

Goggle smarts

This is a story from a little while back... We had a nasty shock the other day: we walked past a clobber's swim bag, and in the bottom of the bag, face down, loose, unprotected, just kicking around the bottom of a grotty, greasy, sandy swim bag – clearly, a boofhead's swim bag – were his goggles.

Another story: we walked into the change room after our customary early morning swim, the last in as usual, and we spotted, on the sandy, concrete floor – a floor exposed to the elements because the change area had no roof – a pile of wet cossies, and next to it, on the sandy floor, the owner's goggles.

And another: a friend, a top-ranking international swimmer at the time, showed us their goggles. They were doing multi-squads a week, multi-kms at a time. Fave distance was 26km-plus. So you'd think they'd know better. Their goggles were lined with mould, all around the inner lenses and the silicone seals. How they swim in them, we will never know. But their practice was, after use, they would just throw them into their swim bags... till next time. Good grief! That's unsanitary.

These are our worst nightmares. Not only were these swimmers disrespecting their goggles but, in the first instance, they were goggles we'd given him, as a present. Even worse: they were *View Fully Sicks*, our fave gog before *View Swipes* came along!

In the second and third cases, the gogs were owned by good friends who really should have known better. Sure, the shelf space is limited in change areas – very soon, this one will be knocked down and replaced with, we hope, a more utilitarian version – but gogs aren't cossies, or thongs (the footwear type – none of us wear 'thongs') – or even swim caps. They were goggles, the most personal item a swimmer possesses, more precious than cossies, or caps, or ... well, anything (since these are about the only possessions of an ocean swimmer, which is part of the beauty of ocean swimming). (Some punters use fins, but that's a matter for them.)

Every time we sell a pair of goggles in person, we lecture the buyer... most of the time... on looking after them. It's not just a matter of keeping them clean. There's also a need to keep them in good running order, the anti-fog quality of the inner lens continuing to work and providing you with clear vision. One thing is guaranteed to destroy your vision: allowing your goggles to become dirty, greasy, and scratched.

But this is just the main issue we see with the practice of swim goggling. The other is strap tightness. More below...

Our gratuitous advice...

Goggles are the most personal item of your swim gear. More personal than your cossies. They deserve respect and care. You should keep your goggles in their case when not in use. If you leave them bashing around in your swim bag, they'll be scratched and become covered in dust and grease. If you drop them on the floor, they'll gather sand, other dirt, grease from feet (maybe even tinea), mould, who knows what.

People's eyes all are different. One model may fit one mug, but be entirely unsuitable to another, irrespective of cost or snazzy colour scheme around the lenses. When you find a model that suits you, you must look after them. Keep them clean; protect them. If you don't keep them clean, sand-free, then no amount of cost, or colour, or pre-swim rituals will make them work for you when you swim.

Respect your goggles.

Before you swim

People have different tricks for keeping their goggles clear when they swim. In the olden days, believe it or not, a standard trick was to soap up the inner lenses. How that worked, we can only guess. It must have assumed absolutely no water leaks. Others used toothpaste, and plenty of divers still do. Toothpaste is abrasive, and it must score the inner lenses and wear away any anti-fog coating. Others swear by baby shampoo, perhaps because baby shampoo is formulated not to sting baby's eyes in the bath. Or rubber ducky's.

Now, this is assuming your goggles are clear and clean...

Spit - When you are dry, and when your goggles are dry – this means, before you enter the water, and before your goggles are wet – spit on the inside of the lenses (just saliva, if you don't mind – try to keep the goobies out) – then wash that around the inside of the lens, ever so lightly with your finger tip. Then rinse the goggles in the water. It's important: spit before you get wet and before the goggles are wet. We don't know why; we do know that water in the mouth changes the consistency of spit. This works better for some than for others. We figure we must have high-quality spit; the viscosity of ours appears to be perfect. (Mind you, this must be affected by body hydration.) But if our gogs are clean, then our spit works just fine.

Goo – Different makers offer their own anti-fog formula. But be careful: some brands of anti-fog have been known to send swimmers to hospital when it's burnt their eyes. Maybe they either didn't rinse them after application, or they didn't rinse them enough. Or maybe that brand of goo was rubbish. When we need to, we use [View Anti-Fog](#) (which oceanswimsafaris.com sells). We call it 'goggle goo'.

All goggles lose their anti-fog coating over time depending upon usage and care. Anti-fog can work even on old, scratched goggles if they are clean.

Put a drop on the inside surface of each lens of clean goggles (no sand or sunscreen or dried salt or grease), and work it around gently with your pointer finger or the applicator. Remember, if you use the applicator (the sponge on the tip of the goo bottle) and there is a grain of sand, you won't feel it, resulting in scratching. With your finger, you will feel foreign particles. The other issue with using the applicator is that you could continue, inadvertently, to dispense the goo, resulting in using far more goo than you need. This would be wasteful and you'd end up using so much goo that it's then hard to move to the next step...

