

STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES



APNEA TOTAL

NAOMI BERGAU

AT Standards and Guidelines V1.1

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Compiled by ATHQ

Contributing to this revision:

Contents

1. DISCLAIMER

The following standards and guidelines apply to all Apnea Total (AT) Courses and levels. These standards relate primarily to matters of safety and therefore must be adhered to at all times by Apnea Total Instructors whenever training or supervising freedivers, advanced and master students and instructors in training or anyone undertaking any Apnea Total training activity.

The Apnea Total Standards and Guidelines (ATSG) cannot displace any local laws, which must be verified by whomever is teaching under these standards. The non-compliance with local laws will be the exclusive responsibility of the Apnea Total Instructors teaching and/or the Centre they are attached to. Apnea Total Headquarters (ATHQ) does not accept any responsibility for the breach of local laws, nor liability as a result thereof.

Detailed standards for specific courses are addressed in the individual Course Manuals.

It is important to say that pushing limits or mistakes of judgment that result in loss of motor control (LMC) or blackout (BO), is not appropriate for recreational freediving, and creates significant risk for the freediver, Instructor, and other students. Any freediver that has an LMC or BO during any AT course must immediately stop in-water training for the day. In the case of underwater blackout, or any blackout with complications (e.g. squeeze), the Instructor may require medical approval for the student to continue in-water training.

2. INTRODUCTION

Apnea Total is an international freediving organisation that promotes the Apnea Total Freediving Education System and provides certification that is recognised worldwide. Apnea Total upholds the highest standards of freediving safety, instruction and education and is one of the oldest certifying freediving organisations in the world.

The primary headquarters for the organisation is located in Koh Tao, Thailand: however there are many reputable freediving centres and experienced Instructors who teach and certify Apnea Total courses worldwide.

Apnea Total welcomes anyone who may have little to no experience in the ocean as well as those who are more experienced. Freediving with Apnea Total is a fun and safe water sport that can be enjoyed by everyone.

The levels of certified education provided by Apnea Total are: Freediver (FD), Advanced Freediver (AFD), Master Freediver (MFD), Instructor, Master Instructor, Instructor Trainer and Course Director

2.1. History and founders

Apnea Total in Koh Tao, Thailand is the primary headquarters for the freediving organisation and is the first and longest-established freediving school in South-East Asia.

The freediving centre was originally founded by Monica Ganame and Eusebio Saenz de Santamaria in 2003 and since this time has developed and grown into a thriving freediving headquarters with a large team of experienced Instructors and multiple freediving courses running daily. To date over 14,000 students have successfully been certified as Apnea Total freedivers in Koh Tao.

3. INSTRUCTOR STANDARDS

3.1. Requirements

There are four grades of Apnea Total Instructor: *Instructor, Master Instructor, Instructor Trainer and Course Director.*

For the purpose of this document, *Instructors* are those who have successfully completed all levels within the Apnea Total educational system included in the Instructor Course (ATIC) and they are usually qualified and allowed to teach up to the Advanced Freediver Course. The Master Freediver Course can only be taught by *Master Instructors, Instructor Trainers* or by *Course Directors*. ATIC can only be taught by *Instructor Trainers* and *Course Directors*. Finally, *Course Director* is the only one allowed to teach the level of Instructor Trainer and give the certification of Course Director too. Collectively they will be called AT Instructors.

Nevertheless the requirements for each level will be detailed below, each Apnea Total Instructor must meet the following requirements:

- 5 minutes of Static Apnea
- 20 metres rescue
- 20 metres safety
- 30 metres CNF
- 35 metres CWT
- 45 metres any depth discipline¹

¹ Exceptions might be made in particular and exceptional cases and only after consulting with the ATHQ.

3.1.1. Instructors

i. Prerequisites

This is the first level of teaching under the Apnea Total educational system. To enrol to the Apnea Total Instructor Course, Instructor candidates must:

- Have successfully completed the Master Freediver Course with AT or any other equivalent course with a different organisation. When coming from another organisation, the crossover must be authorized by the Instructor Trainer or Course Director in charge of the ATIC.
- Be comfortable diving to around 30 metres with the Constant Weight technique (CWT) in a repeatable manner without a long breathe up.

ii. Course content

During a period of two weeks, the candidates will first go through classroom sessions where they will gain knowledge of how AT Courses are conducted and a thorough understanding of the methodology behind the AT teaching system. This portion will help the candidates to become comfortable presenting all the information for Freediver and Advanced Freediver courses.

Once the classroom sessions are finished, candidates will go to the water and start presenting the courses to the Instructor Trainer or Course Director who will help to perfect the information presented and will show the candidates how to teach students the correct technique, breathing, equalization and how to get students over mental barriers, etc. This period lasts approximately another two weeks.

