

Letter to the Editor

Decompression dives

The primary function of language is to be a tool for communication. In everyday oral communication body language also plays a role, and misunderstandings due to less precise ways of expressing oneself can be clarified on the spot. In scientific writing precision is important.

Divers who descend in water are compressed. When they ascend they are decompressed. Accordingly, all dives ending at the surface are decompression dives. A diver who does not perform a decompression dive will thus remain at depth. Some dives require decompression *stops* in order to reduce the risk of decompression illness. My point is that, in general, one should pay more attention to semantics, and particularly so in scientific writing.

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Editor's comment: I share Dr Molvær's irritation about this loose usage. Last week in Vanuatu, a group of divers I was with surfaced after a 35 msw dive without having incurred the need for a 'stop' on their computers, having done a 'multi-level' dive. On the DCIEM tables (which I carry), this dive required two stops of five minutes at 6 msw and ten minutes at 3 msw, which I duly did at the end of the dive. It is time all divers recognised that both 'multi-level' diving and 'safety' stops are forms of decompression stop diving.