

DIVING EPICENTER

with Ben & Jen

Underwater Video

& GoPro Settings Cheat Sheet

Dial-in settings for clear spring water, dim caverns, and the Gulf flats — plus the handful of habits that separate crisp footage from blue mush.

Settings shown for GoPro HERO11 / 12 / 13. Older models have most of the same options in a similar menu.

THE ONE THING TO UNDERSTAND FIRST

Water swallows color, starting with red. Even a few feet down, your reds and oranges wash out and everything drifts blue-green. That's why untouched underwater footage looks flat and cold — it's not your camera, it's the water.

White balance is your #1 lever. Fix that, fix 80% of the problem.

In bright, shallow spring water, Auto white balance is usually fine. The moment you go deeper or your footage turns blue-green, either lock white balance manually (warmer as you go deeper) or add a red filter over the lens. Get color right in the water and you'll barely need to touch it later.

SETTINGS BY WHERE YOU'RE SHOOTING

Bright, clear springs (Three Sisters, Rainbow, shallow flats)

Your best-case conditions — lots of light, great visibility. Let the camera work.

Setting	Use
Resolution	4K (or 2.7K for smaller files)
Frame rate	60fps — smooth, and lets you slow it down in editing
Lens	Wide (or Linear to kill fisheye distortion)
White balance	Auto
Color profile	Natural (or Flat if you edit/color-grade)
ISO Min / Max	100 / 400–800
Stabilization	HyperSmooth On
Bit rate	High

Dim caverns & deeper springs (Devil's Den, Blue Grotto, King's Spring)

Less light, more blue cast. Slow the frame rate to let more light in, and raise your ISO ceiling.

Setting	Use
Resolution	4K
Frame rate	30fps — more light per frame in low light
Lens	Wide
White balance	Auto to start; lock manual if it looks blue
Color profile	Natural
ISO Min / Max	100 / 1600
Stabilization	HyperSmooth On
A dive light	Huge help — restores real color the filter can't

QUICK REFERENCE — PHOTOS & WHITE BALANCE

Shooting photos

Setting	Use
Photo mode	Standard or SuperPhoto
RAW	On, if you plan to edit properly
Lens	Wide
White balance	Auto (bright) / manual (deeper)
ISO Max	400–800

Manual white balance by depth (when Auto looks blue)

Kelvin (K) is the “warmth” dial. Deeper water loses more red, so you warm it up as you descend to put the color back.

Depth	White balance
Surface – 15 ft	~4800–5200K
15 – 30 ft	~5500K
30 ft +	~6000–6500K (or camera max)

No manual white balance on your model (older HEROs)? A red filter over the lens does the same job — just remember to take it off in very shallow or artificially lit water, where it over-corrects.

10 HABITS THAT BEAT ANY SETTING

- 1. Get close, then get closer.** Water kills sharpness and color over distance. The best underwater shots are taken within a few feet of the subject.
- 2. Shoot early.** Springs are clearest in the morning before swimmers stir up the bottom. Best light and best visibility line up.
- 3. Keep the sun behind you.** Let it light your subject rather than shooting into the glare — colors pop and silhouettes disappear.
- 4. Move slowly and hold steady.** Slow, deliberate movement keeps footage watchable and avoids kicking up silt. Two hands on the housing.
- 5. Shoot slightly upward.** Angling up toward the surface light gives cleaner backgrounds and a more dramatic look than shooting down at the bottom.
- 6. Don't stir the bottom.** One careless fin kick clouds the water for everyone and ruins the next five minutes of footage. Watch your feet.
- 7. Lock your horizon.** Turn on horizon leveling/lock so tilted, disorienting clips don't sneak in.
- 8. Give wildlife space.** Never chase. Manatees especially — in-water contact rules are strict. Hold still and let them come to you; the calm footage is better anyway.
- 9. Add a light or filter for depth.** Below ~10–15 ft, a red filter (natural light) or a dive light (restores true color) makes a night-and-day difference.
- 10. Rinse and dry after every trip.** Soak the camera in fresh water, work the buttons, and dry the housing seal — spring minerals and salt are hard on gear.

These are starting points, not gospel — lighting and visibility change day to day, so shoot a few test clips and adjust. When in doubt: get closer, warm up the color, and keep it steady.

See you at the next spot.