After the water sessions are completed, the candidates will have the opportunity to begin with an internship in which they would be able to assist courses and teach under the strict direction of the AT Instructor in charge until they are totally comfortable and ready to teach on their

own. This will be decided exclusively by the Instructor Trainer or Course Director in charge of their course.

The final length of the ATIC will generally depend on each candidate's skills, learning speed and abilities, although it shouldn't take more than 4-5 weeks.

iii. Requirements

In order to obtain the *Instructor* certification to teach up through the Advanced Freediver Course the requirements are as follow and listed above:

- 5 minute static
- 20 metres rescue
- 20 metres safety
- 30 metres Constant Weight No Fins (CNF)
- 35 metres CWT (bi fins)
- 45 metres any depth discipline².

When teaching AT courses, Instructors are always expected to follow the students all the way down and back up, AFD (up to 35 metres) included.

After completing the requirements of this first level, Instructors will generally be allowed to teach up through the AFD. This circumstance will be decided by the Instructor Trainer or Course Director in charge of the course. According to their level of expertise, Instructors might be qualified to teach only FD courses or both FD and AFD.

3.1.2. Master Instructors

² Exceptions might be made in particular and exceptional cases and only after consulting with the ATHQ.

Master Instructors are those who are allow to teach up to the level of Master Freediver Course. To achieve this qualification, Instructors must:

- Have successfully taught 100 Freediver Courses.
- Have successfully taught 50 Advanced Freediver Courses.

Nevertheless, Instructors can also attain the authorization to teach Master Students by shadowing the current AT Instructor teaching the MFD for at least half of the course or a minimum of two weeks. In this case the AT Instructor (Master Instructor, Instructor Trainer or Course Director), will determine when the candidate will be ready to teach Master students. The time required until the AT Instructor in charge of the course considers the candidate to be competent and confident enough to start teaching may vary from candidate to candidate

Moreover, any AT Instructor teaching Master students must be experienced and have the knowledge to follow up the cycles and requirements students must achieve during their course.

3.1.3. **Instructor Trainer**

Instructor Trainers are those AT Instructors who have successfully completed the requirements to prepare and teach up to the level of Instructor and Master Instructor. Instructor Trainers can only be taught by Course Directors.

i. **Prerequisites**

Ideally, candidates must have the qualification to teach up to the level of Master Course. Nevertheless, the requirements are as follows:

- Have successfully taught 100 Freediver Courses and have successfully taught 50 Advanced Freediver Courses or having obtained the Master Freediver Instructor level.
- Have held the Instructor qualification for a minimum of 2 years with no more than a 6 month interval in one go without teaching.

ii. Requirements to be certified

Candidates for Instructor Trainer must attend a two to three day theory class with the Course Director in charge of the course, where they will together review the content of the course based mainly on the way of teaching. Also, water sessions might take place to review the content that must be taught while in the water.

After the theory and water sessions are completed, they must teach ATIC under the surveillance of the Course Director. After each session a briefing will take place where important points will be discussed and an evaluation will be made by the Course Director.

The candidates to Instructor Trainer must successfully teach the content of the FD and AFD Course in order to be certified as Instructor Trainers.

3.1.4. Course Director

Course Director is the AT Instructor able to teach and prepare AT Instructor Trainers. In order to achieve this level, AT Instructors must be Instructor Trainers and they must be authorized by Apnea Total Headquarters.

i. Prerequisites

Candidates for Course Director must apply in order to be allowed to enrol for this course completing the following requirements:

- They must have held the Instructor certification for a minimum of two years and the Instructor Trainer certification for a minimum of one year and have been actively teaching during this whole period, with a maximum break of a 6 month period. Proof of this must be shown when applying.
- They must also have successfully taught a minimum of five Instructor Courses regardless of the number of candidates, or have taught 10 candidates to Instructor level within a minimum of three courses in a period not less than a year.

- Candidates to Course Director must present a cover letter detailing how they are qualified to achieve this level, including recommendation letters from at least two Instructor Trainers or Course Directors, where they show the commitment to the AT Educational System.

ii. Requirements to be certified

This course can only be conducted at ATHQ, Koh Tao, Thailand, under the surveillance of the current Course Director in charge of the course.

Instructors must complete theory and water sessions that will last two to three days, where they will review the AT Educational System and go throughout the teaching techniques for this level. The Course Director will evaluate when the candidates are ready to begin their practical training.

Once these sessions are complete, a practical training will take place where they will have to teach a Course Director program. After each session, a briefing will take place where important points will be discussed and an evaluation will be made by the Course Director.

It will be the exclusive responsibility of the Course Director to certify the candidates.

Under this level, Instructors will be allowed to teach AT Instructor Trainer Courses. To teach up to this level, they must have the approval of ATHQ and take the course at their facilities.

