

COMPETITIVE SWIMWEAR SIZING GUIDE

Selecting the correct swimsuit size can be challenging, especially for athletes new to competitive swimming. Sizing swimwear using only waist and chest measurements will get you headed in the right direction, but this is only the beginning.

Swimwear Sizing Challenges

Generally speaking, swimsuit sizing charts provide excellent guidance. Nonetheless, two challenges remain regardless of size chart accuracy :

1. Swimmers may be unfamiliar with how to take measurements.
2. Athletes may be unfamiliar with what a good fit feels like.

How To Take Proper Swimsuit Measurements

Taking fresh measurements and matching them to a swimsuit size chart is the best approach for a great fit.

Here are some guidelines for making proper swimwear measurements:

- Don't take your own measurement; ask a helper to measure you
- Take measurements on bare skin!
 - Bonus Tip: If this isn't possible, adjust measurements to remove measuring overstatements caused by bulk from clothing.
- Use a soft tape to measure.
 - Bonus Tip: The tape should lay flat, without indenting the skin. Overtightening distorts measurements.
 - Extra Bonus Tip: if a soft tape measure isn't an option, use *non-stretching* string and carefully match the string length to a reliable measurement tool.

Warning for Guys: Gentlemen, your measurements are less challenging, but be careful! Remember:

- Measure 1 inch below your navel to determine your waist size. Generally speaking, waist measurement equates to the suit size.
- Although pants size is a starting point, do not use it as shortcut for determining suit size! Pants size is not an accurate equivalent, because it is often chosen by the look or style of the fit, instead of an actual measurement. Save yourself some frustration and measure your waist.

Chest & Hips – Special Swimsuit Sizing Situations

All bodies are different, and women with greater variations between chest and hip size may want to consider downsizing or upsizing as follows:

- Small Chest/Large Hips: Consider **upsizing** above chest measurement guidelines.
- Big Chest/Small Hips: Consider **downsizing** below chest measurement guidelines.

What NOT to Do:

- *Don't reference a size from an old swimsuit!*
 - Old suits can be stretched out and are not good indicators of your current sizing needs.
 - Department store swimsuits and fashion swimwear brands are not designed or cut to fit like fitness and competitive swimwear.
 - Sizes can vary across brands and suit cuts can change over time.
- *Don't let someone else order for you!* The fit of your swimwear is a personal preference -- don't let someone else's speculation about sizing get in the way of basic swimwear sizing strategies and/or your personal preference/goals.

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What Does a Great Swimsuit Fit Feel Like?

For best results and to maximize the life of your swimwear, it is recommended that swimsuits provide a tight and supportive fit.

For swimmers that are skeptical about the benefits of tight-fitting swimwear, we offer the following encouragement:

- The suit you are trying on/wearing for the first time, is as tight as it's ever going to be and will loosen over time.
- The feel of the suit will change once you are in the water.
- Bag = drag! Any bag or wrinkles will cause unwanted drag during your race or workout.
- Swimsuits are more than a means to cover your skin. Like running shoes, competitive swimwear is a piece of sports equipment. And like shoes that are too large, wearing an oversized swimsuit will cause discomfort and hinder athletic performance.

Fit Differences Between Nylon (Lycra) vs. Polyester Swimwear Fabric

- Polyester material has a tighter, more compressive fit and wears longer. This does not mean you should upsize for poly, but swimmers should *consider sizing up if on the cusp of a larger size*.
- Nylon suits:
 - Have more stretch once worn in the water but should still have a snug and supportive fit.
 - May need to be replaced semi-annually, or more often.

Jammers

Here are some extra jammer fitting tips to help you determine what a great fit feels and looks like:

- Jammers should be sufficiently snug at both waist and knee (i.e., putting two fingers between the suit fabric and your skin should be somewhat challenging).
- Waist fit rules! Don't worry about the leg cuff height, as this will vary for different body types.
- Remember, your waist measurement *generally* equates to the suit size.

How Can I Tell If My Swimsuit is Too Big or Small?

Big – a swimsuit is too big if:

- Suit material is wrinkled or bagging.
- For women, swimwear is too big if
 - Scooping at neck occurs when holding a “streamline” position.
 - Suit straps can be raised to ear height.
 - The open part of the suit back (below the intersection of the straps) lifts off the skin.

Small – a swimsuit is too small if:

- It restricts or limits athletic range of motion.
- Ouch -- it hurts!
- It limits your circulatory system, blood flow and or breathing!
- It causes excessive “muffin topping” anywhere on the body.
- Your chest is spilling out of the suit.

Conclusion

When all is said and done, what is being described above as a great fit for a competitive suit is based on the best knowledge we have on suit fabric, suit cut, and body types. Size charts are geared for a *competitive fit*. We realize every swimmer has different levels of comfort and different goals (and younger swimmers may not yet be able to tolerate such a form-fitting suit; we certainly don't want the suit to be a distraction or a reason to give up on the sport!). Ultimately, each swimmer must decide on the best fitting suit for them based on individual goals and preferences!