



SSI/PRO

CLASSIFIED DIVING

INSTRUCTOR SEMINAR
& DIVE BUDDY TRAINING



Do you remember the first time you went scuba diving? The feeling of being able to breathe underwater, and the first sensation of being weightless once you had sorted out your buoyancy? Wasn't 'it' great?

Well imagine a couple of new sensations being introduced along with this. The feeling of being free from a wheelchair and being able to go up and down and side to side when normally, you have to worry about smaller issues like steps and terrain.

It's an incredible feeling and as a SSI Classified Instructor you are in the position to be able to offer that chance of a wonderful experience and new hobby to disabled people.



What Is the SSI Classified Diving Program?

The SSI Classified Diver Program helps people with disabilities learn scuba diving safely. Developed by Scuba Schools International (SSI), this program uses adaptive techniques to match each diver's needs. It teaches essential scuba skills while accommodating various physical or sensory limitations. Updated in 2020, the program has grown in popularity and effectiveness.

Unlike creating a separate course, SSI adapts the standard Open Water Diver course. Instructors adjust techniques and allow assistance where needed. For example, a diver with limited leg use might focus on arm propulsion. A trained assistant can help with gear setup or water entries. The student completes theory sessions, confined water skills, and open water dives — just like any diver, but at their own pace and ability.

Every Classified Diver dives with support. Their certification card shows their required assistance level. This ensures safety while promoting independence. SSI encourages forming inclusive dive teams. It's not just about an individual and their instructor. It's about building dive communities where all divers feel welcome.





Understanding the Levels in the SSI Classified Diver Program



After training, divers are certified at Level 1, 2, or 3. Each level reflects how much assistance they need. Here's a quick breakdown:

- **Level 1** – Most independent. The diver needs just one Classified Dive Buddy.
- **Level 2** – The diver needs a team of two trained buddies.
- **Level 3** – Requires two buddies plus a trained Classified dive professional (like an instructor).

Each diver's card shows their level. This helps dive operators plan the right team setup. Importantly, these levels are based on water skills — not land-based diagnoses. Two people with the same disability may be at different levels, depending on their in-water ability.

SSI encourages progress. A Level 3 diver may improve over time and move to Level 2. The program builds confidence and celebrates every achievement.

Who Can Join the Program?

The program welcomes anyone with a disability — physical, sensory, or cognitive — as long as they have medical clearance to dive. Here's who can benefit:

Mobility impairments: Paraplegics, amputees, and those with spinal injuries can dive using adaptive gear and techniques.

Sensory impairments: Blind or deaf divers use touch, visual cues, and modified signals to dive confidently.

Neurological conditions: Conditions like cerebral palsy, MS, or Parkinson's can be accommodated with personalized instruction.

Cognitive/developmental disorders: Students with autism, Down syndrome, or brain injuries benefit from patient, repetitive instruction tailored to their learning style.

This program doesn't label people by what they *can't* do. It focuses on what's possible under water.

CLASSIFIED DIVING

INSTRUCTOR SEMINAR

The SSI Classified Diving Instructor course trains active SSI Open Water Instructors to safely teach and certify divers with physical and sensory disabilities within SSI Classified Diving programs. The course focuses on medical considerations, adaptive techniques, equipment modifications, communication strategies, and best teaching practices in confined water.

Upon successful completion, candidates may teach:

- SSI Classified Open Water Diver
- SSI Classified Dive Buddy

Prerequisites

- Minimum age: **18 years**
- Active status **SSI Open Water Instructor**

Course Details

Duration: 2 days

Environment: Classroom + Pool /
Confined Water only

Focus: Knowledge development,
adaptive skill mastery, instructor-level
teaching ability

The SSI PRO logo is located in the bottom right corner. It features the letters 'SSI' in a bold, red, sans-serif font, with a small registered trademark symbol (®) to the right. Below 'SSI' is the word 'PRO' in a large, white, bold, sans-serif font. The background of the entire page is a collage of underwater scenes, including a diver's face in the foreground, a group of divers in the background, and various marine life like fish and coral.

