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Best Running Shorts for Women of 2024

By [Joel Lee Balsam](#)



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Updated: April 18, 2024



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Runners don't need a ton of equipment, but what they wear is key. Along with shoes, socks, and a supportive top, a good pair of women's running shorts are a must – but choosing can be difficult. Women have to decide whether they want breathable loose-fitting shorts with slits or fitted bicycle-style tights. They also need to choose the optimal inseam length – how far they like their shorts to fit down their thigh.

Ultimately, the choice comes down to comfort and fit, according to Kaitlin Goodman, head coach at Running Joyfully and a former professional runner. “You can get the cutest, most fashionable shorts, or the ones with the most pockets, but if the fit is poor and they aren't comfortable, they're not the right shorts for you,” she said.

With the help of experts like Goodman, we sifted through the best running shorts for women and selected the best options to suit the needs of different runners.

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Best Overall

Janji 3" AFO Middle Short »

**PROS:**

- ✓ Breathable and quick-drying
- ✓ Range of sizes
- ✓ Made of 88% recycled polyester

CONS:

- ✗ Brief liner only
- ✗ Small reflective logo

[Buy From Janji](#)

Boston-based Janji has grown to be a big name in the running world. Its 3" AFO Middle Shorts are the company's best-selling shorts. They're light, breathable, and dry very quickly, even in the waistband, thanks to the company's AFO fabric (a mix of polyester and elastane). They have a comfortable internal underwear liner that doesn't slip, and they're flattering on women of many shapes and sizes at an 3-inch inseam. One thing to be aware of with these shorts, as with all split styles, is that they don't have a long enough liner to prevent thigh chafing.

However, these shorts have clever pockets, including a zippered one at the back for your phone, plus a pouch and elastic loop inside to attach your keys.

Janji donates 2% of each sale to clean water projects around the world and uses mostly recycled plastic for its polyester, which wins some brownie points for sustainability. Additionally, the company’s AFO fabric is bluesign certified. In other words, it’s material free from harmful chemicals and it was made in a way that meets high environmental standards.

Specs

List Price:	\$64
Material:	Polyester and elastane
Inseam(s):	3-inch
Sizes:	XXS, XS, S, M, L, XL, XXL, XXXL

[Buy From Janji »](#)

Best Budget

Under Armour Women’s Fly by 2.0 »



PROS:

- ✓ Affordable
- ✓ Breathable mesh panels
- ✓ Range of colors
- ✓ Underwear liner

CONS:

- ✗ Not very stretchy
- ✗ Lacks durability

[Buy From Under Armour](#)

These Under Armour running shorts are an excellent deal. They have mesh panels on the sides that allow a breeze to reach your thighs, and there’s an internal underwear liner so you don’t have to wear anything underneath. These shorts are made out of polyester, which is light but not as stretchy or soft as other fabrics that often mix spandex or elastane. As one might expect for the price, they aren’t as durable as other options.

In terms of style, the side panels and trim add an authentic runner look. And at 3.5 inches, they're a tad longer than the average, a plus for those who want more coverage. These shorts come in a wide range of fun colors, including aurora purple and stardust pink.

Specs

List Price:	\$25
Material:	Polyester
Inseam(s):	3.5-inch
Sizes:	XS, S, M, L, XL, 2XI, 3XL

[Buy From Under Armour »](#)

Best for Long-distance Running

Ciele DLYShort Brief »



PROS:

- ✓ Cooling liner wicks away sweat and prevents odors
- ✓ Zippered rear pocket and hidden interior key picket
- ✓ Lifetime warranty

CONS:

- ✗ Not a lot of color options
- ✗ Limited thigh coverage

[Buy From Ciele Athletics](#)

Ciele makes running gear that's so durable that the company backs its products with a lifetime warranty. Built to last, the DLYShort Brief are very comfortable, with a soft and light woven fabric that's tough enough to last multiple ultramarathons, and then some.

Inside, the brief liner is made with the company's innovative Coolmatic plus material, which uses carbon fibers to cool you down as you sweat. And, the

brief is treated to increase sweat-wicking and fight odors.

In terms of style, they’re not overly cute or fancy, but they’re highly functional. There’s a single zippered pocket at the rear as well as an internal slot for your keys. Colors are relatively muted, and there’s a reflective strip for running at night. The 4-inch length might be long compared to others, but that extra inch could prevent them from riding up, and they give your legs a bit more protection from bushes when trail running.

