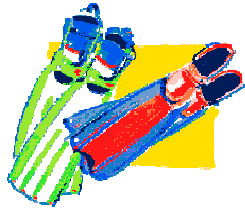




Kit Cat Tips on a catalogue of kit

FINS



Fins (otherwise as "flippers" if you want a beer/chocolate fine) help propel you through the water with as little effort as possible, turning leg muscle power into forward thrust by pushing water out behind you.

There was a time when all fins were made from heavy black rubber. You put them on your feet and forgot about them. Nowadays with lightweight thermoplastics, you find bright colours, more interesting designs - and a greater choice.

There are swim fins shaped like a dolphin's tail, swim fins with channels like the webbed feet of a duck, split swim fins, curved swim fins, stiff swim fins and flexible swim fins. Each will perform differently on different people, so you want to choose the right scuba diving fin for you. Choose swim fins that are comfortable to wear, will allow you to kick/swim for long periods of time without cramping your legs and which don't pinch your toes or heels.

Most fins come in slipper (Full foot) or strap-fin (adjustable) versions. Slipper fins are useful for those who dive barefooted, such as snorkellers and divers in hot countries, and for pool training. Strap-fins are used with boots, and suit those who use drysuits or who tend to dive off boats and rocky shorelines - or even seaside carparks - where they are likely to knock their feet.



Slipper



Strap

Fins for divers tend to be more compact than fins designed specifically for snorkellers, Divers tend to fin for much longer periods of time over greater distances.

Common Mistakes & Misconceptions

The bigger the better - Not true. Select a fin style and size that suit your body type and leg power. Large fins on small legs will cause overexertion and can lead to leg cramps or ankle injuries. Small fins on large legs will cause fatigue due to over-kicking with not enough forward propulsion. If the fins are too big and you are little...you'll get knackered. If the fins are too small and you are big...you'll get knackered.

The more expensive the better - Not necessarily. True, the more expensive fins tend to have features designed to for more comfort and/or more efficiency, but not all do. Like most things, it comes down to what is most comfortable for you and fits the best.

What to look for

- Comfort and fit – Your foot should fit inside without there being room to flop around, but also without being tight. If it is an open heel fin, the sole of the pocket should come as far to the back edge of your heel as possible to provide maximum leverage. (you will need your boots on), Hold your foot off the ground when testing for comfort and fit - Most fins have the blade angled away from the foot pocket. If you try standing up in them, the sides of the pocket can tend to bulge inwards onto your foot giving them a false feeling of discomfort.

Kit List:-

Mask ✓

Snorkel

Fins ✓

BCD

Regulator

Exposure Suits

- Use - Decide how often you will be using them and for what. Snorkelling fins will tend to be lighter, with a smaller blade; free-diving fins are usually very long; fins for boogie boarding or body surfing will be short; fins for scuba diving come in all shapes and styles.
- Blade features - There are great innovations constantly being developed to get the maximum thrust from a fin with the least effort. Channels along the length of the fin blade prevent water spilling off the sides of the blade, displacing more water and therefore improving efficiency. Some of the new ones include a "webbed" style which helps scoop the water and thrust it out the back. With Split blade the idea is to get them to work like a fish's tail. (See more below).
- Let your fins do the work - Learn to kick at the pace and in the style the fins were designed for to ensure you get maximal propulsion with minimal effort.

Split Fins - can be up to 40% more efficient than traditional bladed fins This is achieved by reducing water resistance and thus finning effort. They allow the fin to act like a planes wing, generating more thrust. The blades of split fins tend to be made of much softer material than traditional fins giving the fins a floppy feel on land but when under the surface this causes the water to spin in a vortex action on the downward stroke of finning action propelling the diver or snorkeller forward.



Force Fins – breaking the conventional mould as far as shape is concerned – Duck feet!

Features a toes-free foot pocket that reduces cramping and leverages power from your strongest kicking muscles, for a most efficient kick. Easy to pack. Small, effective blade is the perfect size for turbulent free and fast movement of water. Easy to manoeuvre. Independently moving wing tips that let you fine tune your position with small foot and leg movements. Reduce the chance of kicking delicate marine life.



Foil Force combine both "split fin" and the "duck foot" concept. Vortex Generators keep water fast-flowing to where it meets a pair of flapping foils that accelerate the water through the split behind you.

Colours - Fins are available in a variety of colours. Its a good idea to go for bright ones so that you can be seen easily underwater and you can match your fins with the rest of your gear if required. Contrary to popular myths, there are no colours that are guaranteed to attract sealife species!

Prices can vary from as little as £11 to a surprising £200 a pair, and you can still get the old black rubber fins if you prefer. Check out your friendly local dive gear shop

(See <http://www.divernet.com/gear/fins999/fins999.htm> for some reviews)