Masters swimmers often debate the use of fins, at practice and in USMS online discussion forums. Some swimmers eschew them, others use them for most of their workouts, and many like them as a training aid for specific sets. Whatever your preference, the array of fins is somewhat dizzying. Our testers spent several weeks checking out some of the brands on the market. The majority of fins tested were short- and medium-bladed, and are commonly called training fins.

The shortest of these, such as the Finis Zoomers and Kiefer Power Fins, can feel heavy and cumbersome, creating the need to flutter kick vigorously with small amplitude to keep the legs afloat. Many swimmers and triathletes enjoy this leg workout and say it helps them get great cardio as well.

Swimmers and coaches who don’t like short-bladed fins point out that swimmers who are poor kickers due to a lack of ankle flexibility are missing an opportunity to develop better flexibility, which is critical to efficient kicking. Swimmers whose toes point to the bottom of the pool instead of to the wall behind them may be better served by trying a longer bladed fin first; resistance from the blade will allow an efficient kick only if the toes are pointed and ankles stretched.

The medium-bladed fins tested, such as AlphaFins, Speedo’s Optimus, and HydroFinz, seem to capture the best of both worlds: a blade that’s short enough to allow a good tempo and long enough to promote ankle flexibility. Medium-bladed fins were preferred by most of the testers who wanted to carry only one set of fins in their gear bags.

Fin testers were asked to comment on the comfort and performance of each fin model and, if applicable, how the fin performed during strokes other than freestyle and during streamline dolphin kicking. None of the fins were tested for breaststroke. A review of fins designed for use during breaststroke will be included in the November-December issue of SWIMMER.
1. **FINIS Zoomers Blue and Zoomers Gold** $30-$32
   The shortest of the short-bladed fins, these brought back memories for some testers who were poor kickers in their college programs and were required to use these to build up their kick. They will give a good workout in all three strokes, and “keep your kick honest.” Several testers remarked that the fins caused their legs to splay out at odd angles, which they did not like, and they attributed this to the wide toe pocket. Finis is discontinuing the Blue and Red Zoomers and introducing the Gold, which is a blend of the two, and will be available in mid-October. finisinc.com

2. **FINIS Z2 Zoomers** $30
   Z2 Zoomers have a slightly longer, more flexible blade and a closed-toe design, which many testers preferred for comfort. These felt more natural in the water than the traditional Zoomers. One tester shared, “they made me feel my kick more than any other fin. I was aware of where my feet were and what they were doing.” These, like other short-bladed fins, did not offer a lot of speed, but mimicked a natural kick well. Several testers reported that the Z2s were perfect for sprinting short distances. As part of Finis’s redesign of their fin line, the Z2 will transition in October from blue and white to black and yellow, although the fin design will not change. finisinc.com

3. **Kiefer Power Fin** $27
   The foot pocket on this fin is comfortable; testers liked the fit and feel of it. The Power Fin does appear to be a longer-bladed fin with most of the blade cut off. By removing the blade, Kiefer has created a fin similar to Zoomers. Testers looking for a snappy leg workout liked these; those looking for some assistance to go faster in the moment felt they had to work too hard for it. kiefer.com

4. **Speedo Biofuse Training Fin** $35
   Speedo’s entry in the short fin category was well received by the short-blade fin fans for its comfort. The fin pocket is very soft and comfortable and the silicone material appears to be highly durable. These fins helped testers feel the water and kick harder. Several testers remarked that the design of the fin made them feel as though the fin was not a natural extension of the foot, and that it felt cumbersome. speedousa.com

5. **TYR Burner EBP Fin** $35
   The Burner EPB (Elevated Body Position) was the most comfortable of all the short fins. Testers loved the velvety soft silicone foot pocket. The blade is stiff but just flexible enough to be comfortable even when pushing off the wall. This fin combines the workhorse capability of the Zoomer with the comfort of the Speedo Optimus. The Burner floats the feet, but not excessively. tyr.com
**Aqua Sphere AlphaFins Training Fins $35**

This fin was one of the most comfortable. Many loved the lightweight foam. Testers felt like their feet floated very high, which some testers, especially those who struggle to keep their lower bodies afloat, liked. Other testers felt they floated the feet too high or that the curved blades made their feet splay outwards or into unnatural positions. Some testers liked the lightweight assistance these fins offered without too much power and speed which mimicked natural finless swimming. [aquasphereswim.com](http://aquasphereswim.com)