Specs

List Price:	\$75
Material:	Woven fabric and Coolmatic carbon fiber
Inseam(s):	4-inch
Sizes:	XS, S, M, L, XL

[Buy From Ciele Athletics »](#)

Most Breathable

Bandit Vento 3” Splitty Shorts »

**PROS:**

- ✓ Dramatic splits for breathability
- ✓ Perforated pattern
- ✓ Four hidden pockets

CONS:

- ✗ Expensive
- ✗ No phone pocket

[Buy From Bandit](#)

Members of New York City run crews got together and started Bandit in 2020, and the brand is already making waves in the industry. Its latest invention is Vento fabric, which is known for its breathability. Made from nylon and spandex, the fabric is perforated with tiny holes so air can circulate throughout. The Vento fabric is water-resistant and utilizes Bandit's marquee split design with long slits on the sides so air can breeze through.

The Vento Splitty Shorts have four pockets beneath the waistband for smaller items like running gels, keys, or a fob. Unfortunately, though, the pockets aren't roomy enough for a phone, so you may need to invest in a running belt.

Specs

List Price:	\$88
Material:	Nylon and spandex
Inseam(s):	3-inch
Sizes:	XS, S, M, L, XL

[Buy From Bandit »](#)


Best for Plus Sizes

REI Co-op Swiftland 5" Running Shorts »



PROS:	CONS:
✓ Available in 3XL	✗ Small rear pocket
✓ Stretchy waistband	✗ Longer inseam may not be for everyone

[Buy From REI](#)

 Breathable mesh

These shorts from REI stand out as a particularly good pick for plus-size runners. That’s because they go up to 3XL and come in a longer inseam at 5 inches, which should cover the thighs to prevent chafing. The shorts also pay special care to prevent chafing thanks to flat seams.

Stretchy and breathable, these shorts are made from perforated nylon and spandex mesh. Inside, a brief-style liner allows runners to forgo underwear. In terms of pockets, you can fit a few running gels or keys inside the waistband, and there’s a rear zippered pocket. This pocket is a bit small for larger phones, so don’t expect to fit an iPhone Pro in it.

Another benefit to these shorts is the variety of fun fabrics you can choose, with previous years’ fabrics sold at a steeply discounted price.

Specs

List Price:	\$59.95
Material:	Nylon and spandex
Inseam(s):	5-inch
Sizes:	XS, S, M, L, XL, XXL, 3XL

[Buy From REI »](#)

Best Fitted

New Balance Sleek Pocket High-Rise 6” »

**PROS:**

- ✓ High-waisted
- ✓ Deep pockets
- ✓ Long to prevent slip and chafing

CONS:

- ✗ Just two colors
- ✗ Doesn't come in 3X

[Buy From New Balance](#)

A growing trend in women's running is the fitted biker-style shorts with a longer inseam and a high-rise waist. These are especially helpful for athletes who face challenges with thigh chafing. A great option for this type of biker-length short is the NB Sleek. Goodman says they're her go-to because they have a long 6-inch inseam and they never ride up or cause chafing. "I like that they are high-rise, which I find more comfortable, and they have two deep pockets on either hip, great for holding your phone, car keys, and gels for fueling on larger runs," she says.

These shorts are made with a mix of polyester and spandex to dry quickly and wick away moisture just as fast. They're built to stretch in all directions, whether that's for a run or squatting at the gym. A silicone strap at the cuff prevents them from riding up the leg, too.

Specs

List Price:	\$69.99
Material:	Polyester and spandex
Inseam(s):	6-inch
Sizes:	XS, S, M, L, XL, 2XL

[Buy From New Balance »](#)

Best for Pocket Storage

Oiselle Pocket Jogger Shorts »



- PROS:

 - ✓ Five pockets
 - ✓ Seamless
- CONS:

 - ✗ Not as breathable as other options

- ✓

Various sizes and inseams
- ✗

Some sizes tend to sell out
- Buy From Oiselle

A woman-based company, Oiselle is focused on making quality running products for women. Its pocket jogger shorts are made with five pockets, so there’s plenty of space to store your phone, keys, fob, gels, and more. You’ll find a zippered pocket on the lumbar, mesh slits on both hips as well as slots on the thighs large enough for any modern phone.

