

Buying Goggles

Taken from the book, [The Parents Guide to Swimming](#) by Alan W. Arata, Ph.D. © 2003

Buying a pair of goggles is not as simple as it might seem. There are many different kinds of goggles on the market. The differences include size and shape, lens color, fog-free or anti-fog coatings, nosepieces, and the type of cushioning they use or don't use against the eyes.

Having uncomfortable goggles during practice can make practice miserable and having goggles that fit well and stay on during a race is imperative for good swims. Just as with suits, swimmers should have more than one pair of goggles. Generally, swimmers can find productive use for as many as four different pairs. Swimmers should not use the same pair of goggles for practice as they do in a meet. There are a number of reasons for this. The first is because goggles wear out and lose their seal and swimmers are more likely to feel the effects of this when they dive off the block at a meet. Also, swimmers should wear their meet goggles tighter than their practice goggles. Young and old swimmers alike are prone to forget to tighten their goggles before their first race and this can lead to goggles in the mouth or around the neck shortly after the dive. Another reason is the shading factor. Swimmers who practice or swim meets outside (especially if they swim backstroke) will want goggles that provide some UV protection. Check the goggle package to make sure it says it provides UV protection. (Don't assume because it is darker in color that it provides UV protection.)

Before anti-fog coatings came to be, the first thing swimmers did when they got to the pool was to lick or spit into their goggles. Spit provided some natural anti-fogging. Anti-fog goggles have put an end to spit for many. I highly recommend them.

Regarding cushioning against the eyes, Swedish goggles don't have any. Many top-notch swimmers wear Swedish goggles. This doesn't mean they are better than other kinds of goggles. But a warning to those parents whose children switch to Swedish goggles. Because these goggles don't have cushioning gaskets, they can leave sore spots around the eyes for the first week or so.

Some goggles have gaskets that are hypoallergenic, which prevent eye or skin irritation from goggles for many swimmers. Silicone gaskets and the no gasket Swedish goggles are hypoallergenic. Some goggles have foam gaskets and are not hypoallergenic. I do not recommend foam personally, though many people find them perfectly acceptable.

A good bet for young swimmers is a silicone-plastic gasket goggle with anti-fog lenses. If the child swims outside, look for one tinted "smoke" with UV protection. If the child swims inside, clear or yellow are good choices.

Here is one last thing about goggles for swimmers without 20/20 vision. There *are* prescription goggles. This doesn't help swimmers see underwater as much as it helps them see the pace clock, the coach's face, etc. If your child's vision is worse than 20/200, you might want to look into prescription goggles. If your child wears contact lenses, they can usually wear them *under* normal goggles. If they race in the lenses, it is wise to have them wear the disposable kind. Otherwise goggles coming off during a start could be costly for both swimmer *and* parent.

For more information on swimming equipment and other swim parent related issues, visit <http://www.swimmingparent.com>