

SALVAGE DIVERS

A bag-building push-your-luck game of wreck diving, for 2–4 players.

Rulebook · The Board Game LLC

Overview

You're a wreck diver racing to salvage treasure from a sunken ship across a series of expeditions. Each round, you draw chips from a personal bag to descend along a depth track, managing a limited air supply that depletes with every risky draw. How far you push before surfacing is entirely your call — but running out of air forces an immediate, costly ascent.

Along the way you reach **treasure checkpoints**. At each one, you decide whether to secure the find now — at a cost that raises your risk if you keep diving — or leave it behind to collect only if you make it back to a safe stop. Reaching greater depths always earns **Reputation**, your score, even on a dive that ends in trouble. Treasure, on the other hand, doesn't score points directly — it's currency, spent between dives on gear, permanent upgrades, and crew that help you dive further and safer next time.

The game runs **6 rounds**. Whoever has the most Reputation at the end wins.

Components

- A personal dive bag for each player, containing colored chips
- A personal depth track, marked with treasure checkpoints
- An air tank and a starting-depth marker for each player
- Treasure tokens
- A shared Reputation track
- The Gear, Advancement, and Crew markets

Setup

1. Each player takes an identical starting bag of **12 chips**:
 - **4 Fin Kicks** chips — pure movement, no air cost
 - **7 Air Cost** chips — a spread of values: four worth 1, two worth 2, one worth 3
 - **1 Dive Buddy** chip
2. Each player starts with a full air tank (capacity **6**) and begins every dive at depth **0**.

Round Structure

Each round has four phases:

1. **Site Reveal** — a card is revealed showing that round's dive site.
2. **The Dive** — every player dives simultaneously.
3. **Resolve** — treasure and Reputation are tallied, and every player's dive is revealed together.
4. **Market Phase** — spend treasure on upgrades before your next dive.

The Dive

All players draw chips from their own bag at the same time, one at a time, deciding after each draw whether to keep going or stop. Your own dive is always visible to you as it happens; other players' progress stays hidden until everyone has finished, when all dives are revealed together.

- **Fin Kicks** chips move you forward and cost no air.
- **Air Cost** chips move you forward *and* cost air equal to their own value — an Air Cost chip worth 3 moves you 3 spaces and costs 3 air.
- **Dive Buddy** chips move you forward for free, and when drawn, restore the air cost of the largest Air Cost chip you've drawn so far.

If your air tank runs dry, you **bust** — your dive ends immediately in an emergency ascent. You don't have to bust to stop; you may surface voluntarily after any draw.

Busting doesn't erase your progress.

A busted dive still scores Reputation for the deepest point you reached *before* the fatal draw — you just don't get credit for the over-reach itself. Only your uninsured treasure is lost on a bust (see below); insured treasure and your Reputation are safe either way.

Treasure Checkpoints

Your depth track has a treasure checkpoint every 2 spaces, each worth **\$4**. When you reach one, choose:

- **Insure & advance** — bank the treasure immediately, and keep diving. The cost: your **lowest-value Air Cost chip already drawn this dive goes back into your bag** (no air is refunded for it). This doesn't shorten your dive, but that chip is now back in play — if you keep drawing, you've raised your own risk for the rest of the dive. Insured treasure is yours **even if you later bust**.
- **Advance without insuring** — no cost, keep diving. You only receive this treasure if you later reach a safe stop; bust before then and it's lost.
- **Surface** — stop here safely. Every treasure you left behind this dive — this checkpoint's and all earlier ones — banks automatically, at no cost.

Insuring is cheap when you're about to surface anyway, and costly when you plan to push much deeper — the same choice carries different weight depending on how much dive you have left.

Resolve — Treasure & Reputation

Reputation is your score, and the win condition. You earn 1 Reputation for every 2 spaces of depth reached — whether your dive ends safely or in a bust.

Treasure is currency, not points. It doesn't score Reputation directly — it's spent in the markets to help you reach greater depths (and therefore more Reputation) on future dives.

The Danger Ramp

Starting in **Round 4**, and again in Rounds 5 and 6, the wreck grows more dangerous: every player's bag permanently gains one extra Air Cost chip (value 1). This affects every diver equally, and it doesn't go away — by Round 6, every bag carries three of these additional chips.

Chip Reference

Chip	Effect
Fin Kicks	Pure movement, no air cost.
Air Cost	Moves you forward and spends air equal to its own value. Values vary within the bag.
Dive Buddy	Moves you forward for free. On draw, restores the air cost of the largest Air Cost chip you've drawn so far that hasn't already been restored.

The Markets

Spend treasure earned this round (and any saved from before) across three markets. Gear and Advancement purchases are **permanent** — they stay with you for the rest of the game. Crew is **one-dive only** — bought this round, used on your next dive, then it's gone, and the market refreshes.

Gear — permanent chips added to your bag

Item	Effect	Cost
Reinforced Fins I	Moves you 1, no air cost	\$5
Reinforced Fins II	Moves you 2, no air cost	\$10
Reinforced Fins III	Moves you 3, no air cost	\$13
Rebreather I	Moves you 2, restores 1 air on draw	\$14

Rebreather II	Moves you 2, restores 2 air on draw	\$19
Rebreather III	Moves you 2, restores 3 air on draw	\$21
Spare Tank	Moves you 1; on draw, refills your air tank to full	\$17

You may buy any number of copies of any Gear item you can afford.

Advancement — permanent upgrades to your diver

Item	Effect	Cost
Starting Depth	Begin every future dive 2 spaces deeper — lands exactly on a checkpoint, which you collect automatically at the start of the dive.	\$16
Tank Capacity	+1 to your starting air capacity. Limited to 3 purchases per game.	\$19

Crew — one-dive specialists

Item	Effect	Cost
Navigator	This dive only: your first Air Cost draw is free — you keep the movement, spend no air.	\$7
Quartermaster	This dive only: the first time you would bust, your largest Air Cost chip is restored instead, averting it.	\$6

End of Game

The wreck has a floor at depth **40** — reaching it forces a safe stop, same as choosing to surface.

After 6 rounds, any unspent treasure converts to Reputation at a **5-to-1** rate — a deliberately poor exchange, so holding onto treasure instead of spending or diving with it is never the smart play.

The diver with the most Reputation wins. Ties are broken by leftover treasure.