

# CROP TOPS

by Heather Logie

IN ISSUE #4, we looked at some of the things to consider when purchasing a sports bra and promised to unravel the world of crop tops in a Part 2 on women's running tops. Particular emphasis was given to the importance of getting the right fit in the last issue. Sports bras are an evolutionary branch of the genus 'bra'. They are fitted to specific measurements of the female body on two separate scales; chest circumference and cup size. They are designed to be fitted close to the skin and to the exact shape of the body; hence fit is very important.

In comparison, crop tops are a more diverse family of products which can be grouped into different sub-categories. For the purposes of this review, we have made two simple sub-categories: classic and singlet-style (including short/long, with/without in-built bra and adjustable). In the world of crop tops, fit is not so scientific: tops come in general clothing sizes (8 – 16 or XS – L). Because you can wear them on the outside, more emphasis is given to design and colour. Choice is perhaps more personal and less scientific. For this reason, we've taken a different approach in this review; still documenting the features, identified strengths and weaknesses of each product, but also expressing personal recommendations from our testers. Where a sports bra is purely functional, a crop top can be an expression of your personal style: it's all about personal preferences.

Classic crop tops are akin to an athletic-style bikini top. They are often worn by elite women (accompanied by a matching set of briefs) and provide just the necessary support and coverage to make Jana and Tamsyn look good and still be able to run fast with minimal wind resistance. They are more often worn as an alternative to a sports bra underneath a t-shirt or singlet. Variations in the classic category tend to be enhancements on a proven formula: thicker or thinner straps, different stitching patterns to improve support and reduce movement, use of more or less resistant fabrics etc.

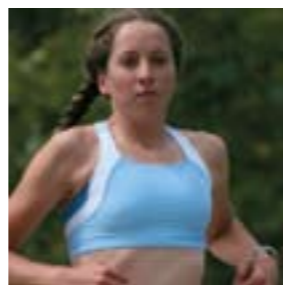
Singlet-style crop tops/tanks are a more varied category boasting features such as in-built bras, adjustable in-built bra straps, heart rate monitor compatibility, padded cups (perhaps to reduce the embarrassment caused by erect nipples on a cold morning?),

## CLASSIC CROP TOPS

### 2XU Women's Competition Top [www.2xu.com](http://www.2xu.com)

**Available in sizes:** S - XL  
**Colours:** Black/white, Blue/white, Grey/white  
**RRP:** \$70.00

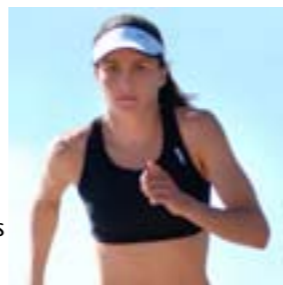
The 2XU Competition Top is designed specifically with triathlon in mind and is made from fabrics which are promoted as being quick drying and more Chlorine/Bacteria resistant than regular Elastane. The result is that you can feel as though you are running in a swimsuit. One tester had concerns that the swimmer-like 'shiny' fabric may wear or stretch over time with ongoing sun exposure and use, the same way a swimsuit stretches and loses elasticity. In terms of general comfort, the top fits nicely and has flat stitched seams to avoid any chaffing. It was certainly comfortable to run in and if you are a triathlete or an adventure-racer, this may be the top that you have been looking for.



### 2XU Women's Lycra Run Top [www.2xu.com](http://www.2xu.com)

**Available in sizes:** S - XL  
**Colours:** Black  
**HIGHLY RECOMMENDED (classic crop top, new product)**

The 2XU Lycra Run top is a very straightforward but well constructed crop top. Boasting an ergonomic cut, flat seams and a mesh fabric strip through the back for added ventilation, the top provides good support for running. Where the 2XU Competition Top is more specifically designed for multi-sport events, the Lycra Run Top is made from a thicker weave material (Formflex) and with a supportive front lining is tailored to use during higher intensity activities such as running. This is a really nice basic crop top from a new competitor in athletic-wear.