The material of these shorts is durable and soft. Interestingly, they’re cut in a tube shape, so there aren’t any seams whatsoever, which prevents chafing.

Another way that these shorts prevent chafing and riding up is that they’re available in three long lengths: 5.25-, 7-, and 8.25-inch inseams. These lengths are rare in women’s shorts, which traditionally come in just 2- to 4-inch inseams. There’s also a wide variety of sizes and five color options, though some sizes sell out quickly – a testament to the popularity of these shorts.

Specs

List Price:	\$66
Material:	Nylon and spandex
Inseam(s):	5.25-, 7-, or 8.25-inch
Sizes:	2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 16/18, 20/22, 24/26

[Buy From Oiselle »](#)

Best for Cross-training

Fleo Keep Up Short »

**PROS:**

- ✓ Won't ride up
- ✓ Designed to fit thicker thighs
- ✓ Breathable

CONS:

- ✗ Just one pocket
- ✗ May be too short for some preferences

[Buy From FLEO](#)

Women who lift can struggle to find shorter shorts that fit thicker thighs. The Keep Up shorts from Fleo answer this call.

The polyester and spandex fabric used for these shorts is lightweight and highly breathable to keep you cool during your workout. There's a built-in liner so underwear isn't necessary, and they're high-waisted, with an elastic waistband. At 2.5 inches, they're short, which gives the legs room to breathe.

Unlike traditional running shorts, the Keep Up shorts don't have a zippered pocket on the back – that'd be uncomfortable when lying flat on a weight bench. Instead, these shorts feature a single flat zippered pocket on the left side.

Specs

List Price:	\$48
Material:	Polyester and spandex
Inseam(s):	2.5-inch
Sizes:	XS, S, M, L, XL

[Buy From FLEO »](#)

Most Stylish

Constantly Varied Gear Shorts »



PROS:	CONS:
✓ Fun prints and matching tops	✗ Might not fit thicker thighs
✓ Pockets	

[Buy From CVG](#)

Constantly Varied Gear (CVG) shorts have built up a dedicated following for several reasons. First, they’re fun. You can find the brand’s shorts in a wide array of eye-catching prints, like skulls, funky geometric patterns, and neon colors. Can’t decide? CVG offers a randomly selected pair on its website for a discount.

Another perk to these shorts is that they don’t ride up thanks to a silicone strap at the cuff. This has led the company to declare their shorts “squat-proof.” They also have a flattering, thick, and soft waistband, and come in three lengths: 2.5-, 5- and 7-inch inseams. As for pockets, these shorts come with two slots on the sides for your phone or cards.

These shorts are made to be used anywhere from the gym to the pool as they can double as bathing suit bottoms.

Specs

List Price:	\$46.99
Material:	Polyester and spandex
Inseam(s):	2.5, 5, or 7-inch
Sizes:	XS, S, M, L, XL, XXL

[Buy From CVG »](#)

The Bottom Line

Women's running shorts come in two styles. Either you want a split-style short, which is more breathable and light, though they're more likely to ride up or lead to chafing. Or, you opt for a long biker-style short, which isn't as breathable but prevents thighs from rubbing together. There are several great options for either, but the Janji AFO 3" Middle Short, which has a split-style design, earns our top overall pick while the New Balance Sleek High-Rise is an awesome choice if you prefer biker style.

Things To Consider When Buying Running Shorts

Size: Most women's shorts are sold in letter sizes, like small or extra-large. Some brands use numeric sizes. Be sure to consult each brand's size guide to make sure you're getting the right size, and look out for any mentions of whether the shorts fit large, small, or true to size. You want them to be fitted, but not too tight.

The length of the inseam – meaning how far the shorts go down the leg – is another key metric. Inseams can run between 2 and 9 inches – either just below the butt or down to the knee. A shorter short is more breathable as your legs are exposed, but some run the risk of chafing if their thighs rub together.

Material: Running shorts can come in classic cotton or mesh fabric, though more commonly in a variety of synthetic blends. Goodman recommends sticking to a synthetic blend of polyester or spandex to optimize moisture-wicking as cotton can get heavy when wet. You'll also commonly see running shorts made with nylon, elastane, or Lycra – which do the same and add stretch.

Synthetic materials are also ideal to prevent chafing when they stretch over the thighs. They dry quickly.

A downside to synthetic materials is that they tend to be unsustainable since they're made from plastic compounds that can take centuries to decompose in landfills.

