



A Brief on Briefings

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Use every briefing as an opportunity to give concise instruction on the critical safety points for that part of the excursion.

THERE IS A MAGIC ART TO KEEPING DIVERS' ATTENTION long enough to impart safety-critical information. Talking about the cool things you will see is easy, but briefings also contain vital information that will keep your divers safe. Five to eight minutes is about the limit of a diver's focus, especially considering the excitement of the upcoming excursion, so a longer briefing usually is not better.

Apart from the dive itself, external factors such as a rough sea, motion sickness, background noise, heat, discomfort, and site security concerns can be distractions. Some divers may have a degree of apprehension after a long break or while anticipating a demanding dive, or numerous other factors might contribute to an inability to remain attentive during the process.

Learning ways to convey critical information is key for dive guides and operators. Every dive is different, as is every group of divers, so the briefing may require unique instructions to be effectively communicated to the group. The goal should be to provide information that ensures safety, enjoyment, comfort, and confidence. There are opportunities throughout the process to remind divers how to prevent an accident.

We usually think of the briefing as only the pre-dive information a dive professional provides right before the dive, but there may be several items to cover before and

after the pre-dive briefing that are equally important and that focus on all aspects of an excursion. The debriefing is also a fundamentally important step in ensuring every diver's health and well-being after the excitement of the dive and preparing for the next one.

Breaking the briefing process into shorter, focused, and situation-specific sessions or instructional opportunities may help divers be more successful at retaining critical information and lower the chance of a dive professional leaving something out.

The briefing process has at least 12 potential segments. Dive professionals can combine and lay these out in a way that works for the specific situation.

- *Before the briefings:* This is when you brief yourself using your personal checklist and prepare the information you will be sharing with the guests.
- *Pre-excursion or during the sign-up briefing:* Use this opportunity to cover the expectations of the dive trip, such as time away from shore, expertise needed, and dive styles. Doing so allows divers to make an informed choice before signing up.
- *Arrival briefing:* Review information such as where to park, bathroom location, where to find emergency

equipment or healthcare facilities, and perhaps even security.

- **Shore dive briefing:** It is especially important to cover the entries and exits, which will be unique to the site and likely something that divers have not encountered previously.
- **Boat dives**
 - **Boat preboard briefing:** During these preparations, you can inform guests what to bring on the boat and when and how to board safely.
 - **Boat safety briefing:** Once on the boat, cover the location of the head, safety equipment, communications, life preservers, and what to do in an emergency.
- **Dive briefing:** Share with the divers where they will be diving, the underwater topography, what they will see, and any specific instructions to ensure everyone follows the plan.
- **Environmental briefing:** Outline

what specific actions and precautions divers can take to protect the dive site.

- **Safety briefing:** Include instructions on how to get in and out of the water, essential underwater signals, who will lead the dive, and what to do in emergencies such as a lost buddy or running out of air.
- **Pause point briefing:** Walk the divers through their final check after kitting up and before getting into the water. This list includes verifying their gas is on, their weights are in, and everything is secure.
- **Postdive briefing:** To wrap up the dive, discuss where divers should put their kit, what to do next — including the surface interval process — and information such as sun exposure protection and hydration.
- **Postexcursion debriefing:** Take care of the divers by providing information on things such as flying after diving, hot showers,

heavy exercise, and postdive symptoms to watch for.

Thorough and consistent briefings help protect professionals, operators, and the dive boat from the potential consequences of an incident or accident.

DAN has prepared a free elearning module to help you think through your briefings and ensure you don't miss anything. "A Brief on Briefings" is available at DAN.divelearning.com.

While you are busy managing anticipation and ensuring that the dive will be exciting, it may be difficult to remember all these instructions. Use a checklist as your own planning tool and quality check to develop your briefings. It can ensure you get things right and don't forget to convey essential information.

Clear, concise, and informative briefings are essential to ensuring safe and incident- and accident-free dives. **AD**

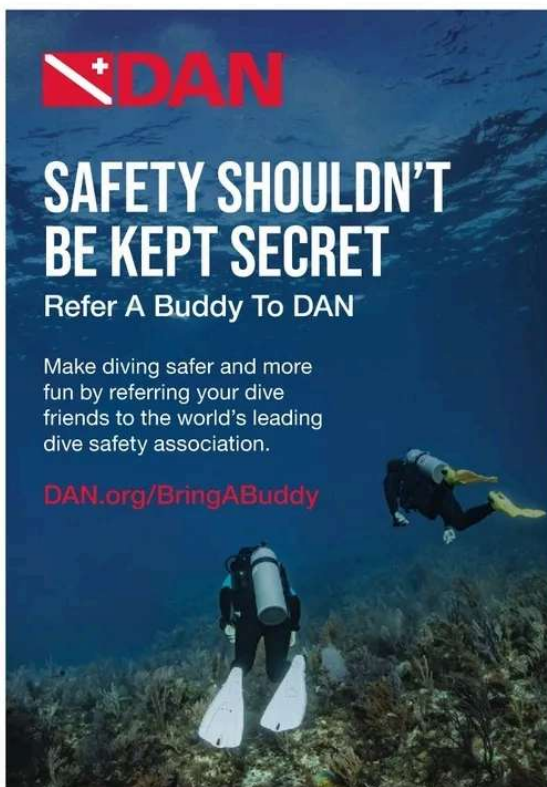


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