**ClubSwim Training Fin $17**

These fins were comfortable and easy to use. Testers liked the softness of the comfortable foot pocket and the medium-length pliable blade. Most testers liked them for all three strokes and felt that although they did not offer as much power compared to some stiffer medium-bladed fins, they felt good and were effective for most kick-drills. [swimoutlet.com](http://swimoutlet.com)

**Hydro Finz Hydro Training Finz $36**

Testers were skeptical of the HydroFinz’s unusual design and heavy feeling out of the box. Once in the water though, testers fell in love with these fins. They became a natural extension of the foot and were neutrally buoyant, so feet did not sink or rise too high. These fins were supremely comfortable, although the sizes appear to run wide – swimmers with narrow feet didn’t get a tight fit. The HydroFinz have a thick, pliable blade that is much wider than other fins. This did not interfere with close, tight kicking and added some speed. One tester remarked that these were the easiest fins to do flip turns in. Most testers agreed that this fin was perfect for longer sets for strengthening the leg muscles without overtaxing them. [hydro4fins@aol.com](mailto:hydro4fins@aol.com)

**Hydro Finz Hydro Tech II Swim Finz $50**

Hydro Sportz’s T2 won the Australian Design Award, and it’s all-silicone curvy shape and snazzy colors (the Large test pair was silver!) appealed to testers. Beauty aside, these were the brawniest fins tested. The blade, wider than the HydroFinz Training Fin and stiffer, had the testers torpedoing down the pool. Like the HydroFinz, these appeared heavy out of the box but were great in the water. Another tester favorite for flip turns and medium and longer sets where feeling your body speeding through the water was important. [hydro4fins@aol.com](mailto:hydro4fins@aol.com)

**Kiefer Silicone Training Fin $25**

This simple, comfortable fin appealed to testers right away. The entire fin is soft and, if fitted properly, molds to the foot while kicking. The blade gave a nice assist without feeling too long and testers liked them for all three strokes and for short explosive kick sets as well as longer swim sets. [kiefer.com](http://kiefer.com)

**Speedo Optimus Training Fin $40**

Speedo’s well-known Optimus fins were a hit with testers, who reported that these are one of the best all-around fins if you only want to have one pair in your gear bag. The foot pocket is soft and comfortable and the blade the perfect length for getting some speed yet also feeling your kick and keeping a small amplitude. Testers liked these fins for all three strokes. [speedousa.com](http://speedousa.com)
1. **Club Swim Floating Fin** $17
   Testers liked the comfortable fit of Club Swim’s long-bladed fin. The blade is not particularly stiff, so not quite as powerful and fast as the Speedo Trialon, but overall a good, versatile fin that was fun to use, especially during SDKs and longer sets. swimoutlet.com

2. **Speedo Trialon Rubber Fins** $30
   Speedo’s long-bladed fin has stiffer side-rails than the Club Swim fin, which make this a powerful kicking tool for those long sets where sorting out how your body feels in the water while swimming fast is important. The comfy foot pocket didn’t rub anyone the wrong way during testing. speedousa.com

3. **TYR Splitfin Training Fin** $41
   Initially, testers thought this fin would be uncomfortable, as the foot pocket is stiff, not soft and flexible like most of the other fins, however fitted properly, it did not chafe. One tester did comment that the foot pocket did not flex with her feet while kicking. A coach who uses these fins exclusively for his team told us that they are comfortable and quite durable. The split blade made this fin behave more like a medium-bladed fin, which made it better on the walls and an all-around versatile fin. tyr.com

4. **Speedo Speed Training Fin** $40
   Most of our testers were not sure about this fin. Its convex blade made kicking straight very difficult, which may be the point. Testers reported that feet splayed outwards during the downward flutter, forcing them to change their kick to accommodate it. The fin was fairly comfortable. The Speed Training fin did get the thumbs up from several backstrokers, who liked the grip the underside of the fin offered on the downward kick while on their backs. Most testers did not like this fin for SDK or butterfly. speedousa.com

5. **TYR Crossblade Fin** $32
   Similar to the Speedo Optimus, the TYR Crossblade was given high marks as an all-around great fin. The foot pocket, like the TYR Burner, is buttery soft and super comfortable. The blade is just the right length and stiffness to allow for any kick drill or set. tyr.com