### Asics Element X Back Top [www.asics.com.au](http://www.asics.com.au)

**Colours:** Black, Sky, Grape  
**RRP:** \$45.00  
**HIGHLY RECOMMENDED (classic crop top, value for money)**

The Asics Element X Back Top is a classic but comfortable crop top. The thick shoulder straps and cross-over style distribute weight and movement evenly over a large skin surface area to minimise any rubbing. The fabric, Tactel®, is quite a soft, lightweight synthetic which contributes to the comfort of the top and particular care has been given to edging of straps (around neck and under arms) to ensure that seams do not cause unnecessary chaffing. This one comes highly recommended in the "Classic crop top" category and represents good value for money at \$45.



### CoolRunning Crop/Bra-top [www.coolrunning.com.au/gear](http://www.coolrunning.com.au/gear)

**Available in sizes:** 8 – 16  
**Colours:** Blue/Green/Gold  
**RRP:** \$45.00

Manufactured by HotDesigns, a triathlon-style crop top, the CoolRunning Crop/Bra-Top is similar in fabric and purpose to the 2XU top reviewed in this article. The top is a cross-over into the world of swimsuits making it quite versatile for use in multi-sport events. One tester did comment that the stitching around the neck was quite pronounced and rubbed a little during a run but otherwise this is a simple, multi-purpose running top.

The more salient reason to wear a CoolRunning crop/bra top is because it identifies you as a CoolRunner, a member of the popular Australian online running community. Turn up at any race in one of these and you will often find yourself receiving support and encouragement from cheerleaders and complete strangers. This is not just a crop-top, it's a lifestyle!



### LineBreak Crop Top [www.linebreak.com.au](http://www.linebreak.com.au)

**Available in sizes:** XS - XL  
**Colours:** Black, Pink, Slate/pink, White  
**RRP:** \$60.00

**HIGHLY RECOMMENDED (classic crop top, large-busted)**

LineBreak products are designed to be very tight fitting and their crop top is no exception. The company's promotional material claims that the tight fit is designed to "compress your muscles to scientifically proven optimum levels which aid performance and reduce recovery time". The result is that you will feel quite flattened through the bust but the fit really does minimise any movement and "bouncing". Our C-cup tester was very impressed with this crop top and highly recommended it to larger-busted runners who may be apprehensive about trying crop tops over the more supportive sports bra alternative.

Regarding value for money, this crop top is on average about \$10 more expensive than equivalent products available from other manufacturers but if it works for you where others just aren't supportive enough, it could be the best \$10 you've ever spent.



### New Balance Women's Tech Running Bra Top [www.newbalance.com.au](http://www.newbalance.com.au)

**Available in sizes:** 8 - 16  
**Colours:** Lavender blue, Dark plum  
**RRP:** \$50.00

**HIGHLY RECOMMENDED (classic crop top)**

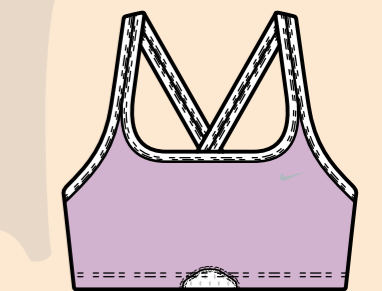
The Tech Running Bra Top is a simple and comfortable classic crop top. Features that were particularly popular include the design and cut through the back of the top (which looks good and aids ventilation) and the softness of the Dupont Tactel® fabric. This top provides good support and moves nicely with your body. Testers did not report experiencing any rubbing or chaffing wearing this top, rather commenting on the softness of seams and lining. This top comes highly recommended in the Classic crop top genre.

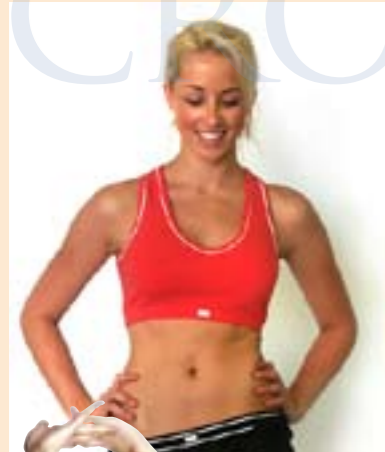


### Nike Foundation Cross Back Airborne [www.nike.com/nikerunning](http://www.nike.com/nikerunning)

**Colours:** Black, White, Pink Mist with White trim  
**RRP:** \$50.00

The Nike Foundation Cross Back Airborne is a slightly different style to most of the other crop tops. The most significant difference is in the thickness and positioning of the shoulder straps which are much thinner. The style is quite flattering but the thinner straps mean that the top does not feel as solid as some of its rivals. Tested by a C-cup wearer, the top was found to provide quite adequate support, minimal movement and no chaffing.