Course Directors may teach the Course Director Program only at the discretion of ATHQ.

3.2. Responsibilities

Their primary responsibilities are safety and instruction. That is why it is imperative rules are followed when it comes to teaching under the AT system.

First, that AT Instructors must be present and in control during all freediving activities for any course that results in AT certification, meaning:

- They are always expected to follow the students all the way down and back up during water sessions when training with a line in open waters.
- When teaching Static Apnea Clinics they must accompany the students all the way during the water session in one to one performance.

Second, and in order to enable AT Instructors to fulfil this regulation, there will always be a maximum of three students per instructor, without exception. A normal ratio of 2-3 students to one AT Instructor will allow greater personalised attention and tuition.

As mentioned before, AT Instructors will accompany the students at all times while underwater regardless of depth, thus increasing student confidence and safety. However, Master students and candidates undertaking ATIC are allowed to assist classroom and water sessions as part of their own training program: the presence of a certified AT Instructor is mandatory under all circumstances.

Master Instructors, Instructors Trainer and Course Directors can use video of students' performances as an instruction tool during the Master Freediver Course and ATIC. Though demonstration and prompt feedback are the primary tools of any AT Instructor, video can be an effective addition, helping students understand how to improve their performances.

While in classroom sessions, AT Instructors will show the students the correct body and breathing technique, equalization and will encourage them to get over mental barriers especially through relaxation and self-confidence.

Therefore, essential achievements promoted to students – regardless of level – are feeling comfortable and safe while freediving. In order to accomplish that, AT Instructors will provide a safe environment during both the classroom and water sessions, so the students are able to relax and improve their skills step by step.

Consequently, the AT Educational System will always place the focus on the students and their own rhythm of apprenticeship, allowing them to learn first-hand from qualified AT Instructors and reaching their own comfortable space while training.

3.3. Freediver students to instructor ratio

Each Apnea Total course is usually divided into a theoretical classroom session and a water session performed in either open or confined water.

3.3.1. Student-Instructor ratio during theoretical classroom session

For theoretical classroom sessions, only one AT Instructor will be required and the maximum number of students may vary according to the number of AT Instructors available for water sessions. Notwithstanding, when large groups of students are allowed, discretion is advised in order to maintain appropriate control during the class, to be able to observe and correct each one of the students when practicing the exercises and to manage the time schedule programmed for the day. Reducing the number of students for the theoretical classroom session or requiring the support of an assistant or another AT Instructor to supervise students while learning, will be recommend in these cases.

3.3.2. Student-Instructor ratio during water session

As stated before, part of the rules the AT Instructor must always follow is the strict number of students they are allowed to teach while in the water sessions. Under no circumstance can there be more than three students per certified AT Instructor. Assistants are not considered a certified AT Instructor and they are only allow to accompany the AT Instructor in charge of the water session.

Discretion is also advised to determine if conditions warrant reduced ratios for student freedivers or participants to maintain safety and control during water sessions, i.e. when teaching Junior Freedivers.

It is a must for AT Instructors to be able to maintain appropriated control of prevailing conditions, perform the required evaluations, meet the required standards and provide a positive experience for freedivers.

3.4. Master Freedivers and ATIC candidates acting as assistant

As previously mentioned, a freediver certified as Master Freediver may assist an AT Instructor during both classroom and water sessions only for FD Courses and AFD Courses.

Also, accordingly to the Master Program, Master students will have to attend FD Courses and AFD Courses as a listener in order to complete the requirements for their level.

A corresponding situation is applied to candidates undertaking ATIC program. Furthermore, they will also teach a minimum of one FD Course and one AFD Course under the strict surveillance of their Instructor Trainer to successfully meet the requirements of their ATIC training.

An assistant is not allowed to teach new skills, but can supervise students while they exercise a skill after the AT Instructor has introduced it.

During water sessions they are only allowed to do safety for the students when the AT Instructor has specifically requested it. Under any other circumstances they will strictly follow the directions of the Master Instructor or Instructor Trainer.

3.5. Supervising children between the age of 11 and 14 years old

Apnea Total FD Course may be conducted, with the permission of a parent or guardian, for children between the ages of 11 and 14. Same rule applies for Coaching sessions. They will be certified as a Junior Freediver, the requirements for which will be detailed in 5.6.

Exceptions can be made strictly under parental supervision, allowing children under 11 years of age to take the course. Moreover, FD Course and AFD Course can be taken by young adults from 15 years of age.

3.6. Suspension of licence after an absence period

Whenever AT Instructors, at whatever their level, have not taught in a period of one year, their licence to teach will be suspended until they contact an Instructor Trainer or Course Director currently teaching to renew it. Instructor Trainers must be reinstated by Course Directors only.

