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with marine life can
(equivalent on 35mm),

as they are often small
ly coloured fish can
(equivalent on 35mm),



Practicalities

The refraction of light in water will change the focal length of your lens, making a wide-angle lens behave more like a standard, while a 35mm lens will work like a 50mm lens underwater. You should use a more wide-angle lens than you might imagine, but be careful it is not cut off by the housing to give a black vignette effect.

Autofocus can be very useful when diving, as manual focussing can be very tricky through a diving mask and a housing. I tend to use a setting that uses a wide array of

sensors, set to focus on the nearest object. I also use single not continuous focus, so I know the picture will be in focus before the camera will take the picture.

Digital cameras are exceptionally good for underwater photography. The LCD screen can really help with composition and – with a large memory card – you can take hundreds of pictures before having to surface. Digital also gives you greater control over the colour balance, allowing you to correct any blue cast to your pictures on a computer. ■

TOP SHOTS WITH YOUR COMPACT CAMERA

Ocean Visions' Maria Munn has the lowdown on using compacts underwater



Do a dry run

Start by taking the empty case down to your diving depth to check for leaks. Keep it out of sunlight, rinse it well in fresh water after use and press all the controls to stop salt crystals sticking.

Underexpose your shots

For photographs from the surface to depths of 15m, alter the 'exposure compensation' setting (EV+/-) to -1, -2 or even -3. This will help keep the ocean looking a rich, deep blue, not pale and washed out.

Balance the white light

Switch the 'white balance' to 'manual' and, at the deepest point of your dive, put a white slate in front of the shutter to calibrate the white balance, repeating as you ascend. If you don't have a 'manual' setting use 'cloudy' to get rid of the blue cast and warm up your photos.

Pick the right programme

The 'macro' function helps to ensure sharp close-up shots. Get within 30cm of your subject for the flash to work at its best and to avoid lighting those nasty in-water particles.

Zoom in... carefully

Remember: subjects are magnified underwater, making them appear closer than they are. Get as close as you can, but always respect the reef and never grab onto any coral for the sake of a great picture.

Tips supplied by Ocean Visions, which runs courses on underwater photography, including a special one-day beginners programme for compact cameras. 07957 621915, www.oceanvisions.co.uk

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