

BASICS OF BETTER UNDERWATER PHOTOGRAPHY

PHOTOGRAPHING PEOPLE



OPTICAL OCEAN SALES
UNDERWATER PHOTOGRAPHY EQUIPMENT

PEOPLE

DIVERS & MODELS

Divers and models make nice subjects to inspire wonder and excitement for the underwater environment. A human presence in this surreal, weightless surrounding can really draw your viewer in and help them relate to your image.

There are 2 major ways to photograph people underwater:

- ▶ **Scuba divers in a marine environment**
- ▶ **Models posing for art, fashion or advertising**



SCUBA DIVERS:

TIPS AND TRICKS

Prepare for your dive – with the tips included in this handbook.



PROFESSIONAL PRESENTATION

- ▶ Dive gear neat and secure.
- ▶ Long hair tied back.
- ▶ Body and arms positioned properly.



LOOKING

GOOD & COMFORTABLE

Wardrobe selection is very important (even for divers).

- ▶ Have your model or dive buddy wear a mask that is nicely shaped and does not hide their eyes.
- ▶ Avoid all-black masks as they hide the nose and much of the face.
- ▶ While a black mask isn't good – black (or other dark color) fins and wetsuit are good.
- ▶ In the end, choose what you think looks nice & professional.



**AVOID
BLACK
MASKS**

CONNECT & COMMUNICATE

Even if your model is really your dive buddy and it is not their main concern to be your model – come up with a plan for hand signals to let them know when you would like them to pose for you & what type of positioning or movement you would like.



SILHOUETTES

IN THE DISTANCE

Just about any wide-angle shot looks more intriguing with a diver silhouette in that big blue area.



TOO MANY PEOPLE

DEALING WITH CROWDS

Change your position so that their presence might compliment your composition.





BUOYANCY

ALWAYS A HUGE FACTOR

Make sure your model or buddy has good buoyancy control – especially if you are planning on having them pose close to fragile corals.

When possible keep fragile things in the foreground and your model behind.



ANIMALS AND PEOPLE

Most people are intrigued by the notion of swimming next to a large animal underwater. Have your model or buddy position themselves on the other side of the animal if possible.



