



Product knowledge:



How to sell swim goggles

Goggles, first allowed at the Olympic Games in Montreal in 1976, may not be crucial for a swimmer's performance, but their absence might breed frustration and cause distractions. For 20/20 vision, protection against the harmful effects of chlorine, other chemicals and UV and ensuring that you see the wall and know when to do your tumble-turns, is simply pivotal.

But what do you recommend when your customers are spoilt for choice in terms of the goggle-market?

Inside or outside the eye socket?

It is very much a personal choice as to which type of goggles a swimmer opts for, but technology has come a long way in terms of hydrodynamic design and the conventional thinking of *less is more* in terms of goggles is changing.

Pros of socket goggles

- The socket goggles that sit inside the eye-socket are lightweight, minimalistic and barely there, so to speak;
- The general consensus amongst competitive swimmers is that a goggle that sits right inside the eye-orbit reduces drag and therefore assists with the speed of the swim;
- Highly competitive pool swimmers tend to prefer this style, as they are pushing through the water with tremendous velocity. They need to be as streamlined as possible because seconds (and indeed milliseconds) count;
- Some socket goggles have interchangeable nosepieces or a *string* nosepiece that enables the wearer to adjust the length between the eye pieces. By adjusting the distance between the eye cups, it is possible to get a great individual fit with this type of swimming goggle.

Cons of socket goggles

- Some of the socket style goggles tend to put pressure just under the brow bone, often causing discomfort and headaches and leaving red pressure marks. There are, however, some that have soft rubber around the eye to ensure comfort;
- Use of Swedish swim goggles can also result in rings around the eyes when they are taken off;
- Some swimmers tend to dismiss socket goggles for the lack of a gasket between the eyes and the goggle.

Full goggles

- Nowadays, there is a definite trend towards

Our cut-out-and-keep series to assist retailers with product knowledge

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recreational swimmers wearing what makes them feel most comfortable – and there is no question that goggles that sit outside the eye socket, sealed with a silicone skirt, are fast becoming more popular;

- Full goggles are also worn in open water swimming, because the swimmer's pace is a little slower. There is less resistance in the water per se and therefore the *fuller goggles* do not impede speed;
- It also makes sense that the wider the seal, the less chance there is of leaking and subsequent fogging – and after all, the primary function of a goggle is to keep water out of the eyes;

- Whilst the socket goggles are sleek and sometimes have the added advantage of an adjustable *string* nosepiece for customised fitting, the wider curved lens of the wrap-around goggles offer greater visibility and superior comfort.

Different frames

There is nothing like swimming with a pair of goggles that allow excellent visibility and peripheral vision as opposed to a tunnel vision. Not only can one see easily where one is swimming, but one can also see competitors encroaching without having to move the head position.

- Field of view is most important for open water swimming to be able to spot and locate key landmarks;
- A larger field of view also can relax some people in the water because they are able to see a larger area more clearly thus feeling less claustrophobic;
- In competitive swimming, field of view is not as important, as at this level it is all about reducing drag, but new racing models will soon be launched with angled frames that offer better vision;
- Wide field goggles tend to be in the middle to high price range;
- In the recreational swimming market a mid-size frame is desirable as it offers a good blend between the comfort of a mask style and the lower drag of a race goggle;
- With a fixed/one piece frame, there are no separations in the mould.
- Whilst the flexible frames often have the added advantage of an adjustable nosepiece for customising the fit, this also means more *moveable* pieces and it is often at these joints that the goggles could wear or break.

Lenses

Anti-fog is important, as there is nothing more frustrating than not being able to see where one is swimming due to fogged-up goggles.

- Anti-fog coatings are a thin chemical layer applied to the lens during production, but over time this can wear away and an anti-fog solution will need to be reapplied with one of the many anti-fog products on the market.

Tinted lenses: Generally, a goggle with a clear lens is most effective for indoor swimming, or where there are low light conditions, as a clear lens allows in more light.

- For outdoor swimming, especially high glare conditions such as swimming in the ocean or dams, a tinted lens offers protec-

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tion from the sun and its harmful UV rays and reduces glare (reflected light). A very common colour for tinted goggles is light blue or *smoke*.

- Blue or polarized lenses will offer the best glare reduction.
- Amber or gold lenses will offer the highest definition. Amber is mostly used in open water swimming goggles where definition of slight objects is important.

Mirrored lenses: These are very popular in the competitive market as they are considered to be cool goggles because of the cosmetics, the fact that you can't see the other person's eyes, etc. They are great for outdoor use to reflect the sunlight and protect the eyes from UV and UVT rays. Indoors they deflect the bright lighting.

