

# TEACHING TIPS FROM THE FIELD

Education, Experience and Equipment

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Ban's Diving Resort in Koh Tao, Thailand, has been a PADI International Resort and Retailer Associations Member since 1992. For the past 12 years it has been a PADI Five Star Instructor Development Center, and in early 2009 was awarded PADI Career Development Center status. With three full-time PADI Course Directors and a team of IDC Staff Instructors on board, Ban's offers a full range of PADI courses and programs in several major languages. Here are some teaching tips from the staff:

**Remember what you are offering.** You've likely heard the dive industry defined by the "three Es": education, equipment, and experience. Additionally, dive instruction is seen as transformational. All of this is true. But, dive professionals are basically responsible for delivering the product of diving while ensuring students satisfy performance requirements and successfully proceed to the end result: certification. Remember, the *journey* toward certification is just as valuable as the end result because of the transformational experience. Ultimately it is your job to facilitate this journey.

**Managing and motivating.** Your goal as a dive professional involves motivating divers to spend their hard-earned money and valuable time to learn the life-transforming skill of scuba diving and manage the way in which they do this. While each diver is an individual and learns differently, there are proven teaching techniques you can adopt that will increase learning effectiveness. Here are some methods that have worked well at Ban's Diving:

**1 Bring the theory to life.** You might not be able to control the conditions in which you teach, but you certainly can affect the environment. Don't limit yourself by four walls and a ceiling in the classroom. Take your class outside. Conduct navigation practice on the beach instead of simply briefing the parts of the compass from the front of a classroom. You could even include a navigation scavenger hunt around your property during the Leading Divers Workshop of a divemaster program, where candidates collect information on certain headings or natural reference points. Don't treat people like children, but bring the child out in people.

**2 Create incentives.** This doesn't mean that you need to find rewards for learning. Student divers are rewarded by the product — qualifying to dive and earning their PADI certification cards. Frequently remind your divers how, when and where they will use the information you're giving them. Connect theory with reality, and pool practice with open water diving. For example, if divers understand the pressure/volume/density relationship, they'll be better equipped to perform neutral buoyancy skills such as the fin pivot and hover. Don't fall into the trap of only offering a passing score on the final exam as the only incentive. Most student divers will work harder if they get a little positive reinforcement

**3 Inspire focus.** Motivating focus lies in understanding individual learning styles. Some learn by watching, some by listening and others by doing. Most people learn through a mixture of techniques



Tapping into the younger generation's desire for unique experiences.

and the PADI System of diver education makes it easy to adapt your style according to the needs of your divers. For example, you can meet the needs of visual learners by showing individual skills from the Confined Water Preview section of lesson guides and meet the needs of those who learn by doing through a prescriptive approach to knowledge development so they can spend more time underwater.

**4 Move your body and voice.** It isn't one of the three Es, but maybe entertainment should be. Remember, the journey holds value. That doesn't mean you need to be a comedian or an actor to show enthusiasm for diving. You just have to move. Get up and walk around as you teach. Most of what we communicate comes from body language and most of what we hear isn't *what* is said, but *how* it is said. If they see you are enjoying your job, energy is contagious.

**5 Keeping it fresh.** You're only as good as the effort you put into keeping it fresh. Evaluate yourself constantly and welcome feedback from customers and colleagues. Continue your personal education by taking courses or staffing an Instructor Development Course. Team-teach with others to see how someone else approaches the material. Finally, be humble enough to accept ideas from others and gracious enough to share yours.