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# Training Tools

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## SNORKELS

From complete beginners to seasoned competitors—all swimmers can benefit from training with a snorkel.

For many beginners, coordinating the breath timing in freestyle is the hardest aspect of learning to swim. The snorkel removes that obstacle, allowing swimmers to focus on the kick and arm cycles. Breath timing can be added once a newer swimmer feels comfortable.

Even the most experienced swimmers benefit from using a snorkel regularly during practice, as it allows them to focus on their technique, perform many drills, and work on lung efficiency—especially if they incorporate an optional cap that reduces air intake.

Snorkels are a game-changer for swimmers who've sustained neck or back injuries and find it hard to turn their heads to breathe. A snorkel can be the difference between being able to continue swimming and having to quit the sport.

Some swimmers benefit by using a nose clip with a snorkel, until they get used to exhaling constantly through the nose.

### FINIS GLIDE SNORKEL | FINISINC.COM | \$25

Always innovating, FINIS introduced the first center-mount snorkel in the mid-1990s. The GLIDE is about the same size but a bit lighter than FINIS's modern Swimmer's Snorkel and comes in four fun colors, with matching brackets.

The most notable difference between the two FINIS snorkels is the absence of a purge valve on the GLIDE. Our testers who don't like purge valves (they can get jammed or break, and they collect moisture) loved having their favorite snorkel minus the valve.

The GLIDE is a large-bore snorkel, so it delivers plenty of air. Testers reported that the bracket was secure and comfortable and remained secure during turns and breakouts.

### MP MICHAEL PHELPS FOCUS SWIM SNORKEL | MICHAELPHELPS.COM | \$35

Our testers raved about the MP FOCUS, saying it was easy to clear water out after surfacing from a push-off or turn. This allowed them to focus on swimming, not on continuing to purge water, and made doing drills a cinch.

The triangular shape of the tube, how it's curved, and how it fits into the forehead bracket make this snorkel hydrodynamic, secure, and comfortable. Design-wise, it looks more like a work of art than a piece of gear.

The FOCUS is a large-bore snorkel that performs like a smaller one. It's stable for fast swimming as well as for flip turns and breakouts. Even testers who prefer a small-bore snorkel, such as the ylon-a, liked the feel of this snorkel.

Some testers didn't like the size of the mouthpiece, reporting that it was too large. The mouthpiece seemed to be larger than on other snorkels of a similar size. But other testers found that it fit well because they didn't have to bite down to hold it in place.



## MP MICHAEL PHELPS STRENGTH PADDLE | MICHAELPHELPS.COM | \$17

These paddles may look large and a little space age-y, but our testers enjoyed them.

One of the biggest positives of these paddles was how well they tracked underwater, which stems from the placement of the vents and the overall design of the paddle. One tester noticed an improvement in technique in terms of pulling straight back on freestyle.

One tester noted that these paddles won't help a swimmer go faster just by putting them on, which is part of the design. These paddles are intended to provide resistance and serve as a way for swimmers to build strength and improve technique.

Testers had a variety of opinions regarding the wrist and finger straps. One tester who liked tight-fitting paddles said the finger strap on the regular size was too loose, and another thought it was too tight on the small size.

The number and placement of vents in the paddles should allow swimmers to use a slightly larger paddle than they're used to. The regular size likely works best for the majority of Masters swimmers. The large appears to be best for stronger swimmers, and the small may be better for swimmers who aren't as strong.



Tested  
**FOR** Masters Swimmers  
**BY** Masters Swimmers



## SPEEDO PUSH PLATE | SPEEDOUSA.COM | \$60

The Push Plate is part of the Speedo Fit workout, an in-water cross-training program the company recently launched. The Push Plate is designed for resistance exercises that work arms, abdominals, and obliques. It features multiple handles that allow for a range of exercises underwater, including some users could develop on their own.

Some testers used a kickboard for some underwater exercises done with the Push Plate, but they quickly realized the benefits of the Push Plate. Due to their buoyancy, kickboards tend to launch out of the water and hit fellow exercisers, which isn't nice. The Push Plate, on the other hand, is neutrally buoyant, making it easy to focus on perfect technique while you're building your six-pack, and keep your lanemates safe from flying foam missiles.

Testers found that pools deeper than about 4 feet made it difficult to use the Push Plate for its intended exercises because they couldn't firmly stand or squat on the bottom.



## FINIS DRAG+FLY | FINISINC.COM | \$90

The FINIS Drag+Fly wasn't available in 2011 when we tested parachutes and other forms of resistance training, so our testers were excited to try it. Parachutes help with resistance training, something that allows you to build strength, power, and aerobic endurance.

The Drag+Fly has an advantage over traditional parachutes because it allows you to adjust resistance easily and quickly by moving the zippers along the approximately 2-foot-long sides of the conical chute. The smaller you make the rear opening, the more resistance you encounter.

The towline is plenty long enough. The added feature of a small buoy on the towline keeps it aloft and allows swimmers to maintain their natural kick cycle and alignment. Testers also liked the wide, comfortable belt, with hook and loop closures for a custom fit.