

Lifesavers and Parents,

Why read this?

Because we would like you to have the coaching team's advice prior to you buying a pair of fins.



Why do you need expensive fiberglass fins for competitive lifesaving?

Put simply, because they are used in 4 of the 11 speed lifesaving pool events. "Proper" lifesaving fins, sometimes known as rescue fins are significantly more efficient and better suited to swimming fast than basic rubber fins (e.g. those used by younger swimmers, or competitive swimmers as training aids).

Are they for every swimmer?

No. Swimmers need to have a certain swimming ability, fitness and strength in order for them to work properly. You should talk to the coaching team about their suitability before investing.

Can I just go and buy a pair?

Yes and No. These fins are not made in the UK, however you can now buy them online from UK companies in pounds. However you need to understand what you should be ordering to make sure that you get something suitable. Please read on.

Are all fins the same?

No. Most are traditional flat fins, however some very experienced swimmers use fins that have both increased rubber stiffening, and more advanced, tighter and angled footpockets to increase the efficiency that power can be put into the water. These are known as 'Rocket' fins and are considerably more expensive. We would only recommend these once swimmers have stopped growing, and have developed good technique and strength with traditional fins.

Are they all the same make?

No. Traditionally the main make used was Leader fins. However Waterway fins are now also available. See the following UK websites, others are also around if you search for them:

Leader: http://www.fins4u.com/rescue_and_lifesaving_fins_C135

Waterway: <http://www.childsplaysurf.co.uk/> Or:<https://www.rlssdirect.co.uk/> Or:<http://www.freedivershop.com/>

A lot of the decisions to make when buying fins are personal preference. However our experience is that the Waterway fins are a better long term option than the Leader fins. They are slightly more expensive. However they are a better and more consistent build quality, the footpockets are better and they seem to last longer.

What else do I need to know to order?

Blade stiffness, blade width, footpocket size & extras. In a bit more detail:

Blade stiffness:	<i>Our suggestion:</i>
How hard is it to bend the fin. Measured in V.Soft, Soft, Medium, M. Hard, Hard. It is really important that the fin flexes in the water to turn the up and down movement of the swimmers legs into forward propulsion. Too much flex or too little flex and there will be less propulsion. A bit like finding the right gear on a bicycle, the selection of stiffness is personal, however generally smaller swimmers need softer fins and bigger and more physically strong swimmers need slightly harder fins. Most use soft or medium.	

(Note that we are comparing size and strength of all swimmers, not the swimmers age or where they swim. Some of the strength consideration is strength as a swimmer; this includes technical ability and the ability to hold position, but most is physical strength which includes core strength).

Blade width:	<i>Our suggestion:</i>
The maximum width allowed in the rules is 30cm, however this is far too wide. In practice 23 or 25cm are used. Again smaller swimmers need narrower fins, both so that their legs are not too far apart and to reduce the surface area to make it easier to kick (lower bike gear), whereas larger swimmers will want the larger surface area of a 25cm. For the small 12-14's 21cm are available either from freedivershop or by bespoke order with the other companies.	

Footpocket size:	<i>Our suggestion:</i>
Based on your shoe size, however rather unhelpfully, the sizing is not measured in shoe sizes; it is small, medium, large, XL etc. You need to try some others on to find out what you want. They need to be snug. A lot of swimmers pick a size that can be used without fin socks in training and so are a bit looser, but with fin socks in a race to make them tight. Fins that are loose move and twist on your feet and you lose a lot of power.	

Extras:	<i>Our suggestion:</i>
Fin socks if required. And you will need a fin bag, unless Granny is going to make you one!	

Why it is important to get this right?

It's like finding the right gear on a bicycle. You need to get what suits you, your ability and strengths.

What do I need to know once I own a pair of Fins?

Look after them. Don't leave wet in the bag; dry them after each session. Repair the edge protection regularly. And they will last.