

Choosing Fins For Lifesaving

A number of competitive lifesaving events involve the use of fins (including the [100m Manikin Carry with Fins](#), [100m Manikin Tow with Fins](#), [4 x 50m Medley Relay](#) and the [200m Super Lifesaver](#)). This guide will help you select an appropriate pair of fins.

Fibre Glass Fins

Elite competitors use fibreglass fins like the ones pictured below. These have a large surface area and are comparatively stiff – this makes them very powerful. Fibre glass fins are expensive (£90-£200/pair) and easily damaged. It requires a lot of specialist training to build up the muscles required to get the most out of a pair of fibreglass fins.



Young competitors should not use fibreglass fins because their bodies are still growing and using fibreglass fins subjects your body to a lot of stress. Young competitors or casual competitors should use rubber “scuba” style fins. By selecting fins carefully it is possible to get excellent performance out of a pair of rubber fins.

Things to Look For When Buying Rubber Fins...

There are many different styles of rubber fins available. Some are designed for scuba diving, some are designed to help you perfect your leg kick when used during swim training, others are better for specific sports like free-diving, underwater hockey and lifesaving. Here are some things to look for when buying fins for lifesaving...

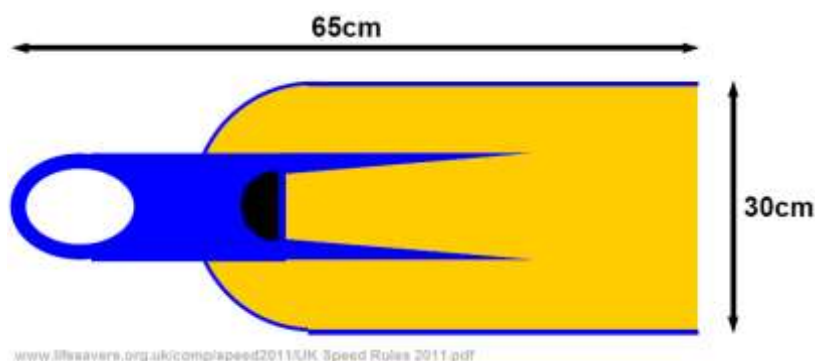


Full Foot Fins You want fins with a foot pocket (often known as “full foot fins”) which are designed to be worn directly on your foot without boots.

Snug Fit Your fins must fit tightly – there is nothing worse than sprinting off down the pool and realising you’ve left a fin behind...! Although a snug fit is important, your fins should feel comfortable so you don’t get blisters from using them for a long time. Ideally you should try your fins on before buying them, but that is not always possible when buying over the internet.

Rigid Fins must be relatively rigid in order to transmit maximum power from your body to the water: in general, the stiffer the fin the better. Some fins (like the Mares Avanti Quattro Power Fins pictured on the first page of this guide) have rubber vanes running along each edge of the fin which helps keep them rigid throughout their life.

Large Surface Area In general, the larger the surface area (or “blade”) of the fin, the more powerful the fins will be. According to the RLSS rules, a fin must have a maximum overall length of 65cm (including the ‘shoe’ or ankle strap) and a maximum of 30cms at the widest point of the blade (See below).



Pool training fins (which are used to help swimmers develop correct kicking technique) or stubby body-boarding fins are not big enough or powerful enough for lifesaving sport.

Blade Shape Single blade designs are best. Avoid “innovative” split blade designs, elaborate shaped blades, or anything with holes cut out of the blade. These fins are designed to reduce fatigue when scuba diving for long periods – they are not appropriate for fast sprint swimming.



Weight Clearly you want your fins to be as light as possible, but there is a trade-off to be made here. Ultra lightweight fins may be flimsy and lack rigidity. As a general guide, you should avoid fins that weigh more than 1.4kgs per pair.

Where To Buy

Most sports shops will stock some fins, but for the best choice you need to go to a dive shop (though they can be more expensive). If you live in Bristol, I have found the team at subaquaholics in St Annes (www.subaquaholics.co.uk) to be friendly and helpful. I’ve also had some excellent customer service from the team at www.watersportwarehouse.co.uk.

I use a pair of Mares Avanti Quattro fins (£45 from www.watersportwarehouse.co.uk) which I originally bought for playing underwater hockey. They are a touch on the heavy side, but they have lasted for 3 years now and they are still going strong!

As always, if you need more advice don’t be afraid to ask an experienced lifesaving competitor in your club

Care of Your Fins

Always rinse your fins in fresh water and dry them thoroughly after use. Don’t wear your fins on poolside – walking around on land in your fins is the fastest way to break them! If you do need to use a lubricant to get your fins on quickly, ensure you use a water-based lubricant not an oil-based lubricant which will damage the rubber.