

Keep It  
*safe!*



## THINK, DON'T SINK... PLAN YOUR DIVE



Inadequate planning is one of the risk factors associated with many diving accidents. Below are a few rules to follow to ensure a safe dive.

It is important to plan each dive, however basic it may seem, a good plan includes preparations relating to the dive site, diving gear and personal and communication skills.

## 1. SITE AND EQUIPMENT

Studying the characteristics of the dive site will allow you to assess the level of difficulty of the dive, compile a list of the gear required and take the necessary precautions. Some information, such as wave height, wind force, visibility and the stability of conditions, must be confirmed on site. Nonetheless, each site has a number of defining characteristics that determine the factors to be considered. You should know in advance whether you will be diving in a lake or a river, the average water temperature, the bottom configuration, and whether there are tides, ice floes or currents.

You can draw up a list of the gear you will need for the dive (e.g. flashlight, type of suit, mitts, quantity of air) and ensure that all items are available and in good working order.

## 2. PERSONAL RESOURCES

Determine whether or not you have the experience required for the dive planned, that is, your qualifications (level and specialization, if applicable), familiarity with the site, skills (e.g. use of equipment, control of emotions), physical and mental condition, and the number of dives you have made in a similar context.

## 3. DIVING PARTNER

Choose a diving partner who has the necessary skills and experience.

Encouraging someone to skip to a new level before they are ready by saying that they will learn faster, that it is a new challenge or that it is “easy” may be dangerous for both you and your diving partner. The type of dive should always be determined according to the ability of the least-experienced diver.

## 4. COMMUNICATION

Establish frank and effective communications with your diving partner. Communication is not limited to using underwater signals. It touches upon every aspect of the dive, from the early planning stage to the moment you exit the water. By communicating effectively, you will avoid false assumptions, disappointments and unpleasant surprises. Nothing must be taken for granted. Buddies must clearly agree on all aspects of the dive (the purpose, each diver's limits, how the dive will unfold, etc.). If you have never

dived with your partner before, it is important to plan some practice dives to become familiar with one another.

Once in the water, pay special attention to your partner's movements to avoid losing each other. For example, agree on where both divers will be positioned during each movement (e.g. side-by-side, in parallel formation, Peter always to the right of John) and plan how you will maintain contact in the event of reduced visibility (e.g. hand-in-hand, short hand-held rope).

## **5. DIVING PLAN**

Agree on and follow a diving plan, because it guides every stage of your preparation. Spontaneous changes to the plan when you are 10 metres below the surface are to be avoided.

## **6. PRE-DIVE ROUTINE**

Check your gear and review hand signals, the diving plan and emergency procedures. For example, remember that if you reach the surface out of breath and you have little air remaining, you should drop your weight belt; if your regulator freezes, indicate the problem to your partner as soon as you detect the free-flow and ascend together. Before diving, ask yourself how you feel (e.g. uncomfortable, tired, having difficulty concentrating) and if you really wish to perform this dive. If not, you are better off on the dock.

Although diving is regulated,<sup>i</sup> and despite the existence of many other safety rules, the focus here is on planning and the important role each diver plays in ensuring his or her own safety and that of his or her partner. As you gain experience and dives become more routine, you face an increasing risk of letting your guard down and taking fewer precautions. Remember that you must be vigilant in preparing each dive.

## CONTACT US

Please contact us if you would like more information or copies of our publications.

By mail:           Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport  
**Direction de la promotion de la sécurité**  
100, rue Laviolette, bureau 306  
Trois-Rivières (Québec) G9A 5S9

By telephone:   819-371-6033 or **1-800-567-7902**

By fax:           819-371-6992

By e-mail:       promotionsecurite@mels.gouv.qc.ca

Web site:        [www.mels.gouv.qc.ca](http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca)

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<sup>i</sup> In Québec, the *Act respecting safety in sports* requires all persons who practise or provide instruction in recreational underwater diving to have a certificate attesting to the level of qualification. The Act also stipulates that no holder of a qualification certificate may undertake a dive or provide instruction requiring a higher level of qualification than the level indicated on the certificate.