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Open Water Goggles

BY DANIEL PAULLING PHOTOS BY LAURA HAMEL



Finding the right pair of goggles might be the most difficult swimming-related shopping experience. Kickboards and pull buoys only need to provide buoyancy, which makes them somewhat interchangeable. Paddles only help you improve a certain part of your stroke or build strength, which means you can look for something that meets your goal.

But the pair of goggles that works for your lanemate might not fit you for any number of reasons, including uncomfortable eyesockets or nosepiece or a propensity for leaks. (Don't worry: It's because your lanemate has the weird-shaped head, not you.)

Add the variables you need to consider regarding open water swimming to your search for the perfect pair of goggles—how much sun you'll encounter during your swim, what you sight on, what's in the background of what you're sighting on—and you'll get a sense of how difficult buying a pair of open water goggles can be.

Yes, you can use your pool goggles in an open water swim, but many swimmers prefer to use goggles designed for the great wide open. Open water goggles tend to be larger for more comfort and increased field of vision, and they're often constructed of a single lens for each eye, unlike many pool goggles that have sidewall lenses that can block peripheral vision.

With that in mind, *SWIMMER* braved the frigid waters brought on by bomb cyclones and polar vortexes and reviewed some of the most recently released open water goggles. Some swimmers prefer one brand or style no matter what because of how it fits, but each brand has something positive that keeps drawing its customers back.

(Note: Prices for some brands vary based on whether lenses are clear, mirrored, or polarized. You should consider all the conditions of your open water swim, especially how much sun you'll encounter. Darker goggles are better if it'll be a factor.)

AQUA SPHERE KAIMAN EXO AQUASPHERESWIM.COM | \$22-\$32

The Kaiman EXO, the latest model in the Kaiman line of goggles, comes in several sizes with a choice of clear, smoke, and mirrored lenses.

Tester Feedback

- Testers liked the compact size of Kaiman EXO, the flexibility of the nosepiece, and how easy the goggles were to adjust.
- Most testers described these goggles as very comfortable with a lightweight design and good field of vision.



AQUA SPHERE KAYENNE AQUASPHERESWIM.COM | \$28-\$50

The Kayenne comes in several sizes and has choices of clear, color, mirrored, and polarized lenses. It's a bit larger than the Kaiman, with a slightly taller lens shape.

Tester Feedback

- Testers with small faces liked the small-fit version, which has the same flexible nosepiece and great field of vision as the full-sized model.
- Many of our testers have used the Kayenne and continue to enjoy the field of vision, comfort, security of fit, and the range of tints available.



AQUA SPHERE VISTA AQUASPHERESWIM.COM | \$40

The Vista can best be described as a “moggle”—part mask, part goggle—which makes it a great fit for certain swimmers, especially those new to swimming who might have some anxiety about the open water and feel that a larger mask-style goggle offers more security and protection from the elements. These goggles come in two sizes and have a choice of clear, blue, and smoke lenses.

Tester Feedback

- Right away testers noticed the excellent suction produced by the secure fit, which meant no leaks, but it did make it difficult to take off the Vista.
- Testers also liked how easy it was to adjust the straps with the buckle on the side of the goggles, something that comes in handy when trying to adjust fit on the fly.



Tested
FOR Masters Swimmers
BY Masters Swimmers



ROKA R1 ROKA.COM | \$33–\$38

The R1 comes in 12 different colors designed to provide maximum visibility depending on the light and environment in which you're swimming. (Check ROKA's website for a handy tool to see how lenses will work in different conditions.) These goggles come with a soft protective bag.

Tester Feedback

- Testers loved nearly everything about the R1, including how comfortable the goggles are, how good the seal is, the range of vision, and the lack of fogging.
- One tester said she enjoyed the goggles overall, but she had difficulty adjusting the straps.



ROKA X1 ROKA.COM | \$22–\$27

The X1, which is noticeably larger than the R1, comes in 10 different colors for different conditions.

Tester Feedback

- This goggle was a hit with testers seeking supreme comfort.
- Testers loved X1's wide field of vision, which made sighting easier. Several testers felt that the X1's larger profile makes it better for use in practice or very long swims, rather than in races.



SPEEDO COVERT SPEEDOUSA.COM | \$30–\$40

The newly released Covert features a nose piece designed to adjust to your face. These goggles come with four interchangeable nose pieces and a choice of clear, color, and mirrored lenses.

Tester Feedback

- Testers described the goggles as sturdy and lightweight and said the four nose piece options should help the goggles fit most people's faces.
- One tester tried tightening the straps on a new pair, only to have the straps break. He said the goggles fared well otherwise.



SPEEDO MDR 2.4 SPEEDOUSA.COM | \$25–\$30

The MDR 2.4 features lenses designed to reduce glare, enhance clarity, and improve depth perception. These goggles come in several sizes and choices of color and mirrored lenses.

Tester Feedback

- Testers raved about the range of vision afforded by the goggles, describing it as "stunning." Several remarked that they didn't have to sight as often using these goggles.
- Other testers liked how easy it was to adjust the strap and how comfortable the nose piece was.