

MASKS & SNORKELS

Finding the right mask and snorkel combo is step one in building a dive rig. An easy-breathing snorkel and a dry, comfortable mask that provides an expansive field of view are critical for maintaining the fun factor of any time spent in the water.

FIELD OF VIEW

Lenses should be shaped to maximize peripheral view and optimize downward view, which is particularly important for reading dive computers and gauges, and finding buckles, D-rings, BC pockets and weight-ditch handles.

BUCKLES/STRAPS

Buckle systems mounted on mask skirts offer a number of advantages, including improving the range of motion for strap positioning and enabling the buckles to be folded flat against the lens for stowing or packing.

SKIRTS

Clear skirts increase the amount of light allowed into the mask. Black skirts block out unwanted reflections that come through clear skirts.

SNORKEL KEEPER

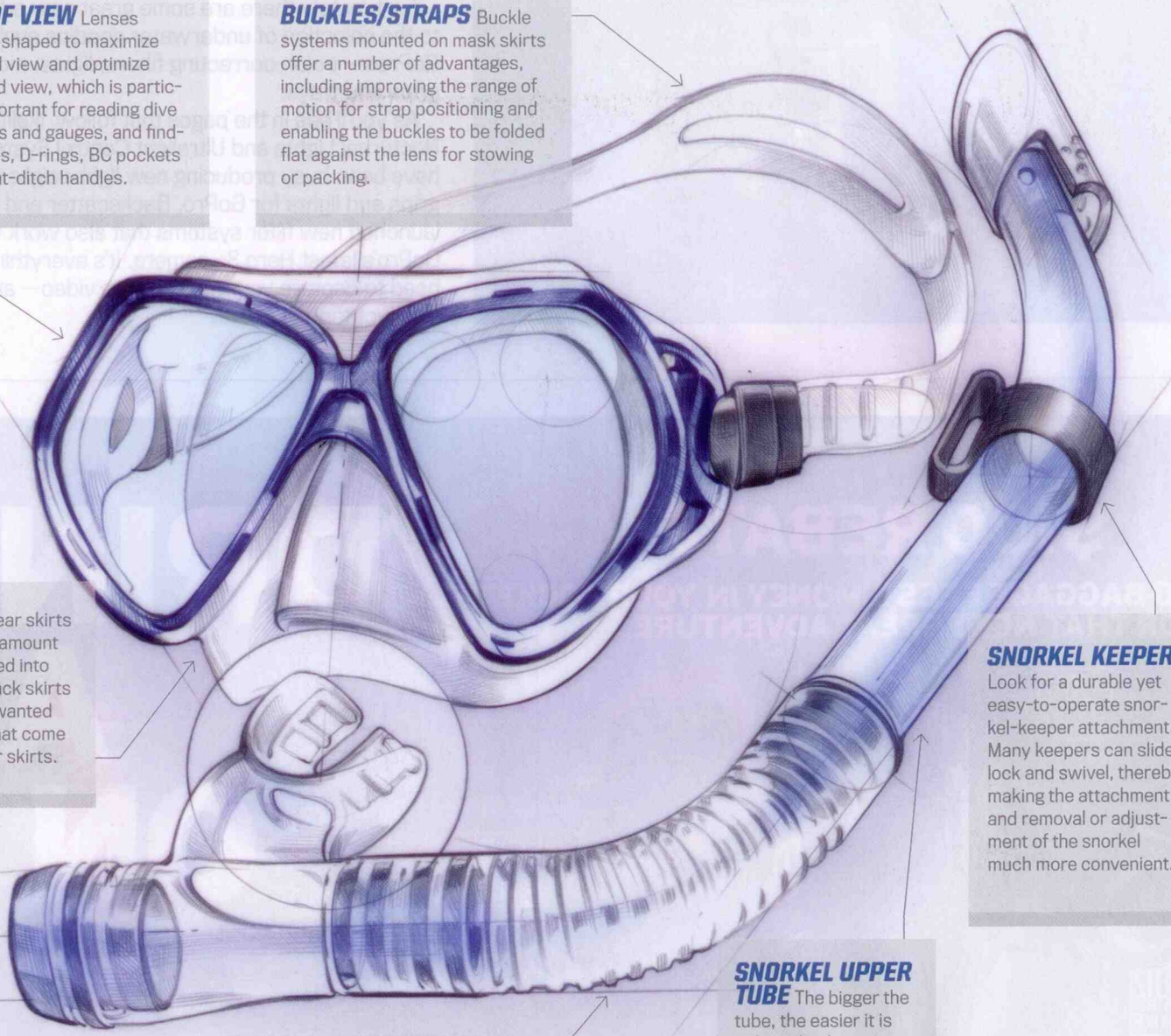
Look for a durable yet easy-to-operate snorkel-keeper attachment. Many keepers can slide, lock and swivel, thereby making the attachment and removal or adjustment of the snorkel much more convenient.

