



# True Wireless Headphones Buying Guide Quick Reference Handout

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## What are true wireless headphones?

The “true” in true wireless headphones means there are no cables connecting the two earpieces, better known as earbuds that communicate and sync together wirelessly. They use Bluetooth to wirelessly pair and connect with devices, like smartphones, tablets, computers or game consoles.

There’s only one time to use a cable and that’s to plug into their charging case. Cases have their own battery that can also charge the earbuds when you place them inside. Depending on the case, you may get one or a few extra charges for the earbuds before you need to refill the case’s battery itself. This also helps keep them topped up and ready to play when you need to take them out and place them in your ears.

## Why choose true wireless headphones?

- **Missing headphone jack** — Headphone jacks are still common on laptops and tablets, but not so much with smartphones anymore.
- **Fitting right in** — No need to untangle headphone cables. Different size ear tips or wings ensure better comfort and stability. Being small and portable, earbuds are also much easier to slip into a bag or pocket when taking them with you.
- **Small package, big sound quality** — Despite their compact size, true wireless headphones pack a real punch when it comes to audio quality, and they keep getting better. Many also have apps to customize features, including an equalizer (EQ) for tuning sound.
- **Productivity and multitasking** — Listen to music while working, and take calls when they come in. Some support “multipoint”, a feature enabling the earbuds to connect to two devices simultaneously. You could stay connected with your laptop to listen to music, along with your phone to take or make calls anytime.
- **Work out in peace** — It’s always nice to wear wireless earbuds while exercising, listening to your choice of music or podcast. True wireless earbuds have different Ingress Protection (IP) ratings. If you see “IP68”, for instance, the first number refers to dust resistance, while the second number refers to water resistance. The higher the number, the higher the level of resistance.



## Key features to consider

- **Active noise cancellation (ANC)** — Onboard microphones listen for background noises and then create inverse sound waves to “cancel” them out. The idea is to block out the background without affecting playback.
- **Ambient or transparency mode** — This is the opposite of noise cancellation in that the microphones filter in outside or ambient noise while listening to audio.
- **Touch or button controls** — True wireless headphones offer responsive and intuitive touch or physical buttons on the sides of the buds to control playback, calls and more.
- **Voice assistants** — True wireless headphones can access voice assistants, like Siri, Google Assistant, Alexa or Bixby, to control smart devices among various other features.
- **Battery life** — Battery life will vary depending on which pair you’re looking at, but two key factors affect it the most: active noise cancellation and volume levels.
- **Bluetooth codecs** — Bluetooth codecs handle how digital audio data is encoded and decoded, which can affect quality. Apple’s iOS devices only support codecs like AAC and SBC, whereas Android devices are more flexible, supporting AAC, aptX, aptX HD, aptX Adaptive, LDAC and LHDC.

## The best true wireless brands

- **Design options** — Designs and styles range as much as the brands themselves do. Some will have stems that protrude down—like the AirPods—others have no stems. It all comes down to personal preference. Colours also vary.
- **Plenty of choices** — Sony, Jabra, Bose, Samsung, Google and Apple are among the top brands making earbuds. There are several others to think about, including Sennheiser, JBL, Beats, LG, Skullcandy, House of Marley, JLab, Soundcore and Belkin.

## Take the next step

It’s easier to find a pair of wireless earbuds with plenty of great features to consider to suit a lifestyle and taste, regardless of whether it’s for leisure, working out, commuting, travel or another experiential reason.