**Puma Core Performer Bra Top**  
[www.pumarunning.com](http://www.pumarunning.com)  
**Available in sizes:** 8 – 16  
**Colours:** Turkish tile, Black, Flint purple  
**RRP:** \$40.00

This crop top is made from a much thicker fabric than many of the other tops reviewed. The heavier fabric was found to absorb sweat and hold onto it. The top also appeared to become slightly misshapen during exercise and shifted upwards on the body resulting in some gaping around the neck and arms (although this may be the result of poor fit on the particular tester rather than a normal experience of wearing the top). The top was quite comfortable to wear and would make a good general exercise crop top but is possibly not as well suited to high exertion activities such as running.

## SINGLET-STYLE TOPS

**LineBreak Sport Singlet**  
**Available in sizes:** XS - XL  
**Colours:** Black, Pink, Slate  
**RRP:** \$70.00

The designer of this top has taken a different approach to the problem of providing adequate bust support: compression rather than an in-built bra. The result is a singlet-style top which is very fitted and flattens rather than lifts your bust. The fabric is very light-weight and moves easily with your body making it very comfortable but the absence of an elasticised band under the bust means that it would probably not be suitable without a sports-bra underneath (although small-busted women might get away with it). The fitted style continues through the body of the top revealing any and all unsightly lumps and bumps (potentially uncomfortable for the body conscious). The manufacturers claim that this tight fit “compresses the muscles to a scientifically proven optimum level which aids performance and reduces recovery time”. The top is unfortunately about 5cm too long in the body and can tend to crease and bunch up around the hips which can be annoying and unflattering.

**New Balance Ladies Tech Running Tank**  
[www.newbalance.com.au](http://www.newbalance.com.au)  
**Available in sizes:** 8 - 16  
**Colours:** Dark plum,  
**RRP:** \$55.00

**HIGHLY RECOMMENDED (singlet-style)**

The Tech Running Tank builds on all the good design features of the Tech Running Bra Top. Constructed from the same soft fabric with particular attention given to flat seams and stitching, the tank is very comfortable to wear. The cut through the back of the top is quite attractive with added mesh back and side panels for ventilation. The fit of the top is very body hugging over the ribs and stomach so those who are particularly body conscious might choose to wear another loose singlet or t-shirt over the top. Overall, this top comes highly recommended.

**Nike Foundation Mesh Tank**  
[www.nike.com/nikerunning](http://www.nike.com/nikerunning)  
**Available in sizes:** XS-XL  
**Colours:** Black, White, Navy, Pink Mist  
**RRP:** \$60

Nike has been making really good running tops for a number of years using great fabrics and simple designs. This singlet-style top is the latest version of a product which they have been producing for a number of years; a DryFit® outler-layer singlet with a supportive inner shelf-bra. New features in this model include a slightly different cut around the shoulders and bust as well as an adjustable elastic strap under the bust. The movable clips which provide for adjustment of the elastic strap are cleverly positioned and do not rub and the loose-fitting style of the outer-layer is particularly good for those who do not want to show off any undesirable lumps. This top has one potential show-stopper: the v-neck design. Independently tested by two

women, the first comment that both made was about the nasty chaffing spot that they received from running in this top. The v-neck design is produced by having a gathered nodule of fabric at the base of the V which, when running, rubs against the skin leaving a sore red mark. Two people make a very small sample so this problem may not affect everyone but it is something that you can't anticipate when you try the top on in the store.