Day 1 – Classroom Session

Theory & Knowledge Development

- Classified Diving medical theory
- Understanding different physical and sensory disabilities
- Risk assessment and safety considerations
- Equipment considerations and adaptations
- Exposure protection, weighting, propulsion aids, and support equipment
- Best practice in adaptive teaching
- SSI Classified Diving standards and procedures review

Day 1 – Pool / Confined Water Session

Practical Skills & In-Water Evaluations

- In-water fitness evaluation and rescue techniques
 - Level 1 classified skills
 - Entries and exits for all classification levels
 - Basic adaptive buoyancy and trim techniques
 - Level 2 classified skills
 - Wheelchair-based diving support
 - Transfers and assisted water entries
 - Equipment handling and positioning
 - Level 3 classified skills
 - Advanced adaptations
 - Buddy team positioning
 - Communication and task loading management
- Classified buddy team practice
- Instructor awareness, positioning, and control

Day 2 – Classroom Session

Review & Assessment

- Review of key academic concepts
- Scenario-based discussion and problem solving
- Final written exam

Day 2 – Pool / Confined Water Session

Advanced Applications & Teaching Presentations

- Review and continuation of Day 1 skills
- Training visually impaired divers
 - Hand signal communication
 - Tactile and touch-based cue systems
- Instructor in-water teaching presentations
 - Skill demonstrations
 - Student control and positioning
 - Problem prevention and management
 - Real-time adaptations based on diver needs
- Final in-water evaluations

SSI
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Adaptation Assessment Overview



The importance of accessibility for the diving and hotel experience is of utmost importance for the comfort and experience of the guest. It is also an area which cannot afford to be generically underestimated. When first presented with the concept of 'disabled accessibility', the first thought that comes to mind is a wheelchair ramp and perhaps assistance bars. There are many types of disability, which can range from the obviously mobility restrictions to less visual ones, including but not limited to: Sight-impairment, hearing impairment, dexterity and mental development issues.

Scuba diving programs have been developed to be as inclusive as possible with very few conditions actually being excluded from participation.

The key issue for a successful scuba experience program is logistics. The ability to make the experience happen for the guest in a comfortable way. This goes from the ability to access the facility, to ease of use of amenities. These include bathrooms, changing facilities, accommodation, switch height, table height, communication tools, transportation, seating, handles, ground & deck protection and even digital accessibility with the ability to access information.

The scuba diving side also includes training material accessibility and use as well as equipment designed to enable the scuba diver to safely scuba dive and meet the performance requirements of diver training. The success of these projects depends not just on the will of the disabled person wishing to scuba dive but on the instructor/ dive guide, support staff, facility and everyone involved with the project.

