

Guide to Swimming Gear

Swim Suits

Shopping for competition swimsuits can be confusing, especially if you don't know what you're looking for. To best select a swimsuit, you must first determine the right fabric. Each material feels and fits differently in the water, so it is important to choose the right fabric to fit your needs. This guide will explain the pros, cons, and purposes of each competition suit fabric.

Nylon

Details:

- Ideal for drag suits and training suits.
- Very common fabric in swimwear.
- Often blended with Spandex for elasticity.

Pros:

- Offers a lightweight, smooth fit.
- One of the strongest manufactured fibers.
- Quick-drying and low-water absorbency.
- Lower-cost.

Cons:

- Has poor resistance to prolonged sun exposure, so fabric will fade and fray. (To help, rinse with cool, fresh water after each use.).

Spandex

Details:

- Ideal for competition suits.
- Competitive swimsuits should contain higher percent of spandex.
- Also known as Elastane or as brand name LYCRA®.

Pros:

- Form-fitting fit.
- Mid-range cost.
- Commonly used because of durable elasticity.
- Excellent elasticity and stretch, so even a small amount is vital for swimsuits.

Cons:

- Can be itchy if not blended with other fabrics.
- Does not hold up well in chlorine. Rinse with cool, fresh water after each use.

Xtra Life LYCRA®

Details:

- Ideal for competition suits.
 - Often blended with other fabrics.
- Pros:
- Longer-lasting than LYCRA® Spandex.

- Comfortable material.

- Retains color and shape.

- Chlorine-resistant.

- Stronger elasticity than Spandex/LYCRA®.

Cons:

- More expensive cost.

PBT

Details:

- Ideal for fitness and competition suits.
- Best for outdoor swimming.
- PBT stands for polybutylene terephthalate, a texturized polyester.
- Often blended with Polyester.

Pros:

- Cost-effective and durable.
- Chlorine- and heat-resistant.
- Great stretch and elasticity, similar to spandex.
- Quick-drying and low-water absorbency.

Cons:

- More expensive cost.

Polyester

Details:

- Ideal for competition suits.
- Durable alternative to Spandex.
- Common alternative to Spandex in competition swimsuits.

Pros:

- Form-fitting fit.
- Chlorine-resistant and colorfast.
- Durable material, even if not cared for properly.
- Doesn't stretch as much as Spandex; holds shape well.
- 2-3 times longer lasting than Spandex.

Cons:

- Not as comfortable as Spandex.
- Higher cost.
- Not super stretchy, harder to put on at first.



Keep in mind that there are different blends of these fabrics in competition swimsuits. While one material may not have good shape retention, the other blended fabric will. Compare the materials listed to ensure you are getting exactly what you need.

There's plenty of fabric and fabric blends available, but it is up to you to determine which composition best fits your swimwear needs. (*"Understanding Competition **Swimsuit** Fabrics"* copied from <https://support.swimoutlet.com/hc/en-us/articles/203851530-Understanding-Competition-Swimsuit-Fabrics>)

Swim Caps

Swim caps are designed for competitive swimmers in order to reduce hydrodynamic drag while swimming. By creating a smooth surface area for the water to flow over, caps allow swimmers to move more quickly and fluidly through the water than they could without a cap. This, in turn, improves mobility while swimming – helping you to perform better in competition. In addition to their performance benefits, there are many other reasons to wear a cap. Some people use swim caps to help keep water out of their hair, which helps to reduce the damage that chlorine and other pool chemicals may cause. Swim caps can also be used to help cover your ears while swimming, retain heat, and keep hair out of the pool.

Silicone Caps:

Silicone is one of the most ubiquitous materials used for swimming caps. Additionally, it is extremely durable. Silicone caps will last for years, when cared for properly. As a competitive swimmer, silicone is definitely my favorite cap material. Not only is it long-lasting, but it also lends itself well to slipping on and off without pulling hair (a plus for both men and women!).

Latex Caps:

Latex is a far thinner material than silicone. It is also less durable. Latex swim caps rip more easily especially if you do not put them on properly or fail to take proper care of them. Since they are lighter than silicone, latex caps allow for more "breathability." Retaining less heat, these caps may be better suited for warmer climates in which heat loss is not an issue. Latex caps are also generally much cheaper than other types of swim caps. So if you're looking for a cap that won't break the bank and durability isn't a concern, then latex is the way to go.

Goggles

Finding goggles that you can count on and that fit right can be tricky. You may need to try a couple different kinds before you find *your* favorite. The goggles listed below are some of the tried and tested favorites of other local swim teams. They reportedly fit better, work better and cause less problems in the pool during practice, especially for younger swimmers. With limited training hours each night it's important to maximize the amount of time we have swimming and learning. Faulty, leaky goggles, leave swimmers spending more time fiddling with their equipment and less time getting the work done.

- Speedo JR. Vanquisher/ 2.0
- Speedo Hydrospex JR.
- TYR Tracer

(adapted from https://www.teamunify.com/iams/___doc___/365378_4_Sharks%20Clothing%20Catalogue.pdf)

