

When it comes to choosing one's dive kit, the humble mask is often neglected. But isn't the mask, our window to the underwater world, just as important as our regulator or computer. Without a good mask, the wonders of the deep would still be a blurred mystery to scuba divers.

Mask

Essentials

SEEING IS BELIEVING



SHELLS AND MACARONI – THE HISTORY OF THE DIVE MASK

THE BUG EYE EVOLUTION

1300

Persians used polished shells as goggles

1926

Yves Leprieur made the full face mask into which air flowed.

1930

Guy Gilpatric used flying goggles plugged up with putty and painted.

1934

Copying the Tahitians who used goggles for spear fishing, Maxime Forjot stuck macaroni up his nose so he could breathe while he made a plaster mould of his face. By including the nose in his mask he overcame the pressure squeeze felt when wearing goggles at depth.

future

The mask of the future will have us looking like underwater flies. Kicking off this evolutionary adaptation is Hydro Optix with their Mega-4.5D mask. Invented with the help of NASA opticians the protruding lenses on the mask forces the adjacent water into a concave shape which against the air creates a giant pair of spectacles. What this means is that compared to a flat lens mask you see five times more, things appear as big and as close as they really are and there is no distortion around the edges. So what is the catch? You have to be near sighted to wear the mask, if you aren't you have to wear contacts to make you near sighted! info@hydrooptix.com

Once you have purchased your mask you must defog it. In the manufacturing process a chemical residue is left on the lens, if you don't clean it off you will see nothing but a grey mist on your first dive.

► **While** the mask has come a long way since the first round, single lens monsters we saw on Jacques Cousteau and Hans Hass, with the huge range of mask now on offer, how do you tackle the daunting task of choosing one? We look at the mask essentials as well as the features of some of the top of the line and bestselling masks on the market.

The single most important thing to consider when selecting a mask is the fit or more appropriately, the seal. An ill-fitting mask will result in constant leaks, headaches and skirt indents streaking across your face for hours after the dive. The classic way to judge if a mask fits is the 'sniff test'.

1. Place the strap in front of the mask and fit the seal to your face, making sure there is no hair in the way. If you have a moustache you may want to apply some Vaseline to get a better seal. At this point make sure the skirt fits the contours of your face.
2. Inhale and see if the mask creates a seal, staying suctioned onto your face. If you have to inhale repeatedly or push the mask onto your face it is not a good fit. If the mask does seal check that it is not pushing up against your nose or on your forehead; after a long dive this slight pressure will turn into a cracking headache.
3. This is usually where the test ends but it is not sufficient. Put your snorkel or regulator in your mouth and see if you still get a good seal. Try to equalize taking note of the nose pocket; can you reach your nose or is it pushing against the skirt and can you equalize with your gloves on?
4. Place the mask strap over your head and check if the pressure of the seal is distributed evenly. Play around with the position of the strap until it is but don't be tempted to keep tightening it, this not only distorts the seal but will be uncomfortable.
5. The final test is to exhale from your nose. If it is a proper fit the air will escape at the bottom near the nose. If the air escapes at the side near the eyes then put it down and repeat steps one through five again!

It is important to remember that the seal is the fit of the skirt in relation to YOUR face. Each face is unique – some narrow, with big noses, scars, moustaches, laugh lines... Keep trying different styles and don't look at the price tags

on any of them until you have found the best fit. If you are really lucky it will be the most expensive one that fits you the best! Apart from fit the variables in mask design include the skirt, volume, strap and lenses.

SKIRT – This should be made from soft silicone. For a flexible fit the skirt should be feathered at the edges so it tapers as it approaches your face. It should also have a second inner skirt, except under the nose, to provide an extra seal. For newer divers a clear skirt allows more light into the mask giving a sense of space. For photographers or those wanting to focus on something a black skirt cuts out this extra light.

VOLUME – The original masks had one lens and no nose pocket, which meant there was a lot of room between the water and the eyes. Such high volume masks made them hard to clear and narrowed the field of vision. Today's masks, with their nose pockets and double lenses have reduced this volume resulting in less drag and a greater field of vision.

LENS – Whether your mask has one, two or four lenses, they should be made of a material that does not break into sharp fragments such as tempered glass. If you need prescription lenses fitted then you will need two separate lenses. There are masks with two extra side windows which will let in extra light and alert you to peripheral movement but be aware that underwater they will not provide a continuous field of view.

STRAP – A mask strap can reap havoc on your hair so the first thing you want to buy is a hair saver, which is a piece of neoprene that fits over the strap making donning and doffing the mask simple. Push button, buckle and expandable masks straps have taken the frustration out of adjusting the strap, but just make sure there is enough tension to stop the mask adjusting itself.

