



Ontario Underwater Explorers SCUBA Club

Used SCUBA Gear Buying Tips

If you're either a novice diver looking for your first set of SCUBA equipment, or already an experienced diver and simply looking to upgrade your gear, it always helps to get some pointers from fellow divers who have been buying and using similar gear for years. Hopefully, this will help you make an informed decision on plunking down your cash for what you may see for sale at our Swap or for sale anywhere else for that matter. To help you out in that respect, we offer for your consideration, some sage advice below, to keep in mind when shopping for used (or new) SCUBA gear.

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- For **cameras**, look for corrosion or signs of a previous flood. This applies to **canister dive lights** as well.
 - **Regs** are basically rebuilt each time you take them in for a regular service maintenance. They do not need to be perfect.
 - When looking at different regs, make sure that the **thread system** is compatible with the valves on your own tanks, unless you also plan on changing your tank valves.
 - Blow up **BC** and check for leaks by squeezing. Air should only come out of the over-pressure valves.
 - Check for rubber age by pulling (gently), look for cracks. (This applies to almost any **rubber/latex/vinyl/neoprene gear**, such as mask or fin straps, drysuit seals, hoses, etc.)
 - Check size of **wet suits** (try on). Look for gaps at armpits.
 - Get the lead out. **Coated weights** are great buys.
 - A split **wrist seal** or **neck seal** on an otherwise great looking dry suit is no reason to overlook it, if the price is right. Seals are a high-maintenance item anyway, and eventually do wear out, so sometimes

the cost of replacing neck or wrist seals can be well worth the huge discount you might find on a great dry suit, provided the rest of it is in nice shape. If in doubt, our gear experts on hand at the Swap can give you their unbiased opinion on the condition of any suit you may be considering.

- See our separate tips below on what to look for on any **SCUBA tanks'** stamped markings, to avoid buying a tank with the suspect inferior alloy that is prone to cracking.
- Unless you're entering a fashion show, check for **proper fit and sealing of any mask** you are looking at, as opposed to whether the colour matches your suit.
- If possible, do some research ahead of time on any **dive computer** you may be looking for, as sometimes computers do show up for sale with little or no documentation, and it helps if you already know the capabilities of the model(s) you are interested in. Copies of manuals can almost always be found online and downloaded.
- Check the fluid levels in any **compass** or oil-filled **pressure gauge** you are looking at, to rule out leaks. Our gear experts on hand at the Swap can connect up any pressure gauge you like to a tank to see how it's working.
- **Tried and true old brand names** are often safer bets than new upstarts you may never have heard of. Never forget that the most important pieces of your gear are life-support equipment. No intention to diss any new manufacturers out there, but there's a reason most old names are still making equipment – their stuff works and people still trust their quality.

Aluminum SCUBA Tank Alloys Tip Sheet

When it comes to tanks, there is a lot of information and misinformation out there. Early aluminum tanks were made of an alloy known as **6351**, which after a couple of decades was discovered to be prone to sustained load cracking (SLC). Of more than 30 million made, about a dozen failed catastrophically. The problem was addressed with a new inspection protocol, involving eddy current testing, such as Visual Plus. Since then, there have been no more failures. The test works at detecting cracks, and bad tanks are removed from service before they become a problem.

Regardless, some dive shops are scared of them and refuse to fill them. **Luxfer** stopped using the 6351 alloy in early 1988. **Catalina** never used it.