In order to be reinstated, Instructor Trainers or Course Directors must ask the suspended AT Instructors to teach courses under their surveillance or whatever other assignment they believe necessary to renew their licence to teach. This matter will be the exclusive responsibility of the Instructor Trainer or Course Director so tasked.

It will also be a requirement for the suspended AT Instructors to attend another ATIC when a period longer than five years has passed since their last taught course. Again, this will be done following the criteria of the Instructor Trainer or Course Director.

Suspended AT Instructors will always be able to ask ATHQ for a second opinion on the matter when they consider that the requirements asked by the Instructor Trainer or Course Director are deemed too strict. In this case, ATHQ will consult and contact the Instructor Trainer or Course Director involved and the final decision will be made together.

4. PREREQUISITES TO ENROLE TO AT COURSES

Before undertaking any Apnea Total training activity or course, students:

- Must be able to independently swim 200 metres with or without fins
- Have a minimum age of 15 years and
- Have a general comprehension of English, as the courses will be conducted primarily in this language.

For students who have learnt courses from different organisations, the AT Instructor must evaluate the student to ensure he/she meets the required prerequisites and possesses the necessary knowledge and skills to enter any of the courses taught under the AT Educational System. Crossover can be authorized to enter from FD Course until ATIC Course.

4.1. Medical and personal requirements

In order to enlist to any of the courses taught by AT or to undertake any AT training activity, it is mandatory to complete and sign the *Apnea Total Registration Form, Medical Statement and Liability Release*. This document, besides listing the personal information and background of the students, also contains a list of medical questions they must respond to.

If a student answers “yes” to any question in the *Medical Statement* section, the student must secure written medical approval prior to any in-water activity³. Any question of medical fitness is solely the area of expertise of a physician.

However, when the written medical approval is obtained and shown by the student, the final decision about whom will be accepted onto AT Courses or AT trainings will be the exclusive responsibility of the AT Instructor or Centre. AT Instructors or AT Centres have no obligation, whatsoever, to accept every or any applicant.

³ This document might not be sufficient if some countries ask additional medical screening requirements. It will be of the exclusive responsibility of the correspondent AT Instructor or Centre to observe those extra requirements before signing up the students.

Students who are physicians cannot sign their own medical statement or give themselves medical clearance.

A central part of the AT Form will be the Liability Release section. It is imperative that each student sign this document prior to any in-water activity regardless of the training level.

4.2. Individuals with disabilities

As for the purpose of AT Courses and training, a disability is defined as a physical illness, injury or condition that makes it difficult for someone to perform the required freediving motor skills.

Despite the above, it is Apnea Total Educational System's understanding that meeting skill performance requirements might be challenging, especially for a beginner. In relation to it, AT Instructors can and should suggest adapted techniques and make reasonable accommodations to assist individuals with disabilities in learning freediving skills.

Therefore, people with disabilities may participate in AT Courses and training activities after they obtain approval from a licensed physician although the AT Instructor has the right to make the final decision about who will be accepted to a course. If they are accepted and they satisfactorily fulfil all performance requirements for the particular certification level, they will receive the corresponding certification.

Although every effort will be made to accommodate all disabled candidates who wish to participate, it must be understood that not all disabilities are compatible with the physical and mental disciplines of freediving.

5. FREEDIVER COURSE

5.1. Prerequisites

As the Freediver Course is the first level of the Apnea Total education system, to enrol students must only meet the requirements listed in section four as no previous experience is required. This means students:

- Must be able to independently swim 200 metres with or without fins
- Have a minimum age of 15 years, and
- Have a general comprehension of English, as the courses will be conducted primarily in this language.

5.2. Course outline

The Freediver Course is designed for those with little or no experience in the ocean, and also for those who have never experienced formal education before in freediving, though may have had some previous underwater experience.

This course will enable the students to feel safe and comfortable when freediving to depths of up to 20 metres, and to improve what they already can do even to double their potential.

Through AT unique breathing techniques, together with the effective structure of the course program in the classroom and water sessions, AT instructors create a fun educative environment and a successful freediving experience.

The FD runs for two days and is divided into two academic lessons and two water sessions.

During the academic classroom session AT Instructors interact with students using videos, questions and different breathing exercises which help to improve confidence, knowledge and techniques prior to the afternoon's water session.

During the water sessions, students are able to reach during the first day a maximum depth of 12 metres and during the second day a maximum depth of 20 metres. These depths are only referential and are not the goal of the course: nevertheless they might be reached by the students.

Upon completion of the FD, students will receive a certificate as well as private online access to the Freediver Course materials, so that they can maintain their freediving knowledge.

