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.

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.

- **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.

Closures

- **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.

- **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.

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.**

Safety Guidelines

- **Do...**
  - Take frequent breaks
  - Take 1-2 rest days a week
  - Regularly wash you binder

- **Don’t...**
  - Bind for more than 8 hours a day
  - Sleep in a binder
  - Exercise in a binder

Price

- **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.**

$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.

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