

BBC Learning English
6 Minute English
Underwater living
11 September 2014



NB: This is not a word for word transcript

Rob: Hello and welcome to 6 Minute English from BBC Learning English. I'm Rob and with me is Finn.

Finn: ...

Rob: Finn? Are you ok?

Finn: (*breathes out*) Ahhh... 49 seconds... I was just... holding my breath!

Rob: A new hobby of yours, Finn?

Finn: Well today... we're talking about people living underwater – so I thought I could do with some practice.

Rob: Ok – well you get your breath back. Today, we'll be hearing about scientists who broke the world record for time spent underwater – they spent an incredible 31 days under the waves! And we'll be learning some related vocabulary too. Ready now, Finn?

Finn: Yes – I think so. And are *you* ready for this week's question?

Rob: Hit me with it.

Finn: This week's question is... what is the longest time a human being has held their breath underwater for? Is it:

- a) 12 minutes
- b) 18 minutes
- c) 22 minutes

Rob: I'm going to go for b) 18 minutes.

Finn: I'll tell you if you're right or wrong at the end of the programme, but...
don't hold your breath!

Rob: Haha. Don't hold your breath – a phrase which means 'don't expect that a particular good thing will happen'. Anyway – what about these scientists – did they hold their breath for 31 days?

Finn: Haha – no – but they did live underwater in a **laboratory**. That's a room or building with scientific equipment for doing tests.

Rob: One of the men was Fabien Cousteau, who's an **oceanographer** – someone who studies the oceans. He's the grandson of Jacques Cousteau – a Frenchman who held the previous record of 30 days underwater.

Finn: Fabien said he wanted to break his grandfather's record to raise awareness of ocean **conservation** – protecting and looking after the ocean.

Rob: Well he's raised our awareness at least. Now I'm interested in how they lived underwater. Listen to Fabien talking about the laboratory called Aquarius. Which word does he use to say that the lab is completely underwater?

Fabien Cousteau: Oceanographer

*Aquarius is very unique in that it's the only **undersea** marine laboratory – it gives us a unique platform from which to live and explore this **final frontier** on our planet.*

Finn: He called it an undersea laboratory. 'Undersea' is, as you might guess a word similar to underwater. It means under the sea.

Rob: And he called this undersea world 'the final frontier'. It's an interesting phrase – it comes from the *Star Trek* television series, which called space the final frontier – the last place that humans have not yet travelled to, the last place to explore.

Finn: And apparently this laboratory was 18 metres under the sea in Florida... and being there allowed them to spend less time diving and more time observing **marine** life.

Rob: Marine life – that means 'of the sea', so marine life means sea life, plants and animals that live in the sea. They were particularly interested in investigating the effects of pollution on coral.

Finn: Now, I know they did this to raise awareness of marine conservation. But what I'm really interested in is what life was like for them. What was it like to live underwater for so long?

Rob: Surprisingly, perhaps, life there wasn't too bad. They had air conditioning, hot water and internet access!

Finn: Though I do know that Fabien struggled with one aspect. Listen to him to find out what:

Fabien Cousteau: Oceanographer

*Unfortunately for me, as a French person, the food will also be simulated – **freeze-dried**, **astronaut** type of food, canned foods – things like that, so it's a horror show for me.*

Rob: Poor Fabien. He said the food was pretty awful. Maybe it was English food?!

Finn: Probably – as a Frenchman he wasn't impressed by the freeze-dried food – that means food that is quickly frozen and dried – to preserve it.

Rob: Yes, he thought it was astronaut style food – the sort of food you would eat as an astronaut – someone who travels into space!

Finn: And coming back to dry land they had to spend 16 hours **decompressing**.

Rob: That's very important. Divers have to decompress – to return to their original body pressure – when they come out of the water.

Finn: Sounds like a long time to wait for a good meal! So Rob – what do you think? Would you like to live underwater for a month?

Rob: Absolutely not. I'd get very claustrophobic in those small spaces.

Finn: Anyway – let's see if you got this week's question right. I asked you what you thought the world record for holding your breath for underwater was.

Rob: I went for 18 minutes.

Finn: Actually it was even longer than that: 22 minutes! There are reports that two different men have managed this feat – Stig Severinsen from Denmark and Tom Sietas from Germany – with Tom apparently holding his breath for 22 minutes 22 seconds. But they're professionals, please don't try this at home! Well, that brings us to the end of today's 6 Minute English. We hope you've enjoyed today's underwater programme. Please join us again soon. Bye.

Rob: Bye.

Vocabulary and definitions

don't hold your breath	phrase meaning: "don't expect that a particular good thing will happen"
laboratory	room or building with scientific equipment for doing tests
oceanographer	someone who studies the oceans
conservation	protection of plants and animals
undersea	below the surface of the sea
final frontier	the last place for humans to explore
marine	relating to the sea
freeze-dried	(of food) quickly frozen and dried to preserve it
astronaut	a person who has been trained to travel in space
decompressing	reducing your body pressure after being underwater

Read and listen to the story online

http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/general/sixminute/2014/09/140911_6min_underwater_living.shtml

More on this story:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-28139900>