5.3. Course content

Day 1:

During the academic lesson on the first day of the FD course, students will be taught:

- Introduction to freediving and the different disciplines
- Familiarisation with equipment
- Duck-dives – Effective underwater entry technique
- Kicking technique
- Equalisation techniques
- Breathing techniques
- Recovery breathing
- Hydration and diet

During the water session of the first day, they will be taught:

- Preparation of equipment
- Practice of efficient breathing technique in the water
- Practice of duck-dives and kicking technique
- Practice and correction of body positioning

- Buoyancy test
- Freedives on the dive-line to a maximum depth of 12 metres

Day 2:

During the academic lesson on the second day of the FD course, students will be taught:

- Review of the freedives of Day 1
- Fine-tuning the breathing technique
- Safety regulations
- Safety procedures in the water, including the rescue procedure
- Pranayama – yogic breathing with application to freediving

During the water session of the second day, they will be taught:

- Warm up dives
- Practice of new breathing technique. Pranayama and Bandhas.
- Buddy team work
- Safety procedures and rescue practice
- Freedive on the dive-line to a maximum depth of 20 metres

When conditions and time allow, AT Instructors and students will visit a local dive site for underwater exploration of corals, tropical fish, caverns or even shipwrecks

5.4. Requirements to be certified

In spite of the fact that under the AT educational system, depth is not the main goal especially when teaching FD courses, nor is the breath hold time of the students, to obtain the FD certification, the students must:

- Perform and achieve the rescue procedure taught during the second day of the course from a depth of 6 metres, ideally reaching a depth of 10 metres with Constant Weight technique.

The rescue procedure must be performed as follows:

- The safety diver quickly grabs the unconscious diver by the opposite arm, turning them, and passing one arm under the arm of the unconscious diver.
- With the other free arm, the safety diver tilts the head of the unconscious diver down, thereby closing the airways.
- The safety diver positions themselves behind, and at an angle from the body of the unconscious diver and kicks their way to the surface.
- Once at the surface, the safety diver rests the head of the unconscious diver onto their shoulder, thereby opening the airways and keeping the airways clear of water.
- This is followed by removing the mask and performing BTT (Blow, Tap, and Talk). Blowing air towards the nose, gentle taps on the cheek, and calling the name of the unconscious diver, firmly instructing them to “breathe”.

It is imperative to emphasize the importance of keeping the divers airway from dipping below the water upon surfacing. This is one of the most crucial points of the rescue and AT Instructors must remind the students of this during the explanation in the classroom as well as in the water.

If it is not possible for the student to reach the depth or use the suggested technique, the AT Instructors in charge of the water session will still be able to certify the student when it is perceived by them that the student is using the correct kicking technique, has learnt and is able to demonstrate the breathing technique properly, is confident under the water and is able to successfully performed the rescue procedure even though they did not reach the suggested depth.

5.5. Safety dive practice

For students who are strong in Constant Weight, AT Instructors might include into the FD program extra time towards the end of the second day's water session to practice Safety Dives with them. Although they are unlikely to be proficient at Safeties by the end of the session, it is good practice for the students, and on occasion, a student may be ready to do training sessions with a buddy after completing the course.

To perform this technique, the buddy, known as the safety diver, escorts the diver face to face in the last 10 meters of the dive watching the diver closely as they ascend together and, once at the surface, watches the diver closely for one minute to ensure that there are no signs of hypoxia (extremely low levels of Oxygen).

During the final meters of the ascent, the safety diver will have to look closely at the eyes of the diver and to observe the movements of the diver's body. Scared or wide eyes and uncoordinated movements are clear signs that the diver will soon be in trouble. Another sign is an uncoordinated exhale under water.

That's why this technique will only be taught to students who were able to perform the rescue procedure from 10 meters with Constant Weight technique.

It is important to say that, when acting as a safety diver, the dive only finishes when the recovery breathing has been completed. It is strongly advised to be over-cautious rather than too confident in the diving buddy's ability, no matter the level of the students training.

5.6. Junior Freediver.

Junior Freedivers are persons aged 11 to 14 years inclusive, for which there is a depth limit of 12 metres.

As with any other student, to sign up to the course, they must be able to independently swim 200 metres with or without fins.

Also, an explicit authorisation form from the parents will be required as they will have to complete the *Apnea Total Registration Form, Medical Statement and Liability Release* on behalf of their child.

The requirements will be tailored according to the level of experience of the Junior Freediver and there will be no need for them to perform a rescue procedure during the second day, unless the AT Instructor considers the junior student is capable of doing it.

That being said, the certification obtained with this level is for recreational purposes rather than indicating the level of expertise of the student.

Whenever the Junior Freediver has reached the minimum age to enrol into the FD, he/she must complete the second day of the Freediver Course. Nevertheless, the AT Instructor in charge of the course will evaluate the student's skills level and decide if it is necessary for her/him to take the course again, just join the second day of the course or propose another alternative according to the student's needs and abilities and the natural progression of AT education.