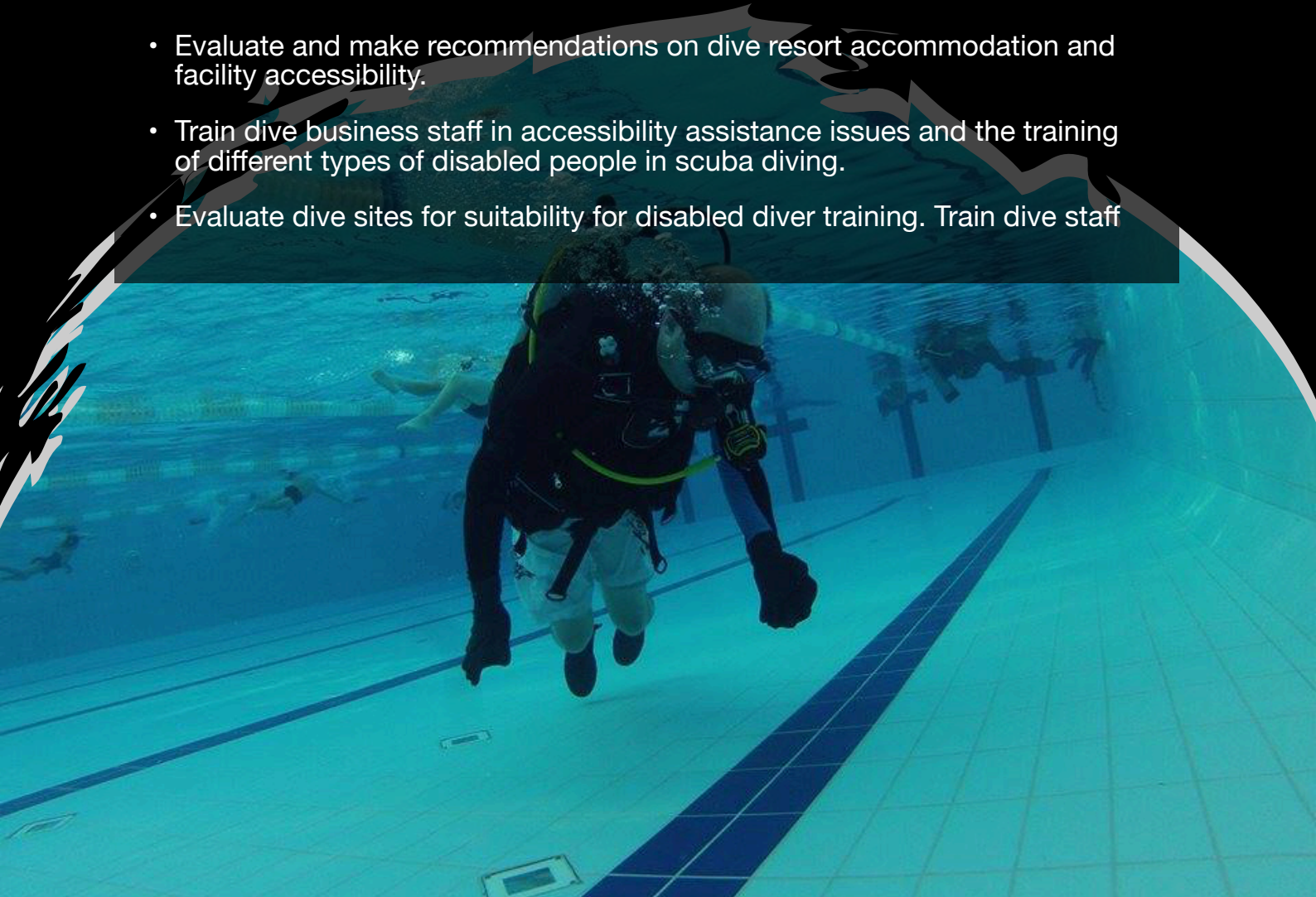
Other considerations that need to be made with the training and support experience for disabled divers, go right down to the language and mannerisms used to communicate with disabled people and the training of them. This also needs to be addressed when discussing the concept of "accessibility". Instructors and dive staff need to be prepared to work with an open mind to enable training and diving to happen based seeing what the disabled person can do, rather than pre-conceived assumptions of what they can't do.

Away from the diving, the easier the hotel experience can be for the guest is of vital importance to the success of the project. From a disabled person's point of view, if they cannot enjoy the whole experience, it is unlikely for them to want to repeat or recommend it. As such the development of a hotel/resort around diving should have the accessibility questions mentioned as a forefront consideration, not an afterthought.

Assessment guidelines for the dive centre and resorts have been developed with reference to the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) Accessibility Guidelines and European Accessibility Act. The guidelines would take into account the specific requirements of the country in question. They will also reference the training standards set forth by Scuba Schools International (SSI) and medical guidelines from individual disability organisations.