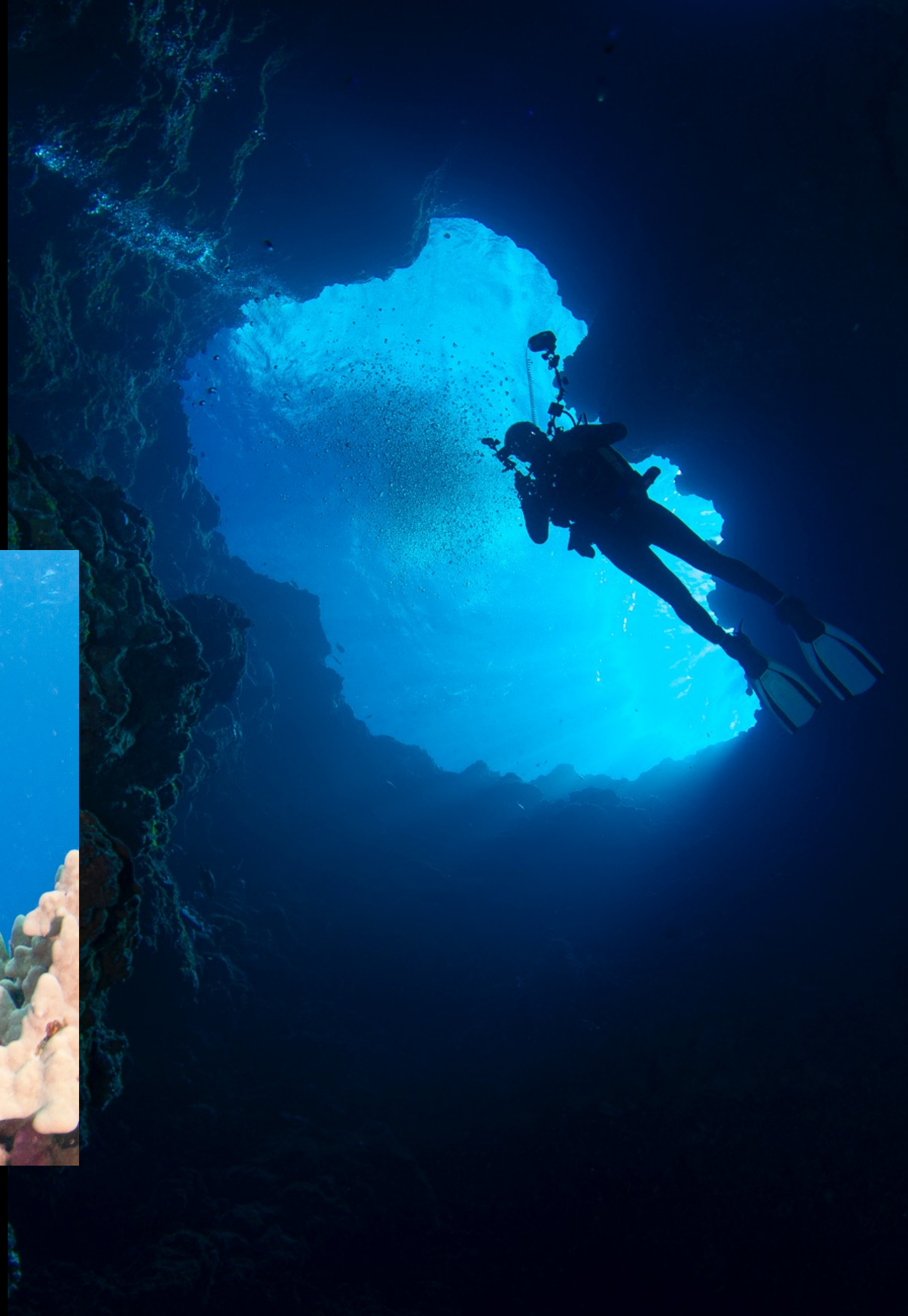
MORE LIGHTING POSSIBILITIES

Don't forget about the possibility of your diver holding a light. This can be done just to draw attention to a diver silhouette – or the diver can provide additional light on the other subject of your composition.



CAMERA SETTINGS

If you are instructing your model or dive buddy into your scene, make sure to have your camera set up before they enter the shot.



REVIEW YOUR IMAGES

WITH YOUR DIVER

Go over your images with your model.
Having them see what looks good and
what doesn't will really help them know
what to do the next time around.



MODELS:

FASHION, ART, ADVERTISING

With these posed, dream-like images, there is a world of possibilities.



These tips are for free-diving models close to the surface that do not require supplied air while underwater.

KNOW WHAT YOUR MODEL IS FEELING

Looking natural underwater – especially while holding your breath – is much harder than it looks.



Before you shoot a model underwater, try:

- ▶ holding your breath while swimming underwater
- ▶ having your eyes open
- ▶ keep cheeks un-puffed
- ▶ keep face and body looking natural
- ▶ move freely underwater, without fins



TANGLE PANIC

Clothes – especially long flowing clothes can initially cause panic, as there is the feeling of being tangled and drowning.



Explain this to new models right away before they start. If they are expecting it, it will prepare them and help reduce the panic.

WATER

UP THE NOSE

If you can avoid this situation – AVOID IT.

For models that have this problem:

- ▶ Have them practice holding their breath then just lowering their mouth and nose underwater so they can get the feeling of not drawing air into their nose while underwater – in a calm, relaxed way.
- ▶ If they just can't get comfortable with it try having them blow a little air out of their nose when they are first going underwater – then hold their breath.
- ▶ If all else fails – let them hold their nose when they first go underwater – then let go while still holding their breath.

Be prepared to spend much more time getting your shots and you may not be able to get exactly what you want.



RED EYE

IRRITATION

Photographing models – especially in a pool with chlorine, eyes will get irritated after a while. Some people are more sensitive, but just about everyone will be affected after a while.

After the shoot, models can flush their eyes with a cool eye rinse or saline eye drops for relief.

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WATER

CLARITY

Fabric as well as constant motion causes water to get cloudy after a while. Fabric can release particles, so pre-wash it if possible. Constant motion causes tiny little bubbles that make the water look cloudy.



If you are in a pool – taking a break for a while can help the bubbles dissipate.

BREAK THE RULES

Don't forget, when you are photographing models, you don't always have to present the photo right-side-up. The weightless look of underwater shots gives you complete creative freedom.

Turn your photographs
any way you want!



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LEARN BY EXAMPLE

Show your model examples – photos or sketches – of positioning before they get in the water to help them figure out movements and poses.



HAVE FUN BEFORE YOU START

Let your model get used to moving around underwater. Have them practice for a while in a completely relaxed mode without any pressure to do anything specific.



GO WITH THE FLOW

When using clothing & fabric – the model needs to be able to create movement and motion that gets the fabric moving properly.





SAFETY

& MORE HELP IS BETTER

Safety:

- ▶ If you are in a pool, the model can always retreat to the edge.
- ▶ In open water – keep some sort of float or platform close by.
- ▶ There should also be at least one helper with fins staying close by the model that can help.

More Help:

- ▶ It's really best to have at least 2 helpers ready with fins & mask when shooting in a pool.
- ▶ When shooting in open water divers are a better choice.
- ▶ Along with safety, they can wrangle fabric, adjust props and hold strategic lights.

KEEP IT WIDE

You will want to be able to get as close to your model as possible while still being able to get their whole body in frame. A lens in the 20-28mm range works really well.



REVIEW YOUR IMAGES

WITH YOUR MODEL

Seeing what looks good and what doesn't will really help your model know what to do the next time around. What it feels like they are doing – isn't always really what they are doing.





Part of the “Basics of UW Photography” Series

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