

79: Zen & the art of snorkelling

suggested answers

Example: The buddy system means that ...	a) you should never dive or snorkel alone
1) Wetsuits ...	a) increase your buoyancy
2) Weight belts ...	b) decrease your buoyancy
3) When suiting up in a full-length wetsuit, you should ...	a) gently wriggle your feet through before pulling the knee-pads up to your knees
4) In order to communicate more effectively in the water ...	a) use standard hand signals
5) The best way to enter the water from a shallow beach is ...	a) walk backwards into the water with your fins on
6) When you are snorkelling or diving, dive flags ...	a) should always be displayed to alert others that you are in the water
7) Before fitting your mask, spitting in it is ...	a) a time-honoured way of preventing it from fogging up
8) Refraction makes fish & stuff under water seem ...	a) bigger & closer
9) Wearing swimming goggles when you duck-dive is ...	a) dumb
10) Mask- & snorkel-clearing are ...	a) simple & easy-to-learn techniques that make snorkelling a lot more pleasant
11) Visibility will be best when ...	b) it is sunny & hasn't rained for a while
12) You should propel yourself in the water by ...	a) kicking or flexing from the hips
13) When finning, you should ...	a) be careful not to kick fragile marine creatures or structures
14) You should ...	a) not poke your fingers where you can't see them
15) If you duck-dive & don't equalise you will ...	a) probably experience severe earache
16) Sound travels four times faster under water, but ...	b) it is hard to tell what direction sounds (like the sound of boat motors) are coming from
17) You should ...	a) not remove living creatures from the water for any period
18) Everyone should ...	a) try to learn the difference between exotic pest species like Pacific sea stars & indigenous 11-fingered sea stars
19) If surge increases, snorkellers should ...	a) take more care because they can be pushed into sharp solid objects like coral or pylons
20) After use, wetsuit, mask, snorkel & fins should be ...	a) rinsed in fresh water & stored away from direct sunlight

teachers' notes

1) In this worksheet, the wrong answers are generally ridiculous, so it should not be too difficult for students to figure out the right answers.

2) With many novices, the main problem is to overcome their fear of submerging and breathing underwater. (See article below.)

3) Here are some of the common ways students create chaos during snorkelling sessions:

- struggling to squeeze into dive suit (sometimes over boardshorts)
- staying vertical in the water
- constantly removing mask &/or snorkel
- placing mask on the top of their head
- losing flippers
- making big splashes when "finning"
- kicking each other in the head
- panicking, especially in water where they can't stand up
- leaving their buddies
- either frightening off or just not seeing marine creatures
- not putting stuff away in the right spot after snorkel

Introducing inner city girls to the wonders of the outer world

by Robbo Bennetts

Organising outdoor education experiences for inner city schoolgirls can be challenging. Many of the girls come from backgrounds where there is little culture of visiting natural places, going to the bush or the beach, or even going away on holidays. Many have missed out on childhoods that the rest of us take for granted: building sandcastles swamped by waves, boogie boarding at crowded beaches, or burning in the boiling summer sun. Too many of the girls can't swim, and consequently find the water, the waves, wetsuits and snorkels both strange and frightening.

Even if girls manage to overcome their fear of breathing Darth Vader-like through a snorkel and then immersing their faces in the water, they often see very little. Doing their best to remain vertical in the shallows, they may not see much more than a solitary fish, a dismembered crab's claw or – on a good day – a sea star. In deeper water, while there is more to see, the most fearful girls are too busy slapping and splashing the water with their fins, or clutching each other for dear life, to take very much notice of what is beneath them.

Just occasionally, however, the natural world jumps out at us in ways that can't be ignored. There was the time there was a dead pilot whale beached as (sic) at Pt Addis. Different groups of girls visited and mused over the pilot whale over a period of weeks as its teeth progressively disappeared, souvenired by trophy-hunters.

There was the time when hundreds of thousands of Northern Pacific Sea Stars were stranded on a sandy spit at St Leonards when the tide went out. There were so many that we simply couldn't step in-between these exotic pests. It was terrible to see them in such abundance.

Most recently, one of our Year 7 classes was fortunate enough to see many thousands of spider crabs, also at St Leonards. The spider crabs were piled up on top of each other in about two metres of water, where the sandy sea floor meets the sea grass. As many readers would know, these large crabs enter Port Phillip Bay, running tip-toe along the old bed of the Yarra River, swept along by the currents of the incoming tide. They mass just inside the Bay in peaceful refuges like St Leonards and Sorrento. Here, in the safety afforded by their great numbers, they discard their armour in order to mate. Later, they return to Bass Strait.

Because this amazing love-fest was so "public," so accessible, almost all of the girls were able to see it. For them, it was like being inside a David Attenborough documentary. It was something totally outside their previous experience, something that momentarily at least, allowed them to step out of an inner world shaped by the pressures of growing up in the inner city.

first published in *Coastline Magazine*, winter 2011

gallery



spider crabs in Port Phillip Bay



a snuggle of snorkellers



"Is it edible?"



"Are you okay?"