GOALS OF THE ACCESSIBILITY ASSESSMENT & STAFF TRAINING

- Train dive Instructors in SSI Classified Diving Program of how to adapt the standards laid down in SSI Training Standards to enable people with disabilities to take part in scuba via the Classified Diving program or standard SSI diving courses.
- Train Divemasters to be SSI Classified Diving Buddies to help divers with disabilities.
- Assess dive centre equipment for the training of divers with disabilities and make recommendations on adaptive equipment purchases.
- Train dive instructors in the use of adaptive dive equipment. For example full face masks with communication units, diver propulsion vehicles (DPVs) and other assistive devices such as hand fins. Able to issue instructor certifications in these fields.
- Give a basic generic understanding and guidelines for a wide variety of disabilities and tips and recommendations for successfully conducting training and experiences.
- Evaluate and make recommendations on dive centre building accessibility.
- Evaluate and make recommendations on dive centre transport accessibility. This includes but is not limited to land vehicles, small dive vessels and liveaboard vessels.
- Evaluate and make recommendations on dive resort accommodation and facility accessibility.
- Train dive business staff in accessibility assistance issues and the training of different types of disabled people in scuba diving.
- Evaluate dive sites for suitability for disabled diver training. Train dive staff



The Instructor Trainer

ABOUT MARK

As a child, Mark was obsessed with the underwater world. Originally from Great Britain after years of snorkelling and free diving on holiday, he finally earned his Open Water Diver scuba certification on the Great Barrier Reef in Australia, travelling around the world on his GAP year.

Mark continued to dive and after completing a bachelors degree at Newcastle University, Mark travelled to Thailand to become a Divemaster. Enjoying himself so much working on dive boats, he elected to stay and become a diving instructor.

Just a few weeks after Mark became an instructor, tragedy struck. A fall from a third floor left Mark paralysed from the waist down. He was hospitalised for four months in the spinal unit in the UK. But he considers that the thought of being able to scuba dive kept him going. And true enough just three weeks after Mark's discharge from the spinal unit, he was invited back to teach in his former job in Thailand by his mentors top PADI Course Directors, the late Stephen Blumenthal and Russell Martin, and tech diving legend, the late Stephen Burton.

Delighted that he could still teach as a normal dive instructor, and wanting to pass on that gift to other divers, Mark specialised in working



with divers with disabilities. At the same time he worked as part of a busy dive centre team, earning higher instructor certifications until in March 2008 he attained the highest PADI Instructor rating possible for anyone. PADI Course Director. He is at the time of writing the **first and only wheelchair user to ever attain this rating.**

After becoming a PADI Course Director Mark worked in Egypt, and Phuket & Bangkok, Thailand before setting in Kenya teaching diving courses. The culmination of Mark's experience and hard work was rewarded when Mark finally opened his own dive centre Ocean Tribe in 2015. He strives to maintain the highest possible standards



"Diving is the greatest freedom, so lets get out there offering the wonders to as many people as possible"

of diving instruction and dive trips at Ocean Tribe and introduce people to the wonders of Kenya's superb diving. Ocean Tribe is an accredited **SSI Classified Diving Center**

In addition to his work for Ocean Tribe, Mark was the **Director of Training and Marketing for Disabled Divers International (DDI)**, one of the world's leading disabled diver training organisation. He travels around the world teaching Divemasters and Instructors to work with disabled divers and instructor trainers how to teach the instructor courses for pros who wish to work with handicapped people.

Mark was the main Instructor Trainer for the launch of the **PADI Adaptive Techniques Specialty Instructor** program in Asia-Pacific, Africa and the USA in 2018. He also assisted with the writing of the disabled diver accessibility program **Classified Diving for Scuba Schools International (SSI)** in 2017.

Mark has been involved in numerous projects around the world implementing accessible programs and facilities for disabled diving including the aquarium and dive training centre at **Resorts World Sentosa, Singapore**, the diving centre and aquarium at **Atlantis Resort, Dubai** and Pavilion Dive Centre in **Jumeriah Beach Hotel, Dubai**. He has also worked with a number of dedicated organisations in the field of rehabilitation using scuba diving with the **Veteran's Association (VA)** and **Dive Pirates** in the USA, **Help for Heroes** in the UK and corresponding programs in Australia and New Zealand.

