

HOW TO BUY A BINDER

Finding the right binding option for you!



What is a Binder?



Binder

Most compression, stiff front panel that flattens. Has safety guidelines: eight hours max per day, not safe for exercise or sleep.



Compression Top

Medium compression, no stiff panel. Fabric is compressive but stretchy. No time limits, safe for exercise.



Tape

No compression, reshapes chest tissue instead. Less visible, can last multiple days. Adhesive can cause irritation.

Closures

Most binders are put on over the head like a shirt, but there are other closure options. A safe binder closure will be even, nonadjustable, and discreet.



Seek

Single center zippers, zippers on both sides, over the head



Avoid

Velcro, lacing, single side closures, non-surgical hook and eye closures

Style

Straps

Classic binders have wide straps and a full back for maximum coverage and even weight distribution. Racerback binders offer thinner straps and increased range of motion. Avoid strapless options.



Length

Most binders come in a half (covers ribcage) or tank style (covers full torso). Half binders are the default, but tanks are recommended for those with longer torsos or large bust to underbust ratios.



Color

Consider when, where, and with what clothes you will wear your binder. The most common binder colors are white and black, shortly followed by skin tones, though some brands have a wider variety of colors, patterns, and even textured fabrics.

Size

Size Wisely

Binders do not follow the same sizing conventions as other clothing items. Your binder size will likely differ from your shirt size, so it is important to directly consult the sizing chart of the brand you are purchasing from before ordering. Bodies change over time so please remeasure and update your size as needed!

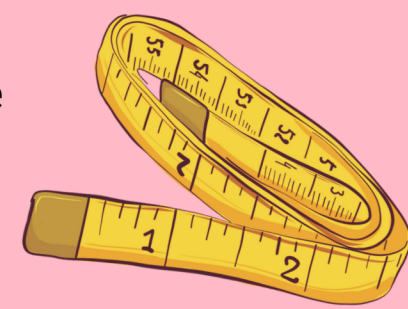
Sizing Charts

Binder sizing charts may use one to three measurements: around your chest, around your underbust, and across your shoulders. The chest measurement is the most important. If your measurements fall between sizes on a sizing chart, always size up! This will prevent permanent rib damage and ensure that you are binding safely. Most binder brands are happy to conduct exchanges if you find you need a different size.

**ALWAYS
SIZE UP!**

Taking Measurements

While topless, draw a soft tape measure around the largest part of your bust (usually where your nipples are). The measuring tape should be just snug enough to not fall. Take a deep breath and relax as you exhale, then note where the tape measurer meets itself. For the underbust, move the tape down to the fold under your chest tissue and do the same. For shoulders, measure from one shoulder point to the other going across the back of the neck.



Feel

Most binder brands use cotton for the stiff front panel and a spandex/nylon blend for the rest. If you are sensitive to rough textures, look for a binder with flat seams or an enclosed front panel. Mesh binders tend to feel rougher on the skin but will allow for more air flow and less sweat.



Price

A basic, good-quality binder will start at around \$40 (plus shipping). Options from reputable binder brands range from \$30-100 depending on quality and special features. While you can find cheaper binders on Amazon and various drop-shipping sites, you will likely end up with a poor-quality, uncomfortable, and potentially harmful product. A good binder is worth saving up for and can last you years with proper care. If you cannot afford a binder, consider looking into local giveaway programs, second-hand binder exchanges, or gender-affirming product sponsorships.

Safety Guidelines

Binders should fit snug, but still allow you to take a deep breath and utilize your full range of motion. Binding with the wrong materials, the wrong size, or for too long can cause permanent damage to your rib cage, nerves, and skin. Binding can be safe and incredibly gender-affirming, just make sure to listen to your pain receptors and follow these safety guidelines!

Do...

Take frequent breaks
Take 1-2 rest days a week
Regularly wash your binder

Don't...

Bind for more than 8 hours a day
Sleep in a binder
Exercise in a binder

To learn more about UCSB's gender-affirming product resources or to speak with an expert, email equity@sa.ucsb.edu.