Waistband and Fit: According to Janet Hamilton, a running coach with Running Strong and a registered exercise physiologist, the best fit depends on your preferences and body type. "Are you tall? Heavily muscled thighs? Apple shaped? Pear shaped? I just encourage them to seek out moisture-wicking material and search for a fit that feels comfortable," she said.

Many women prefer high-rise shorts that wrap around their waist. Hamilton likes waistbands with a drawstring that can be adjusted tighter or looser as needed. Many women also like soft and wide waistbands, especially for fitted shorts.

The main goal is for your shorts to not slip down as you run or squeeze you so tightly as to be uncomfortable.

Lining: Many running shorts come with an internal brief liner so runners don't need to wear underwear. These liners, which are made with synthetic materials like polyester and spandex, wick away moisture and dry quickly.

For split shorts, many liners are in the shape of a brief, though some can be longer and stretch further down the thigh. Longer liners may also have built-in pockets for your phone. Fitted bicycle-style shorts act as one large liner, so don't have anything underneath.

One thing to be aware of with liners is that they can ride up, so look for liners with an elastic or silicone cuff to stop them from moving around. If riding up and chafing are issues due to thighs rubbing, runners might opt for a longer liner or a bicycle short.

Alternatively, and more rarely, some running shorts are unlined, which means you have to wear underwear underneath.

Seams: Seams – where the material is stitched together – can be a source of chafing. This can occur anywhere there are seams, but often between the legs as your thighs rub together. This has caused some brands to cut their material in a tube shape to avoid the need for seams.

Pockets: The biggest trend in running shorts right now is the presence of pockets, and Goodman is all for it. “Many running shorts are now featuring deeper pockets to hold all the things you want to bring along with you on the run - your phone, your car key, gels for fueling on the long run, etc,” she said. “Shorts with good pockets are a must-have for me.”

Brands are finding new and creative ways to place pockets. Some compression-style bike shorts have pocket slits on the thigh to slide in your phone. Others have a rear zippered pocket over the lumbar part of the spine, and you'll see all kinds of innovative interior pockets – some with elastic loops for keys or flaps to stay secure.

Consider what you plan to bring on your run. If it's a larger cell phone, make sure the short pockets are big enough to accommodate it – many aren't. And, if the pockets are on the sides and without a zipper there's a good chance what you're running with will fall out.

If your shorts don't have pockets and still want to run with a phone, you can opt for a running belt or an armband.

Style and Color Options: Running shorts can come in all kinds of flashy colors and patterned prints. They also come in various inseam lengths and cuts.

When deciding, choose comfort and functionality first and foremost. Consider if you want split shorts or fitted, bicycle-style shorts, and think about the inseam length – you're going to be the one running in them, so they have to feel good.

Then take a look at style. Loose-fitting shorts with slits on the sides provide breathability and also deliver an authentic runner's look. On the other hand, fitted bike-style shorts might be comfortable and reduce chafing, but aren't as breathable.

Both split shorts and fitted shorts can come in fun, expressive colors and patterns. Consider the colors of your running shirts and shoes for making your pick.

How We Chose the Best Running Shorts

We consulted running experts Janet Hamilton, a registered physiologist and coach at [Running Strong](#) as well as Kaitlin Goodman, a former professional runner and head coach at [Running Joyfully](#). With their help and our writer's research, we identified the latest trends in women's running and chose options with different types of runners in mind.

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Our contributors and editors have years of experience researching, testing, and reviewing products. [Joel Balsam](#), the author of this piece, is an avid runner and gym-goer who loves to test out the latest gear. For U.S. News 360 Reviews, Balsam writes about health and wellness – topics he has been writing about since 2012. He also

writes about travel gear for Travel + Leisure and does in-depth journalism features for publications like TIME and National Geographic.

FAQ

Is there a difference between men's and women's running shorts? +

What's the best length for women's running shorts? +

Is it better for women's running shorts to be loose or fitted? +

About Our Team



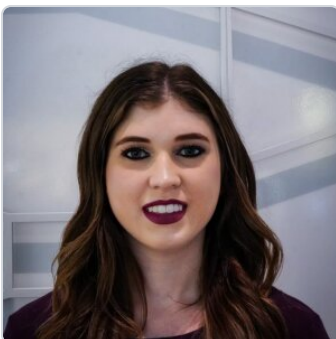
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