

# Top 5 Tips for Underwater Polar Photography

Photographing in 1-degree water presents serious challenges, even for experienced underwater photographers. But with the right preparation, you can improve your chances of capturing stunning images in these extreme conditions. Here are five key tips to help you get the best results:

## 1. Bubbles on Your Dome Port

In cold water, bubbles tend to form on the dome port as the temperature difference causes the cold water to aerate the glass or acrylic. These bubbles can ruin otherwise amazing shots and are nearly impossible to remove in post-production.

### What to do:

- Apply a layer of mask anti-fog gel or liquid to your dome port before entering the water. This reduces aeration and helps water bead off the surface—especially helpful for split shots.
  - Be proactive. Carry a small chamois or use your gloves to gently wipe the dome while in the water. Get in the habit of checking it regularly to avoid those pesky air bubbles ruining your shots.
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## 2. Condensation & Fogging

Shifting between warm and cold environments can cause condensation inside your housing, fogging up the lens or dome port.

### Pro tips:

- Assemble your camera gear in a room with a consistent temperature.
  - Avoid opening the housing until everything has returned to room temperature.
  - Keeping your setup acclimated to the ambient environment helps protect your equipment and avoid internal fogging that could compromise your shoot.
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## 3. Battery Life in the Cold

Cold dramatically reduces battery performance.

### Stay prepared:

- Make sure all batteries are fully charged and keep them warm for as long as possible before assembling your gear.
- Bring plenty of spares, stored in a dry bag while diving.

- Avoid opening your housing on the water unless absolutely necessary—it only takes a drop of salt water to cause damage.
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#### 4. Use a Checklist

Underwater, there's no going back to fix something. A pre-dive checklist can save your shoot (and your sanity). Always test your camera, strobes, and settings on the surface before diving.

**Include these essentials on your checklist:**

- **Autofocus enabled** – Don't make the mistake of having your lens set to manual from a previous night shoot. I once went in with my lens on manual focus, ISO sky-high, and nothing was in focus. Learn from my mistake!
  - **Lens cap removed** – Yes, it's happened. Everything looks black... because the lens cap is still on. Don't let it ruin your dive.
  - **Dome port interior clean** – Even a few specks of dust can ruin footage, especially video. A spotless dome means crisp, clean visuals.
  - **Memory card formatted and ready** – Running out of space mid-shoot is frustrating. Back up after each dive and always start with a fresh card. Turn off the "shoot without card" feature if your camera has it.
  - **O-rings clean and intact** – These seals are crucial. Cold temperatures can affect the elasticity, and even a single hair can cause a leak. Always check, clean, and carry spares.
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#### 5. Cold Hands & Glove Choice

Obvious, perhaps—but critical. In polar conditions, your hands are gripping the housing and often stay still, which makes them go stiff fast. That stiffness makes it harder to operate buttons or change camera settings.

**What helps:**

- Wear warm but **thin gloves** under your wetsuit that allow dexterity.
  - Test whether you can adjust your settings with the gloves on before getting in the water.
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**Final Word:**

Shooting in polar waters is incredibly rewarding but demands respect for the environment and attention to detail. With a little extra planning and the right habits, you'll be much better prepared to capture breathtaking images in the world's coldest places.