6. ADVANCED FREEDIVER COURSE

6.1. Prerequisites

To enrol onto the AFD course, students must have successfully completed the FD Course or have an equivalent certification level from another freediving organisation.

Though depth and breath holding time are not the goals of the FD level nor the AFD, to sign up for the AFD students must feel comfortable under the water and have the potential to reach further depths as the aim of this level is to encourage students to push their own limits that bit further.

A suggested depth of 20 metres is advised, although the Instructor and/or the Centre can decide on different criteria according to the student's performance.

In some cases, Coaching sessions will be suggested before enrolling into to AFD, in order to help students to be ready for the challenges of this level.

6.2. Course outline

The Advanced Freediver Course is designed to take students to a whole new level of freediving.

By the completion of this course students will be surprised to achieve depths of over 30 metres on one breath alone. The most advanced breathing techniques together with the specific preparation for deep dives will make this possible even if students have just started in the sport.

The Advanced Freediver Course runs for 3 days and is divided into 3 academic/breathing sessions, 1 pool session and 2 deep water sessions. This includes static apnea with breath-holds of over 3 minutes in the water, which is achieved by most of the students. During the deep diving water sessions students will progressively achieve new depths with knowledge, control, comfort and fun.

6.3. Course content

The Advanced Freediver Course structure is as follows:

Day 1: Static Clinic

During the classroom session of the first day, students will learn the Static Apnea techniques:

- Mammalian dive reflex
- Preparation for static apnea
- Specific breathing technique for static apnea, pool and dry training
- Breath-hold exercises
- Relaxation, mind and body control techniques
- Training routine for increasing breath-hold capabilities

During the water session of the first day, students will learn:

- Body position and relaxation
- Preparation for a maximum breath-hold
- Maximum static apnea attempts
- Minimum 3 minutes breath-hold
- Safety procedures and practice

Day 2: Water session (exhale dives)

During the classroom session of the second day, students will be taught:

- Advanced 4-section breathing technique
- Pre-dive breathing pattern

- *Negative Pressure Static Apnea* (N.P.S.A.)
- Benefits and techniques of 'Exhale Dives'
- Body adaptation to great pressure

During the water session of the second day, students will learn:

- Preparation with N.P.S.A.
- Specific breathing for exhale diving
- Exhale dives with a maximum depth of 25 metres
- Practice of equalisation technique
- Body relaxation and energy efficiency in the water
- Full lung dives with a maximum depth of 30 metres

Day 3: Water session (deep day)

During the classroom session of the third day, students will be taught:

- Review of exhale dives from Day 2
- Stages and preparation for a deep dive
- Visualisation
- Thoracic stretches
- Lung capacity increasing exercises
- Deep equalisation techniques

During the water session of the third day, students will learn:

- Stretching and breathing exercises on the boat
- Full preparation for a deep dive
- Exhale dives with a maximum depth of 30 metres
- Full lung dives with a maximum depth of 40 metres

6.4. Requirements to be certified

6.4.1. Static Clinic

The AFD Course can be divided into two stages: Static Clinic and the full Advanced Freediver Course. Therefore, students can undertake only the Static Clinic or attend the full three-day course.

If the students are only signed up for the Static Clinic, they are able to obtain a Diploma indicating they successfully completed this Clinic. Further on, they are also allowed to continue with the extra two days in order to complete the full AFD.

Information about their performance must be completed on the student's profile, indicating their time and their ability to understand and execute the breathing technique taught during the Static Clinic.

6.4.2. Full Advanced Freediver Course

In order to obtain the certification of an Advanced Freediver, students must have attended the three days of this level and have comprehensively and successfully learnt the breathing techniques.

As for all Apnea Total Courses, the most important part of every course is the students learning the right way to perform the breathing technique, having practicing it as many times as possible during the course while in the classroom and in the water. Consequently the AT Instructor will evaluate the performance of the students for the techniques taught during the AFD and will certify the students accordingly.

Although depth is not a requirement, students should feel comfortable freediving down to 20 metres.

6.5. Safety dive practice

As mentioned on section 5.5, for students who are strong in Constant Weight, AT Instructors can also include into the AFD program an extra time towards the end of the third day's water session to practice Safety Dives with them. Although they are unlikely to be proficient at Safeties by the end of the session, it is good practice for the students, and on occasion, a student may be ready to do training sessions with a buddy after completing the course.

7. MASTER FREEDIVER COURSE

7.1. Prerequisites

Any freediver who has attained the level of Apnea Total Advanced Freediver can enrol immediately onto the Master Freediver Course. Crossover will also be permitted once consulted and approved by the Master Instructor or Instructor Trainer in charge of the course.