Once you have purchased your mask you must defog it. In the manufacturing process a chemical residue is left on the lens, if you don't clean it off you will see nothing but a grey mist on your first dive. The classic cleaning method is to smear toothpaste on the lens and skirt, rub it around

Kicking off this evolutionary adaptation is Hydro Optix with their Mega-4.5D mask. Invented with the help of NASA opticians the protruding lenses on the mask forces the adjacent water into a concave shape which against the air creates a giant pair of spectacles.



and rinse it off. Before you do this, check the manufacturer's guidelines. Prior to every dive, while the mask is dry, you must apply some anti-fog gel or use the cheaper option – spit! What this does is breaks the surface tension on the glass so that the condensation forms a transparent sheet rather than the droplets of fog that can ruin a dive. After each dive rinse in fresh water, dry out of the sun and store in a separate bag or box. [SD](#)

GIVING SIGHT TO THE BLIND *by Jayne Jenkins*

Ozbob

There comes a time in life when you realize that your arms are no longer long enough to read the pages of your latest dive magazine!

When I faced the fact that I needed glasses, one important thing that I did not do was realize until much later on, what I was missing out on underwater. It took me a dive trip that There COMES a time in life when you realize that your arms are no longer long enough to read the pages of your latest dive magazine!

specialized in "little critters" to realize how blind I was underwater. The dive guide gave me a magnifying glass plus had to point out everything, this was getting serious!

Having tried out many varieties of stick on lenses, over the counter prescription masks and contact lenses with not a huge amount of success, I heard about Rob Hamilton other wise known as Ozbob. What makes Ozbob unique is that he makes your own custom script into a lens. Rob prefers to use the Cressi, Tusa and Mares two piece masks, simply because they are easier to dismantle and manufacture the lenses to fit. He will cover all types of prescriptions from short, long, bi-focal and astigmatism.

Contact Rob at 0414 991 533 or Ozbob@bigpond.com

BUYERSGUIDE

APOLLO

TOP OF THE LINE

The Bio Metal is a revolutionary new mask that sets new standards for fit and performance. Strong, slim-line aluminium frame allows extremely low volume design which brings the eyes closer to the lens increasing the field of vision. A reduced width across the bridge of the nose centres the eyes in the lenses. Flat screen technology for unmatched peripheral vision and a uniquely shaped silicon skirt brings unparalleled comfort, fit & sealing. Prescription lenses with 9 anodised colours to choose from.



BEST SELLER

Seaview offers a super lightweight, low volume design with the highest quality, double edged silicone seal. With a wide field of vision this mask has revolutionary quick adjustable, spring-less buckles that not only swivel with your facial movements but absorb shock and prevent buckle breakage.



TOP OF THE LINE

AQUALUNG

The Quartz 1 mask is lightweight with a single lens and wide field of vision. Unique swivelling buckles allow for easy donning and doffing as a quick push of a button releases the strap from the mask. Soft touch finger pads aid in mask clearing.



BEAUCHAT

The Primo X1 or Primo X2 because they have a panoramic view with a wide angle single lens, the finest crystal clear or graphite liquid silicone, universal fit, double edged comfort skirt, pivot buckles for precision strap adjustment and for the Primo X2, removable lenses.



CRESSI SUB

Our best selling mask is our top of the line - the Matrix. It is the evolutionary development of the Big Eyes mask that introduced the new concept of the tilted lens that provided tremendous extra downward vision. It is a contemporary, attractive and lightweight mask. Due to its streamlining the frame is almost invisible when worn and the soft silicone with a broad seal ring offers unprecedented waterproofing and comfort. Integrated pressure buckles allow for quick and precise strap adjustments.



DACOR

Solaris offers a twin lens mask with a patented, metal-blade closure system. The rigid metal maintains the right pressure for constant sealing, and the angled lenses provide maximum visual performance. The new assembly system allows the mask to fold flat for easy storage (even in the pocket of a BCD!), and Solaris is easily fitted with corrective lenses.



MARES

The X-Vision offers an exceptional field of vision, with no restrictions. The optimally-angled windows are designed to mesh perfectly with the eyes and provide the widest possible viewing angle in every direction. The ergonomic, quick-adjusting buckles, positioned directly on the skirt, make for increased comfort and hydrodynamics during the dive. X-Vision has low internal volume, is extremely lightweight and is available with corrective lenses (-1.5 to -5, +1.5 to +3) (-5 to -10 by special order).



OCEANIC

The Shadow mask is a sleek design with black silicone skirt attached directly to the lens. The unique frameless design reduces weight and size of the mask, with easy adjustable buckles. It's ideal as a backup mask, as it fits easily into a BC pocket and is extremely popular in spear fishing market.



BEST SELLER

Quartz 2 mask has the same features as Quartz 1 except with twin lenses.



