

Sewing for Swimming

FACT SHEET – Choosing the right elastic for your swimming cozzie



Elastic is a vital component of a swimming cozzie. It provides shaping and holds the garment in place against your body whilst allowing freedom of movement. The elastic you use in your garment has to stand being in wet, salty, chlorinated and sunny conditions. A standard polyester elastic will deteriorate quickly!

There are different ways elastic are made; braided, knitted, woven and extruded.

Braided



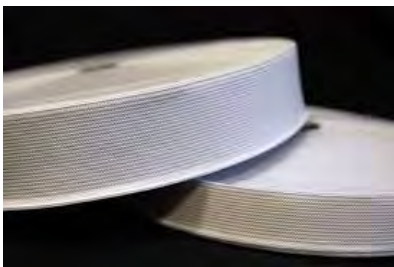
Braided elastic is known for its parallel lines and ribs running the length of the elastic. When you stretch braided elastic it narrows and rolls in on itself. When you sew over braided elastic it will lose some of its stretch and return so it's not suitable for swimwear. Best used in a casing where it is threaded through rather than sewn onto fabric. (A casing is a tube of fabric that the elastic travels through – like on an elasticated skirt. You can't see the elastic as it's inside the waistband 'casing').

Knitted



Knit elastics are made by knitting fibres together. It won't narrow when stretched and is very stable so can be stitched directly onto a fabric.

Woven



Woven elastic or no-roll elastic is stronger than knitted and braided elastics and suitable for medium to heavyweight fabrics. It doesn't narrow when stretched and is excellent for waistbands.

Extruded



Rubber or clear elastic is made by forcing liquid rubber through a machine that re-arranges the molecules into long lines with microscopic links between them. Very stretchy with good return and less bulky than braided elastics with a smooth finish.

Elastics for swimwear

Cotton swimwear elastic



Made up of a mixture of cotton and rubber. It is salt and chlorine resistant. It comes in a variety of widths. Some manufacturers will sell a general 'swimwear' elastic so check the fibres to find out what you are buying.

Rubber elastic



A little more tricky to work with than cotton elastic, rubber can be wiggly BUT it gives a flatter finish (less bulky than cotton elastic). It's most commonly found in 1/4" (6 mm) and 3/8" (1 cm) widths and is available in off-white and grey/black.

Clear elastic



A good alternative to those with rubber allergies. It's made from latex-free polyurethane. This type of elastic grips the skin and provides great stretch and return. It also has the advantage of being transparent so can be used for 'invisible' straps or on translucent panels or lace/lightweight sections of a garment.

Plush elastic



Sometimes described as plush waistband elastic/bra band elastic or felt back elastic. It's elastic one side and has a soft, velvety feel on the other – great next to the skin. This elastic comes in a wide variety of widths and colours. It's excellent for providing internal support for 'bust panels' and for comfortable waistbands on tankini bottoms and shorts. It is more perishable than the rubber based elastics though.