SNORKEL UPPER TUBE

The bigger the tube, the easier it is to breathe; however, a large tube creates more drag as it moves through the water.

SNORKEL LOWER TUBE

Flexible tubing improves fit and allows the mouthpiece to hang out of the way when breathing off your regulator.



Out of the Box

1 During the manufacturing process, mask skirts are injected with a releasing agent that helps them pop out of their molds. This chemical tends to leach out of the silicone and onto the mask lens, contaminating it. To remove, mask-prep compounds are available, but any mild liquid abrasive like Soft Scrub or even toothpaste will do the job. Rub the cleanser into both sides of the lenses several times, rinsing thoroughly. It doesn't hurt to do the same with the skirt and strap assembly too.

2 Check the buckle system to make sure buckles are functioning, then put on the mask for the initial strap adjustment. Avoid overtightening, and be sure the headband portion of the strap is centered on the back of your head.

3 Install the snorkel keeper on the mask strap. Then, wearing the mask, position the snorkel so it hangs alongside your left ear, out of the way until needed.



HOW TO CARE FOR MASKS AND SNORKELS

► **WASH IT** Spraying with a hose is just the beginning. To make sure all grit and salt is removed, give your mask a good soak in fresh water. It's important to clean the lenses; sunscreen that can migrate onto the lenses will create fogging issues if not scrubbed off periodically.

► **CHECK IT** After the soak, towel-dry and look closely for cracks in the skirt or the frame near the face plate. Also inspect the strap; stretch it while looking for cracks or small tears. If ever in doubt about a strap's reliability, replace it. Also check the buckle attachments for cracks or debris. On the snorkel, check the flexible portion of the tube for cracks, and peel back the silicone flap on the purge valve to look for bits of sand or salt that may have survived the soak.

► **STORE IT** Allow the mask and snorkel to drip dry completely before packing them away (this will help avoid mildew growth). Avoid storing them near light, heat and fumes, just like you would other dive gear. To protect the clear silicone, store mask and snorkel away from other

dive gear — the darker pigmentations found in other equipment, especially neoprene, can cause the silicone to become discolored. Pack the mask loosely, preferably in its original hard case. Leaving it squashed into a weird

position or storing another item of gear on top of it for a long period of time will cause the mask skirt to take on an unnatural shape (which will lead to annoying leaks the next time you dive with it).

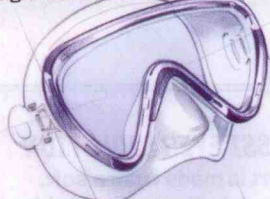


What You Need to Know About Single-, Dual- and Multilens Masks

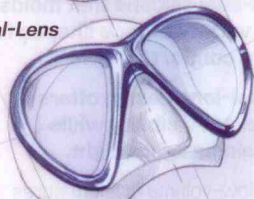
Single-lens masks provide an unobstructed view of the underwater world. Because there is no solid nose bridge dividing the front window, you can look off to the left or right without losing binocular vision. This can also be a big plus when looking straight-on at close subjects.

Dual-lens masks tend to position the viewing glass closer to your eyes, which can increase field of view. They are the best masks for installing prescription lenses (some manufacturers offer low-price drop-in corrective lenses that come pretty close to many divers' actual prescriptions).

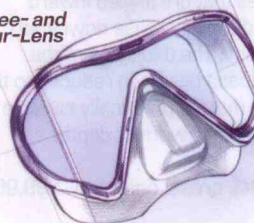
Single-Lens



Dual-Lens



Three- and Four-Lens



Three- and four-lens masks make use of side windows to increase peripheral vision as well as to let in more light and contribute to an airy, open feel on a dive — good for those prone to claustrophobia, a common issue that can plague beginning divers, and even those who are more experienced. However, the intersection of front and side lenses — while producing a seamless joint when wearing the mask in air — creates blind spots and distortion at depth. Some divers think of these issues as minor irritants that are worth it to be able to see what's on their flank, but for others, the distortion is too much of an aggravation.