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What Kind of Headphones Do You Need?

AUGUST 29, 2022



Whether you're on the run and want to take your tunes with you, or you want to block the noise of the outside world and focus all your attention on your favorite podcast, having the right headphones is key.

Before you break out your credit card and buy the first pair you see, it's important to determine which option is best for you—and to do that, you need to figure out how you want to use them, and how they might fit into your lifestyle.

In this article, we've broken down some of the more common headphone-based activities to help you decide.

Headphones for runners

Are over-ear headphones a preferred option compared to in-ear headphones? It tends to boil down to your preferences, but this is one instance where over-ear headphones aren't a great choice in my opinion. Running with over-ear headphones can be clunky, which is why so many people favor in-ear headphones—they tend to be more lightweight. You'll want to choose a pair that includes rubber or foam tips of different sizes, so you can ensure they fit your ears properly and don't move around or fall out when you run.

Some will feature some level of water resistance or sweat resistant material, but double-check to make sure the ones you want include this. There's nothing worse than spending money on headphones to have them die out because they drowned in sweat. Some have noise cancelling capabilities, which can be great on the treadmill. But if you run outdoors, you'll likely want a pair that still let the outside world in, so you can stay aware of your surroundings.

Headphones for gamers

Chances are you're going to want to get over-ear headphones to get the full immersive experience of game play. But if you're into multiplayer games or live-streaming your gameplay, you'll definitely also want [a pair with a built-in microphone](#). Some have controls for volume and muting, while others can connect to your phone, so you can

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take calls while you're killing zombies.

Headphones for music fans

Here's where [over-ear headphones](#) can make a big difference. Because they cup your ear, they allow for some space between the speaker and your ear, and in some cases help seal out any sound that's not coming from your headphones. This allows them to deliver a truly immersive listening experience without being overwhelming to the senses.

The drawback to these kinds of headphones is they can be a bit bigger—and therefore, heavier—than many other forms of headphones. They can also make your ears sweaty. Just make sure you get a pair that has good padding on the ear cups and the headband, so that they're comfortable to wear for long periods of time.

Headphones for talkers

If you're one of the rare people who still uses your phone for talking, you probably won't need overly robust headphones. [A decent pair of ear buds](#)—either wired or wireless—will give you all the audio support you need to get your gab on. Double check for noise canceling capabilities and foam or rubber tips that can be sized to fit your ear canal for a secure fit.

Headphones for commuters

So, you want to tune out the outside world and listen to your podcast while you're on the subway heading to work. Ear buds may do the trick, especially if they have noise canceling capabilities. But if you really want to disassociate from your commute, you'll probably want to look into [on-ear headphones](#) or over-ear headphones.

On-ear headphones are the less intense version of over-ear headphones, in that they sit on top of your ears like earmuffs rather than encircling your ears. They tend to be smaller than over-ear headphones, and generally won't make your ears sweaty or feel too heavy on your head after a while. The drawback is they might not seal in the sound quite as well, so your fellow commuters may hear your podcast, or you may hear them (though less so than with non-noise cancelling headphones). If you really want to go all in on shutting as much outside sound as possible, [over-ear headphones](#) may be the way to go. Just make sure to pay attention to your surroundings.

Think you know what you want now? [It's time to shop!](#) Then, enjoy the fruits of your headphone labor as you pop them on and tune into whatever you love to listen to most.

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