7.2. Course outline

The Master Freediver program of the Apnea Total Organisation is a 4 to 5 week program divided into a maximum of 6 cycles. Each cycle includes 5 days of training (4 water sessions and 1 dry session) with one day off in between. Total of 24 water sessions and 6 dry sessions.

For those who do not have enough time, the course is also available for shorter periods.

With optimal conditions students will be able to reach a maximum depth of 45 metres.

Apnea Total provides all equipment necessary for this course: however Master Freedivers are encouraged to have their own personal freediving equipment. The minimum recommendation is to own a mask, snorkel and rubber weight belt.

7.3. Course content

The training includes:

- 1) Personal daily routine: three levels of progression each consisting of a ten day routine encompassing:
 - a. Morning exercises: Prior to training sessions (water and dry)

- i. Stretching: yoga sequence specially designed to develop core and chest capacity, and increase flexibility of ribcage and diaphragm
 - ii. Equalisation: exercises in accordance with Apnea Total Program Gym for BTV⁴, for a total of four weeks
 - iii. Packing exercises
 - iv. Breathing exercises: progressing according to the personal level achieved during the program.
- b. Afternoon exercises: Post-training sessions (water and dry)
- i. Apnea Walks⁵: CO2 tolerance exercises.
- 2) Water sessions: twenty four water sessions tailored to each students' level and progression. They include:
- a. Training in the following Freediving techniques: Free Immersion (FIM), Constant Weight (CWT), Constant Weight No Fins (CNF), Variable Weight (VW), Dynamics (DYN), Monofin and Exhales (empty lungs)
 - b. Training on Safety procedures to a depth of 20 metres
 - c. Training on Rescue procedures to a depth of 20 metres
 - d. Mouthfill training
 - e. Training Repetitive dive (stamina test): 6 dives using CWT technique to a depth of 20 meters with a one-minute surface interval in between each
 - f. Prepare students to achieve 'personal best' on long and deep dives.

⁴ Gym for BTV: exercises to improve *Balance Tube Voluntary*. For more information contact our Headquarter (HQ).

⁵ For more information contact our HQ.

- 3) Workshops and Dry sessions: six dry sessions including workshops and training in the following subjects:
 - a. Review and fine tuning of breathing
 - b. Low Oxygen Tolerance Tables (O2 Tables) in swimming pool or classroom
 - c. High Carbon Dioxide Tolerance Tables (CO2 Tables) in swimming pool or classroom
 - d. Anaerobic exercises for lactic acid, and stretching exercises to develop stamina and lung capacity
 - e. Apnea Walks on the beach or hill
 - f. Pranayama workshop
 - g. Equalisation exercises
 - h. Physiology
 - i. Static Clinic (STA)
 - j. Mouthfill workshop
 - k. Monofin workshop
 - l. Advanced Safety, Rescue and CPR procedures workshop
- 4) Course assistance: each candidate must assist an Apnea Total Instructor during a Freediver Course (FD, two day course) and an Advanced Freediver Course (AFD, three day course).
- 5) Final presentation: on a subject directly related to freediving. Tailored training to the individual according to progress and results.

7.4. Requirements to be certified

Completion of the full program during a period of maximum 6 cycles will be the most important requirement in order to obtain the Master Freediver certification, regardless of depth and breath-holding time achieved during the process. This program, as for any other AT Course, can be taken as many times as the student requires. It will be the exclusive responsibility of the AT Instructor in charge of the program to certify students

Nevertheless, students ideally should achieve the following in order to apply for the next AT educational level:

- 5 minute static
- 20 metres rescue
- 20 metres safety
- 30 metres Constant Weight No Fins (CNF)
- 35 metres CWT (bi fins)
- 45 metres any depth discipline⁶.

⁶ Exceptions might be made in particular and exceptional cases and only after consulting with the ATHQ.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT

As an AT Instructor, it is important to understand the responsibilities that come within and to know how to manage risks to avoid or minimize problems. Even though problems or accidents are not expected when teaching or assisting a course, all AT Instructors should always practice risk management as a precaution. Besides helping prevent accidents, solid risk management techniques also offer a degree of liability protection because they can prove that people involved did everything deemed necessary to avoid problems. Important reasons for practicing risk management include:

- Keeping students and everyone attending an AT course safe—the primary and most important need for risk management
- Liability protection—risk management plays an important role in protecting AT Instructors legally in case something goes wrong despite taking all precautions. By following a proven standard of practice a level of liability protection is maintained.
- Liability insurance—this is important for defence purposes and will only be available if risk is managed. The most important step is to reduce claims by preventing accidents. The second step is to reduce claim size by being able to defend what occurred through proper risk management.