Head straps

- It seems to be a given that a double strap design offers greater support, as it holds the goggles in their position better and puts less pressure on one area of the back of the head.
- Make sure that the straps are not flimsy and are strong and thick (about 1cm wide). It is common for straps to snap on goggles, but if they are wide enough and made of tough durable silicone, there is less chance of this happening.
- Easy adjustment of the strap is just as important. If a goggle strap is hard to adjust people will get frustrated attempting to get the right fit, and you might lose the sale. This is especially true in kid-goggles. A leaky goggle and a hard strap adjustment lead to unhappy kids and frustrated parents.
- A one-touch buckle system means the swimmer does not have to spend precious time fiddling with the straps before, or even during, a race.

Goggles for different levels

Recreational swimming: Comfort should be paramount, so the wider lenses or seal masks should be good for this.

- The frame can rest around the eye socket.
- Normally, they tend to have one-piece soft frames, with quick strap adjustments, or adjustable nose bridges on cheaper goggles.

Competitive pool swimming: You will most-

ly recommend a racing or socket goggle;

- For this level the goggle tends to have a multiple piece frame for optimum customisation, and it will probably have multiple coloured lens options.
- Sighting is not as important in pool swimming as it is in open water swimming, so pool goggles tend to be on the very small side, with at most a mid-size frame. This is because a swimmer typically has lane lines and the black line at the bottom of the pool for guidance.

Competitive open water swimming: Open water goggles tend to be mid- to large-frame sizes with a larger field of view.

- It will probably be a goggle with a one-piece soft frame with quick strap adjustments.
- It will have multiple coloured lense options, including polarized and amber. For outdoor pools and open water swimming people prefer a tinted lens to reduce glare and eye fatigue — just like wearing sun glasses.
- In almost all cases, curved lenses will be preferable.

For children starting to swim: You should recommend smaller frames and lenses for smaller faces.

- The goggle should be leak-resistant, so that the child's early introduction to swimming and association with water is as comfortable and pleasant as possible.
- A one-piece soft frame would be preferable.
- A quick strap adjustment must be possible.
- The price should ideally fall into the low to the middle range.
- It should have multiple coloured lense options, especially fun colour-combinations are recommended.

Fitting a swim goggle

The most important thing when recommending a goggle is to ensure that it doesn't leak and will be comfortable for an extended period of time. That is why many swimmers buy several pairs once they find a model that works well for them.

It is therefore essential that your customer tries on several goggles for fit.

- Make sure you check that the seal fits properly around the nose area, as this is where leaking tends to occur.
- Many people have a face shape that is not

a perfect fit for off-the-shelf goggles, meaning that lots of swimming goggles won't fit without some adjustment. One solution to this problem may well lie in recommending a pair of goggles that can be adjusted around the nose, rather than a traditional pair of goggles where only the strap can be adjusted. If this is the case, then socket style swim goggles may be the best bet as they can be adjusted in more than one way.

- It is important to recommend a pair of goggles that fits your customer's face shape correctly. The best way to test this and the seal that the goggle will give, is to ask him to press the goggle firmly onto his face, without using the straps.
- If the goggles stay there, without support, you will know that this is a good fit and the chances of water leaking into them will be minimised.
- When you push the lens of the goggles over your eyes and get a slight suction, you are assured of a good fit. If they fall off immediately, or one side pops off, then it is a bad fit or some adjustments need to be made.
- People with smaller faces will benefit from swim goggles that come in smaller sizes, such as children's or women's sizes. Some goggle models come in both a standard and small version, therefore check the label carefully.

Other important facts to consider

- UV protection is also important. Higher quality goggles will offer UVA and UVB filtration.
- Higher quality goggles will be made of silicone, TPE or TPR. Lower priced goggles tend to be latex or PVC.
- It is also important to remind the buyer that goggles need to be looked after. Goggles should always be rinsed in clean, fresh water after any swim. Despite the fact that many goggles in today's market claim to be chlorine resistant, it is a strong chemical, and will eventually erode and have a negative effect on your goggles. The *life span* of a pair of goggles can definitely be increased if they are cared for correctly.
- It should also be pointed out to the customer that a pair of goggles will not last forever and if they get six months to a year's use out of them (obviously depending on the frequency of use), it would be good.

Local prices for international quality racing swimsuits

SECOND SKINS has developed a range of racing suits under the Speedskins sub-label that compares well to and competes with the imported options, as it provides compression, is hydrophobic and offers low-drag).

The Speedskins range has been approved by FINA. This means that records broken

while wearing Speedskins will be recognised by the international swimming body...

All this at locally affordable price points.

Second Skins has spent many years sourcing top quality lycra fabrics and will therefore not be affected by the closure by the Ninian & Lester lycra manufacturing plant, says Tammy Rutherford, who also cautions

retailers to watch out for inferior quality fabric and imports in future.

"The growing swimming market has also drawn us into manufacturing a range of training costumes of assorted prints and styles," he adds.

