

- j. Efficiently and comfortably demonstrate how to donate gas to an out-of-gas diver followed by an ascent to the surface utilizing minimum decompression ascent profile.
- k. Comfortably demonstrate at least two propulsion techniques that would be appropriate in a delicate and/or silty environment.
- l. Demonstrate aptitude in the following open water skills: regulator removal, regulator exchange, long hose deployment, mask clearing, mask removal and replacement.
- m. Demonstrate a comfortable demeanor while swimming without a mask in touch contact, followed by a switch to the backup mask.
- n. Demonstrate comprehension of the components necessary for a successful backward kick.
- o. Demonstrate proficiency in basic underwater compass navigation.
- p. Demonstrate proficiency in the Basic 5 rescue skills.
- q. Demonstrate proficiency in the ability to deploy a surface marker buoy (SMB) while using a spool.

3.1.3.9 Equipment Requirements

GUE base equipment configuration as outlined in Appendix A, plus:

- a. Snorkel, simple in design, with no purge valves

Prior to the commencement of the class, students should consult with a GUE representative to verify equipment requirements and the appropriateness of any selected equipment.

Appendix A - GUE Equipment Configuration

The GUE base equipment configuration is comprised of:

- a. Tanks/cylinders: Students may use a single tank/cylinder with a single- or dual-outlet valve. Students may also use dual tanks/cylinders connected with a dual-outlet isolator manifold, which allows for the use of two first stages. Dual tanks/cylinders connected with a dual-outlet, non-isolator manifold can be used, but only in recreational (minimum decompression) diving, and are considered an alternative for a single tank/cylinder. Consult course-specific standards and your instructor to verify size requirements.
- b. Regulators:
 - i. Single tank: The first stage must supply a primary second stage via a 5 to 7 ft/1.5 to 2 m hose. A backup second stage must be necklaced and supplied via a short hose. The first stage must also supply an analog pressure gauge, inflation for the buoyancy compensator (BC), and (when applicable) inflation for a drysuit.
 - ii. Double tank: One first stage must supply a primary second stage via a 5 to 7 ft/1.5 to 2 m hose (7 ft/2 m hose is required for all cave classes), and inflation for the buoyancy compensator (BC). The other first stage must supply a necklaced backup second stage via a short hose, an analog pressure gauge, and (when applicable) inflation for a drysuit.
- c. Backplate system:
 - i. Is held to the diver by one continuous piece of webbing. This webbing is adjustable and uses a buckle to secure the system at the waist.

- ii. A crotch strap is attached and looped through the waistband to prevent the system from riding up a diver's back.
- iii. The continuous webbing must support five D-rings;
 - 1. The first placed at the left hip
 - 2. The second placed in line with a diver's right collarbone
 - 3. The third placed in line with the diver's left collarbone
 - 4. The fourth and fifth are placed on the front and back of the crotch strap when divers plan to use advanced equipment such as DPVs.
- iv. The harness below the diver's arms has small restrictive bands to allow for the placement of backup lights. The webbing and system retains a minimalist approach.
- d. Buoyancy compensation device (BC):
 - i. A diver's BC is back-mounted and minimalist in nature.
 - ii. It is free of extraneous strings, tabs, or other material.
 - iii. There are no restrictive bands or restrictive elastic affixed to the buoyancy cell.
 - iv. Wing size and shape is appropriate to the cylinder size(s) employed for training.
- e. At least one time/depth measuring device
- f. Wrist-mounted compass
- g. Mask and fins: Mask is low-volume; fins are rigid, non-split.
- h. Backup mask
- i. At least one cutting device
- j. Wetnotes with at least one pencil
- k. Exposure suit appropriate for the duration of exposure
- l. Surface marker buoy (SMB) with spool: Where required, the SMB should be appropriate for environmental conditions and deployed using a spool with at least 100 ft/30 m of line.