Before teaching in a new location or in unfamiliar conditions, it is mandatory for every AT Instructor to consider potential risks to her/his students and/or herself/himself. Such risks may include: current; lightning; strong winds and/or waves; hazardous marine life; mechanical (e.g. engine) failure; and boat/jet ski traffic. When considering such risks, the AT Instructor should evaluate the likelihood of such risks, possible outcomes, options to mitigate such risks, and emergency/evacuation procedures. Not only does this help the AT Instructor to become more aware of all risks but also in case of incident it helps to show that he/she acted appropriately.

8.1. Personal health and safety of AT Instructors

An essential part of guaranteeing students' safety is assuring the AT Instructors' own safety as a professional. A few considerations to take are advised and suggested to manage possible risk and acting safely:

- Only teach freediving when feeling physically and mentally fit and capable of conducting a given course.
- Have a full annual medical check-up with a doctor who understands freediving.
- Maintain adequate surface intervals between dives when teaching to minimize the risk of decompression sickness.
- Co-teach with another AT Instructor or a professional safety diver as buddy. If this is not possible, it is vital to keep the proper communication with the people on the boat and/or mainland that are able to assist quickly in case of emergency.
- Always teach in accordance with the maximum ratio of students permitted.
- Maintain personal dive accident and health insurance.

8.2. The role of Standards and Guidelines

AT Standards and Guidelines help AT Instructors organize and conduct effective training courses. They also assist in reducing legal risk.

Adhering to these standards makes teaching practice easier to defend as they are proven and safe practices. Deviating from standards makes defending the teaching practice of an AT Instructor much more difficult due to the burden shifting back towards proving that the actions of an individual were prudent and correct.

8.3. The role of paperwork

Forms, files and other course documentation show that AT Instructors followed the standards and used the AT Education System as it was designed. Paperwork also provides the proof needed in many legal systems to show that the AT Instructor acted appropriately.

The forms that all student freedivers must complete as part of the AT Course document state their understanding of the risks and requirements associated with freediving. The AT Liability Release establishes that the student freediver assumes or understands the risk and releases the AT Instructor from possible liability. The Medical Statement warns the student of potential risks associated with medical conditions and provides assumptions of risk by the student/participant or transfers liability to a physician.

Paperwork should be retained for each student in accordance with local law, or for five years, whichever is longer. Failure to properly use the required documentation can make it difficult to defend the teaching practices of an AT Instructor.

9. QUALITY REVIEW BY ATHQ

All AT Courses and Freediving Centres teaching under AT Educational System are subject to a quality review made by ATHQ. The purpose of a quality review it is to monitor AT activities for observance of these Standards and Guidelines, quality control and risk management purposes.

To enable this, Course Evaluation Surveys will be sent yearly to AT Instructors around the world, including new Instructors and Instructor Trainers. These surveys ask AT Instructors specific questions about their training, ways of teaching, difficulties in applying the Course Outlines, comments on what they consider might be improved, specific considerations about the place they teach and if they are in need to adjust their teachings according to the site conditions, amongst others. When AT Instructors provide answers that indicate possible lack of compliance with AT Standards and Guidelines, ATHQ will rectify and suggest privately to those involve ways to improve their teachings and then later will send an official statement including subjects that need to be reinforce to AT Instructors and Centres.

ATHQ may also open an inquiry after receiving written complaints from freediving students, other freedive professionals, or as a result of an incident occurring during AT training. An inquiry will NOT be opened based solely on hearsay or rumours. The proper course of action suggested will be taking the case and inquiry first to the Centre involved if there is one and then asking ATHQ for help. In any case where freelance AT Instructors are involved, the inquiry must be directed firstly to ATHQ.

All inquiries made to ATHQ will be held fully confidential between the ATHQ and the AT Instructor or Centre concerned. All AT Instructors are expected to help maintain AT Standards and Guidelines. In support of this obligation, AT Instructors must:

- Report in writing all violations of AT Standards and Guidelines personally witnessed. This should be done by email to the ATHQ within fifteen days, or as soon as possible after witnessing the violation. This report must specify and include as much detail as possible.

- Not make false reports of Standards and Guidelines violations for competitive, political or financial reasons. Making a false report will definitely be grounds for action against the reporter.
- Cooperate fully during all ATHQ inquiries by responding fully and promptly to information presented and requested.

During all inquiries, if ATHQ determines that the seriousness of a situation requires immediate action, the AT Instructor involved may be temporarily suspended pending further investigation.

When the situation leads clearly into a felony or crime the reporter and ATHQ should provide the information to the relevant authorities and act as an adjutant in the subsequent investigation.

Public commentary on the process is not allowed while the case is under review. All parties involved should respect the process and need for the ability to proceed without addressing the public. The process can only work if all involved are able to speak freely.