DIVE CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

- 2004- Certified as a PADI diving instructor
- 2005- Certified as an IAHD Instructor Trainer
- 2008- Youngest PADI Course Director in the World at the time at 25 years old
- 2008- First and only wheelchair user to become a PADI Course Director
- 2008-Present – Taught SSI ITCS, PADI IDCs and DDI Instructor courses in Thailand, Egypt, Kenya, Tanzania, UAE, Oman, Australia, USA, Canada, Honduras, Puerto Rico, Kuwait, Costa Rica, Netherlands, Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, South Korea, China and UK
- 2013- Taught first ever DDI Instructor course in Australia
- 2015- Opened Ocean Tribe
- 2015- Appointed Director of Diver Training for Disabled Divers International (DDI)
- 2015- Trained first ever DDI Instructor Trainers in Australia and New Zealand
- 2015- Trained first ever DDI Instructor Trainers in USA & Canada
- 2015- Training supervisor on Award-Winning North American TV show “Invincible- Beneath The Surface”
- 2016- First and only wheelchair user to become an SSI Instructor Trainer
- 2016- Awarded SSI Gold 500 Instructor
- 2017- Awarded SSI Platinum 1000 Instructor
- 2017- Awarded SSI Platinum Pro 5000 Diver
- 2018- Taught first PADI Adaptive Techniques Specialty Instructor Courses in Philippines, South Korea, Indonesia and China
- 2018- Certified as a PADI Freediver
- 2019- Received Award from Governor of Roatan for Services to the People of Roatan
- 2020-24 PADI Gold Course Director
- 2025- SSI Elite Instructor Trainer



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INSTRUCTOR SEMINAR & DIVE BUDDY TRAINING

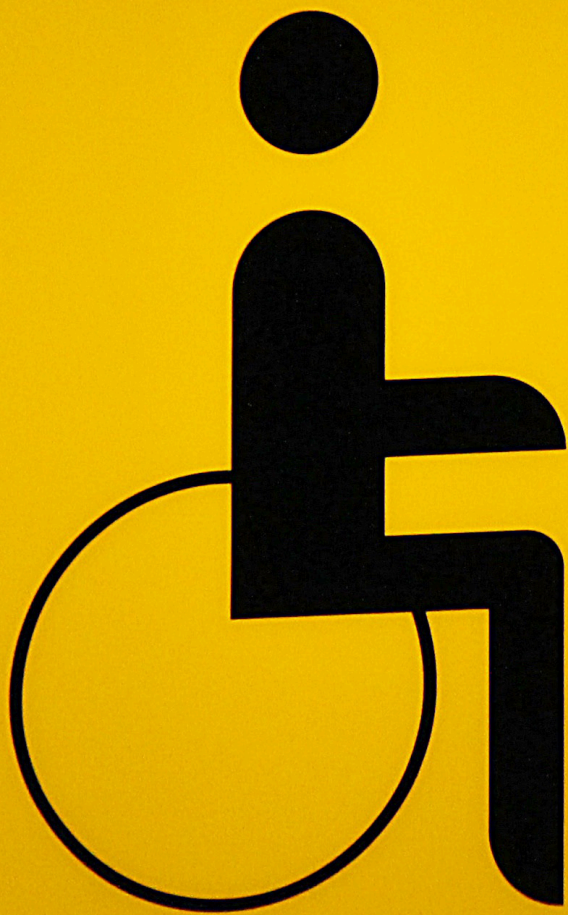
PRICES

Training @ Ocean Tribe in Kenya	
SSI Classified Diving Specialty Instructor Seminar -*	\$499
SSI Classified Dive Buddy -	\$349
Training @Your Dive Centre Anywhere in the World	
Minimum Candidates 5 (We can also advertise for candidates for the programs)**	
SSI Classified Diving Specialty Instructor Seminar -*	\$499
SSI Classified Dive Buddy -*	\$349

*- Includes: SSI Classified Diving Instructor / SSI Classified Dive Buddy Digital Outline

** - Includes Dive Business Facilities Accessibility Evaluation and Consultation





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