The GUE PSCR configuration is comprised of:

- a. GUE base equipment configuration (except Tanks/Cylinder)
- b. One primary and two backup lights
- c. A GUE-approved passive semi-closed circuit rebreather
- d. Modified tank configuration as appropriate for use with a GUE-approved passive semi-closed circuit rebreather
- e. Modified regulator configuration as appropriate for use with a GUE-approved passive semi-closed circuit rebreather

The GUE CCR configuration is comprised of:

- a. GUE base equipment configuration (except Tanks/Cylinder)
- b. One primary and two backup lights
- c. A GUE-approved closed-circuit rebreather
 - i. Where required, students must own a GUE-approved closed-circuit rebreather before attending the course; they can, however, use a rented or borrowed unit during the course.
 - ii. The closed-circuit rebreather used by the student, with all associated components, must be fully functional (pass all tests on the rebreather pre-dive checklist) and serviced according to manufacturer specifications.
 - iii. All oxygen sensors must be less than one year from manufacturing date.

- iv. Both the rebreather controller and SOLO board must be updated with the latest software and firmware versions published by the manufacturer.
- d. Modified tank configuration as appropriate for use with a GUE-approved closed-circuit rebreather
- e. Modified regulator configuration as appropriate for use with a GUE-approved closed-circuit rebreather
- f. Spare parts and consumables, including one set of controller, HUD, and solenoid batteries; one oxygen sensor; and one DSV/BOV mouthpiece.
- g. If using a drysuit inflation cylinder attached to the backplate, extended inflation cylinder straps need to be used to ensure that it does not interfere with or restrict the counterlung's function.

The GUE Sidemount configuration is comprised of:

- a. GUE base equipment configuration (except Tank/cylinders, Regulators, Backplate, BC)
- b. One primary and two backup lights
- c. Tanks/cylinders: Students are required to use independent cylinders with single valves and without manifolds, which allow for the use of one first stage each. Stage cylinders with [proper cylinder marking \(2.2, e\)](#) will also be utilized.
- d. Regulators: One of the second stages must be on a 7 ft/2 m hose. Both first stages must supply a pressure gauge and provide inflation for a drysuit (where applicable) and a wing.
- e. Sidemount harness: A diver's sidemount setup should be back-mounted and minimalist in nature. Wing size and shape should be appropriate to the cylinder size(s) employed for training.

Additional Course-Specific Equipment

- a. Where required, back gas and stage cylinders with [proper cylinder marking \(2.2, e\)](#) will also be utilized in accordance with the GUE General Training Standards, Policies, and Procedures document and configured in line with GUE protocols.
- b. When drysuit inflation systems are applicable, they should be sized appropriately for the environment; small tanks are placed on the left side of the backplate with larger supplies affixed to the diver's left back gas tank.
- c. Underwater lights:
 - i. When required, backup lights should be powered by alkaline batteries (not rechargeable) and stowed on the D-rings at a diver's chest (except when diving sidemount).
 - ii. Backup lights should have a minimal amount of protrusions and a single attachment at the rear.
 - iii. Backup lights should feature a twist-on/off switch for operation
 - iv. The primary light should consist of a rechargeable battery pack and be fitted with a Goodman-style light handle.
 - v. When burn time requirements create the need for an external battery pack, it should reside in a canister mounted on the diver's right hip.
- d. Guideline devices, as required during cave diving activities:
 - i. A primary reel is required for all cave diving and provides a minimalist form factor with a handle designed to support a Goodman or "hands free" handle operation. The primary reel must contain at least 150 ft/45 m of line.

- ii. A safety spool is required for each diver while cave diving and must contain at least 150 ft/45 m of line.
 - iii. A jump or gap spool is required during Cave 2 diving and must contain at least 75 ft/23 m of line.
- e. Where required, GUE-approved DPV must:
 - i. Be a tow-behind style with adjustable speed and clutch mechanism.
 - ii. Include an attached cord at the back with bolt snap to be clipped on the front crotch strap D-ring.
 - i. Include a leash attached to the front to be used for towing.