The X-Optimo because it has a single lens with a big view, light weight, soft liquid silicone skirt, frame integrated rotating buckles provide easy adjustment with a positive strap locking and a great price.



The Mystere is a single lens mask with an innovative design; practical and reliable. The structure of the lens is computer generated for maximum peripheral vision, and the silicone strap and quick-adjust buckles ensure ease and comfort.



Pure Vision is a top seller behind X-Vision, a single lens design with cutting edge technical solutions. Pure Vision offers a superior field of vision thanks to the special shape of the lens, the reduced internal volume and the central position of the eyes. Quick-adjusting buckles positioned directly on the skirt make for easy adjustment and a hypoallergenic liquid silicone skirt ensures greater comfort.



The Bat Mask's innovative technical design offers unrestricted field of vision. The sturdy lightweight frame, dual lens design with optimal lens angle and low internal volume make it easy to clean and extremely user friendly. An impressive array of style and features at a reasonable price.



TOP OF THE LINE

RIFFE

The Mantis, Viso and Sight all offer high visibility with the variance being the size and shape of the face to be fitted. Each mask is designed to give full support to the face by varying the thickness of the silicone. The supplier of our new masks has patented the process of heat treating the silicone where little or no fogging occurs. The frames are made from nylon for superior strength and the plastic and silicone mold is of the highest quality, evident when handling the mask. There are three tempered lenses; clear, amber (for increased light, higher contrast and better separation in low visibility) and mirror (hides eyes and reduces glare).



SAEKODIVE

M-2247S iMask with its curved frame design has excellent horizontal and downward vision. It offers divers superior comfort and virtually an unprecedented field of vision. Buckles are mounted directly onto skirt for comfort. Divers can purchase this Saekodive top mask at a fair price through distributors around the world.



SCUBAPRO

The CrystalVu mask is new in a range of scubapro's innovative products. If you like single lens masks then this is for you with its seamless side window design that gives the diver 170 degrees of uninterrupted vision - a total panoramic field of view. Made from crystal silicone this mask features a double sealed skirt, low volume styling for a snug, comfortable fit, swivel buckles for easy adjustment and a patented purge for easy clearing.



TECHNISUB

The Kea mask with its angled lens provides excellent upward and downward field of view. Very low volume makes clearing easy while the premium quality silicon skirt has a unique easy adjust mask strap. Push button buckle for easy adjustment and an open frame that lets in plenty of light.



TUSA

The first important difference in the M-14 Visualator is that the lens and frame have been dramatically made bigger compared to previous products. The second important difference is that the distance between the lens and the eyes has been reduced. By moving the fitting line up to the middle of the forehead, the distance between the lens and the eyes is further reduced and a wider field of vision. At TUSA we use advanced materials and technologies such as Computer Aided Design (C.A.D.) to create masks that deliver an unsurpassed level of fit, comfort, and beauty.



ZEAGLE

The Ranger mask has a grey silicone skirt, extremely low volume and a split lens design. It's easy to overlook your mask--until it doesn't work right. Diving is a highly visual activity, and the fit of your mask has a lot to do with how much you enjoy it. Zeagle masks are simple and durable in design. Opaque skirts to cut down on internal reflections and provide greater visual clarity. They are made from the highest quality extra soft silicone, have tempered glass lenses, and the straps are quick adjusting. Our skirt styles fit a wide variety of faces.



BEST SELLER

1083S, this mask is available with optical lenses ranging from -1.0 through -7.0 and with both silicone and PVC skirts. The most important feature is that the double feather edged skirt offers a universal fit. Lightweight and low volume this mask greatly reduces tunnel vision.



The Fino is the maxi fit mask that will fit everyone. With no two faces alike Scubapro devotes its time to accommodating individual differences. Excellent for new divers as the shape and seal of the mask will offer confidence without leaks. For the older divers this mask offers optional optical lenses. With its small, light and compact design the Fino is terrific for long dives with the extra comfort provided by the crystal silicone. Rotating buckles make adjusting the strap easy.



The Look Mask accepts both positive or negative corrective lenses and has a swivel buckle system for comfort and fit. The lense is low volume and close to the face for maximum vision. It uses the best silicone on the market giving maximum transparency and UV resistance. 360 degree rotating quick adjusting buckles.



M-20 Platina for which TUSA has devoted years of research to improving the diving mask's field of vision. The result is the new Direct Sashing System (D.S.S.), a totally new structure. It eliminates the inner frame that blocks the field of vision and attaches the lens directly to the frame to realize a startlingly new super-slim frame. The result is a major increase in the upper/lower-left/right visibility range. It also achieves a major narrowing of the centre joints connecting the left and right lenses to eliminate the vision field split.



Our best selling Ebon Mask has a black silicone skirt, extremely low volume, and a split lens design. A simple, very comfortable and robust mask