Then, either dry the lenses with a clean, dry soft cloth after a minute (eg the inside of a clean T-shirt) or you can rinse lightly in water (just enough to remove any excess - the aim is to leave a film but not so much you can detect it when looking through the lens). We rinse in the water in which we are about to swim, but make sure the water is clean, clear, and sand free (be careful of white water on the edge – it's always full of turbulent grains of sand).

After you swim...

Wrap your goggles in your towel or wet bag or something similar. When you get home, rinse them in fresh water (as you should your cossies and cap); leave them to air dry; then store them in their case. Every now and again, wash gently with detergent, then rinse and leave to air dry before storing in the case. (It shouldn't need to be said: you must keep your case clean, too.)

We are reminded of the line used by a chap we met in Hawai'i who was running a Maui Jim stand on the beachfront on, er... Maui. We gave him our Maui Jim's to check. He cleaned them for us, and handed them back saying, 'Remember, when they're not on your face, they're in the case'. And rightly so. Ditto for gogs.

Swipes

We don't have nearly as much need for goo since the release of View's Swipe goggles. This sounds like a sales push, but it's actually true; we've proven it to ourselves. The Swipe technology is all about the anti-fog lens coating on the inside of the lenses of Swipe model goggles. The spiel is that it lasts ten times longer than conventional 'anti-fog' coatings. And it does. We customarily use a new pair of Swipe goggles 50-plus times before we need to do anything to them prior to swimming, and they remain fog-free. We simply put them on, on the water's edge, clean and dry. (This assumes you keep them clean and in good order.)

After 50-odd uses, they may fog a little after the first 100 metres or so, in which case rinse them in the water and rub your finger gently around the inside of the lenses. This activates the Swipe coating, and you should be right from then on.

After many uses, you will find that the fogging may occur more readily. In this case, if it becomes an issue for you, when you rinse them post-swim, wash them gently in warm water using dishwashing detergent. Don't go overboard with it. All treatment must be gentle to protect the lenses. After that, they should return pretty well to normal. You should need to wash with dishwashing detergent only occasionally.

Clean

We have told this story so many times that we almost bore ourselves with it: a couple of years back, a lady approached us at a swim in Sydney and said she thought it was time for a new pair of goggles. We asked her what she was wearing then. Turns out, she had a pair of original View Selenes, and she'd been using them 'for years'. How many years? She couldn't remember. After a bit, she pointed at her husband, standing nearby, and she said, 'Longer than I've had him'. We said, 'How long have you been married?' She said, 'Nine years'. The key was, she'd kept her goggles clean.

A tight strap is a silly strap

The other issue with goggle performance is how tight you make your strap. This is an issue affecting goggle leaks. Some – 'many', as Newman would define when questioned by Jerry – people think the tighter the strap, the more water-tight the gog. Put another way, this thinking goes, the seal is strengthened by the tightness of the strap.

We'll deal first with corollary problems with taut straps: they'll give you headaches because they'll affect blood flow to your head. This also affects your ability to think, although that's clearly affected already if you think a tight strap is the way to go. They're distracting because they're uncomfortable, maybe even painful. Secondly, the tighter the strap, the more pressure it places on the seal, stretching the seal and making leaks more likely.

A tight strap is a silly strap.

Other than if the goggle is rubbish anyway, seal is determined by how well the goggle fits the individual eye.

All eyes are different, and some goggles fit some but not others, and vice versa, or vicey versey, as a friend used to say. One person's perfect fit is another person's leak.

The best way to fit goggles used to be to attend to our Goggle Clinics at swims when we ran goggle stalls. Mrs Sparkle would then go through a fitting process with the individual swimmer, explaining things such as seal, care, commonsense, and how not to be an idiot. We don't do that any more, however, so you'll just have to read carefully here...

Assuming the goggles are reasonable quality, seal is determined by how well the goggle fits the eye sockets. The best way to determine whether the goggle fits your eye is to hold the goggles onto your eyes before you buy them. Don't fit the strap; just leave it loose in front. Hold the goggles into the eyes; apply a little pressure; then let them go. If they stay in place even only for a moment, then they fit your eye. The fact that they hold on at all means they've sealed, without need of the strap.

The strap merely is an anchor to keep them in place. It should not be used in an attempt to affect seal – ie don't tighten the strap to pull the goggles onto the face – because that will disturb the seal. This is where the 'how not to be an idiot' bit comes into play. The strap should be just tight enough to make the goggles secure on your head and to stay in place.

Another thing: place the strap half-way up the back of your head. And if the strap is split into two strands, then separate the strands, to spread the effect of the anchor; spread the load, as it were.

Simple

This is all quite simple, really, but it's taken us a while to work out some of this stuff. Since we began selling goggles c. 2006, we've sold literally thousands of pairs of goggles, all of them View brand. These days, we sell mainly View Swipes with the new anti-fog technology. They come as Selenes (the broad, soft seal that don't leave you with Rocky Raccoon eyes), and Wide Eyes, which come with different sized nose pieces. Since 2006, we can count on one hand the number of people whom these goggles don't suit.

Respect and smart

It's all about respect. Your goggles are not just another item you need to swim. They're more than that. They are your most important, precious, personal item. Respect your goggles. And be smart with them.