

# Sound investments

The right pair of 'phones can help you fine-tune your performance – in the gym, on the road and in the water. Here's our sweat-tested edit

There's little that strikes fear in a fitness lover's heart like arriving at the gym without headphones. But it's not just that we're all afraid to be alone with our thoughts. Multiple studies have found positive correlations between music and exercise performance, with ergonomic benefits noted across the full spectrum of endurance, sprint and strength work, as published in the *Journal Of Functional Morphology And Kinesiology*.

That said, uncomfy buds, confusing controls and tinny sound can have the opposite impact on your workout – so it pays to do your research.

Throughout the year, our *Men's Health* writers are busy testing the best new 'phones on the market, putting them through their paces in the weights room, on long runs and in the pool. From battery life to noise cancellation, touch controls to sweatproofing and durability, our editors ensure only those that make the cut feature on the pages of our magazine.

Here are five we consider worthy of your playlists. Get amped.

## Best for the gym

**Powerbeats Pro 2, £249**

**The good stuff:** If you're a fan of hook-style earbuds, these might be the best on the market: light, comfortable and secure, even when repping out burpees. You can switch between active noise-cancellation and transparency mode, depending on whether you want to block out or tune in to your environment. A max battery life of 45 hours plus handy charging case make these a strong purchase.

**Any downsides?** While the Pro 2 also features heart rate-monitoring sensors – a first for Beats and Apple – this can be a bit fiddly to use. The price point is on the high side, but for good reason.

THE EDIT

## Best for android users

**Samsung Galaxy Buds3 Pro, £219**

**The good stuff:** A great choice for those in search of gym-friendly buds that don't compromise on day-to-day functionality. The Galaxy Buds3 Pro boast powerful noise cancellation, top-quality sound, up to 26 hours of battery life and exclusive features for Galaxy smartphone owners, including 24-bit audio streaming and location tracking. A secure in-ear fit makes them comfy enough for long runs.

**Any downsides?** Not compatible with iOS devices. Music is controlled by pinching or swiping the stems of the buds, which requires a little more focus than button controls.

## Best for runners

**Huawei FreeArc, £99.99**

**The good stuff:** 'Open-ear' is no longer synonymous with sub-par sound quality. Huawei's buds deliver an impressive audio experience, while keeping you plugged into the world around you – a good choice for runners who don't fancy getting hit by a cyclist. Secure and sweatproof with a max 28-hour battery life, they utilise smart ambient noise reduction tech when taking calls on the move.

**Any downsides?** The swipe, double-tap and triple-tap touch controls require a bit of practice.

## Best for swimmers

**Shokz OpenSwim Pro, £143**

**The good stuff:** Not only good for your underwater activities, these are also Shokz's most impressive open-ear headphones to date. A waterproof rating of IP68 means they'll withstand depths of 2m, even in salt water. Plus, with 4GB of storage, you can load your playlists to the headphones, allowing you to go phone-free at the pool. Sound quality is decent, too.

**Any downsides?** A charging case isn't provided, though battery life stretches to nine hours. As with most open-ear headphones, wearing on-land with glasses is tricky.

## Best over-ear

**Bose QuietComfort Ultra, £329.95**

**The good stuff:** The sound can't be faulted. Playback is crisp and clear, while the headphones even scan the shape of your ear canals to personalise sound and temper any distortion in your environment. The noise cancellation is peerless, too. On-headphone controls mean if you do want to chat, you can quickly switch to 'aware' mode, which lets the outside world in.

**Any downsides?** They're not cheap. That said, Bose products are built to last. As they're not water-resistant, they're better suited to weight training than sweaty endeavours.

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