



**NATHAN QUICKSHOT  
PLUS HYDRATION  
FLASK**

# Tips to Care for Your Favorite Pieces of Gear

**BY HEATHER MAYER IRVINE**

**RUNNERS ARE CREATURES** of habit—route, time of day, and, of course, what to wear and what gear to use. It can be hard for a runner to give up their favorite pair of shorts or sports bra despite obvious signs of abuse. While gear can't last forever, there are some tricks to keep your favorite pieces in action for years—maybe even decades.

As a runner for nearly 20 years, I've tested a lot of gear, but only a few pieces remain in my closet as staples. Following are some of my favorite pieces, along with a couple of recommendations from the *RW* test team, that have outlasted that box of Twinkies you've been hanging onto for world's end.

**UNDER ARMOUR  
AUTHENTIC COLDGEAR  
COMPRESSION LEGGINGS**





▲ **TriggerPoint MB1 Massage Ball**

**LENGTH OF USE:** 10 years

When I stepped on my 10-year-old TriggerPoint massage ball, it split in half along the glue line. I wondered if, over time, the material in this type of recovery tool degrades, regardless of use.

The TriggerPoint ball, and similar tools that use EVA foam, are designed to withstand significant weight and pressure over a period of years, says Alex Strobridge, brand manager for TriggerPoint. The MB1, for example, has a weight limit of 360 pounds.

“The ball should not have given way the way that it did,” Strobridge says. *RW* test editor Amanda Furrer, for example, has had her MB1 for the same period of time, and it’s still whole. But EVA foam, Strobridge explains, can start to lose shape over time, particularly if there isn’t a solid core. Puncture marks are a sign of wear and tear that could affect the integrity of the foam.

**CURRENT MODEL:** TriggerPoint MB1

Massage Ball, \$17

▲ **Nathan QuickShot Plus Hydration Flask**

**LENGTH OF USE:** 10 years

Since I started training for my first marathon in 2012, I’ve been using this Nathan QuickShot, a lightweight, grip-free bottle that delivers a shot of water with just a squeeze.

While you certainly can fill the bottle with water and freeze it overnight, don’t fill it up entirely or into the mouthpiece, says Katie Voigt, senior product designer and developer for Nathan: “Freezing will expand the plastic and deteriorate the product. Leave room for the ice to grow.”

Nathan has a lifetime guarantee for its products, but the lifespan of a handheld can also decrease by friction, cleaning it in a dishwasher, or letting mold take hold.

The QuickShot was replaced by the SpeedShot, which is slightly larger but works the same way, explains Voigt.

**CURRENT MODEL:** Nathan SpeedShot Plus

Insulated Flask, \$32

▼ **Saucony Skyrocket Bra**

**LENGTH OF USE:** 1 year and counting

I’ve tested my fair share of sports bras, but I always go back to a no-frills racerback. I recently fell in love with the Saucony Skyrocket bra, and even though I’ve been wearing it just shy of a year, it’s designed to support me for years of running.

The fit of a sports bra is crucial to ensure ample support. And that means ditching a bra once its band or material loses elasticity, says Sarah Clark, director of product for apparel and accessories for Saucony.

This particular bra is designed for high-impact activities for A and B cup sizes, and medium- to low-impact activities for C-plus cup sizes. Though elasticity degrades over time, the Skyrocket, made from a recycled nylon and spandex blend and a recycled nylon power mesh, should last for years when worn and cared for properly, Clark says.

For runners who prefer bras with more support—adjustable straps, underwires, and hook-and-loop closures—more care is required to maintain the integrity of the bra.

“Fasten the fasteners and wash in a garment bag on a delicate cycle,” Clark says. “For bras with removable cups, wash them separately. Lay flat rather than machine dry.”

**CURRENT MODEL:** Saucony Skyrocket Bra, \$35





## ▼ Under Armour ColdGear Leggings

**LENGTH OF USE:** 10 years



**TESTER SPOTLIGHT:**  
Morgan Petruny,  
test editor

Petruny has owned a pair of UA tights for about 10 years. They're well loved, with a torn knee from a midrun fall. "But they don't sag and they're still comfy and warm," she says. "The thick waistband hasn't lost much of its stretch."

The material used in today's ColdGear line is a polyester/elastane blend, a dual-layer fabric with "an ultra-warm, brushed interior and smooth, fast-drying exterior," says Erin Dreisbach, a UA product line manager for the brand's run and competitive train apparel.

Signs of wear and tear would be a stretched waistband and stretched material.

"If an elastic is made with natural rubber, it's more likely to stretch and become brittle over time," Dreisbach says. But the elastic used in UA's tights is synthetic, which stands up better to heat and continual stretching.

**CURRENT MODEL:** Under Armour Authentic ColdGear Compression Leggings, \$50

## ▼ Darn Tough Press Crew Sock

**LENGTH OF USE:** 5 years



**TESTER SPOTLIGHT:**  
Jeff Dengate,  
deputy editor

Dengate's go-to socks are Darn Tough's discontinued Press Crew, which provide a lightweight cushion with a merino wool, nylon, and spandex blend. This combination, says product line manager Owen Rachampbell, wicks moisture, regulates temperature, minimizes stink, provides protection from underfoot impact, and offers durability and stretch.

"Our socks are guaranteed for life, and we truly believe they can last that long if you're using them for their intended activities and taking good care of them," Rachampbell says. "Each sock is designed with a purpose that fits the technical needs, foot-wear, and aesthetic of that activity and its lifestyle."

Signs that your socks are beyond repair are holes, thin spots, or a decrease in elasticity. Darn Tough will replace those socks and collect the worn ones to analyze where it can make product improvements.

**CURRENT MODEL:** Darn Tough Element Crew Lightweight Athletic Sock, \$21



Lakota Gambill (Petruny); Trevor Raab (Dengate)

## PRO CARE TIPS

TLC will keep your favorite items intact for the long run.

### SPORTS APPAREL

- Use your gear as intended
- Use a mild, no-bleach detergent to avoid destroying fibers
- Use a wool wash or wool detergent for wool-based items to remove dirt, which can grind the fibers
- Wash inside out to protect the outer layer; the dirtiest part will be the side next to your skin
- When possible, hand wash or use a front-load washing machine on a delicate cycle
- Avoid high heat in wash and dry cycles
- Lay flat to dry or tumble dry low
- Lay socks flat to store or gently cuff the socks together; do not ball them up, which can cause stretching

### HYDRATION GEAR

- Rinse water bottles with water and soap—even if you only drink water, saliva can leave behind bacteria
- Allow plastic to dry completely, and store bottles and bladders in the freezer to avoid mold growth
- Remove fabric from the bottle and wash on a delicate cycle
- Use a brush kit to clean the inside of the straw valve on hydration packs

### HEADPHONES AND EARBUDS

- Wipe dry with a microfiber cloth after use and make sure ports are dry before charging
- Store in protective case
- Turn headphones off when not in use to prolong life of battery, which often cannot be replaced

### EVA FOAM-BASED RECOVERY ITEMS

- Wipe down regularly with a wet cloth
- Follow weight-limit guidelines