**Puma Polar Tank Top**  
[www.pumarunning.com](http://www.pumarunning.com)  
**Available in sizes:** XS – L  
**Colours:** Phantom black,  
**RRP:** \$70.00

This singlet-style top with a built in bra is quite long in the body and, being very fitted in the body and made from Lycra®, it has a tendency to ride up, bunching at the finest point of your waist. For most, this is just below the

rib cage which means that you can find yourself adjusting the top every 5 minutes during a run. The Polar Tank also markets itself as being ‘compatible with Polar® heart rate monitors’. The elastic band that forms the support for the inbuilt bra has a number of loops through which you can thread the strap. If you use a heart rate monitor and experience difficulties with the strap shifting or slipping out of place during a run, the Polar Tank might just be the crop top for you.



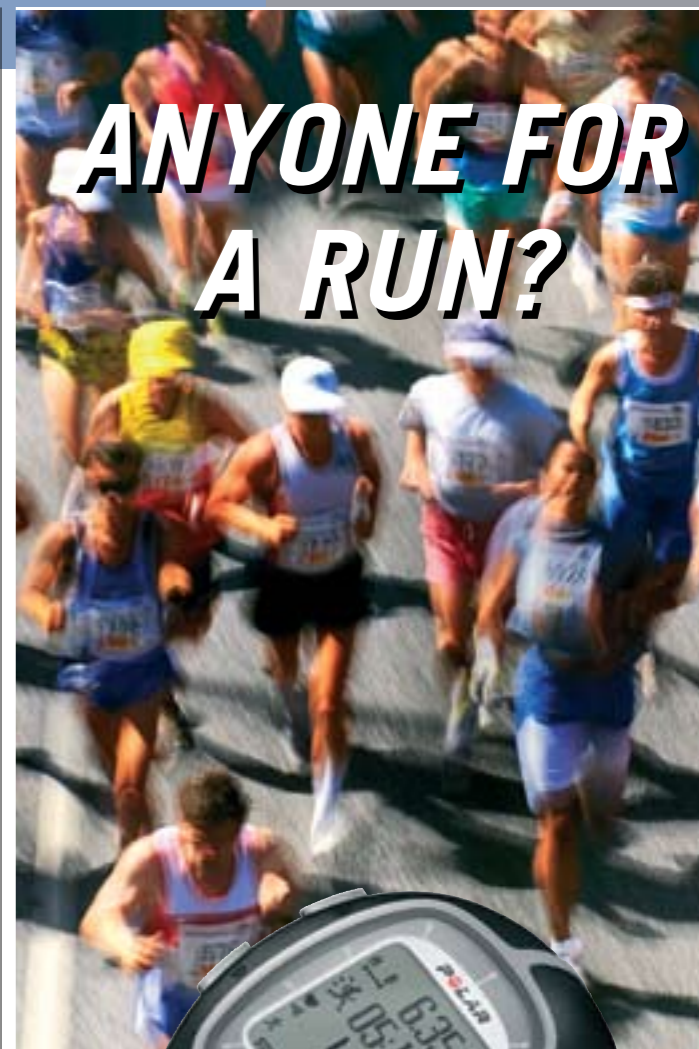
**Reebok Stamina Action Top**  
[www.reebok.com.au](http://www.reebok.com.au)  
**Available in sizes:** XS - XL  
**Colours:** Black and porcelain, Blue and porcelain  
**RRP:** \$50.00

**HIGHLY RECOMMENDED (singlet-style, value for money)**

This singlet-style top has a very supportive inner layer with a large elasticised band which sits below the bust. The outer-

layer is made from a very light-weight, loose-fitting fabric which breathes easily and does not cling to the chest and stomach. The cut of the body of the top is quite short for a singlet-style top (more mid-riff than full singlet) but is quite flattering because it doesn't cling to the body. While on first impressions the light-weight fabric of the top might be considered not supportive enough, the top was found to provide good support for a C-cup wearer and was very comfortable when running. Compared to many other singlet-style tops, this top was thought to represent good value for money as well.

R4YL



RS200sd

The Polar RS200sd is the newest addition to the Polar Running Computer Family. The RS200sd comes complete with the Polar S1 Footpod, which uses the same advanced inertial sensor technology as the Polar flagship product the S625X, to provide real time running speed, pace and distance. With Polar's patented ECG accurate heart rate and running specific features including, 99 lap/splits, interval trainer and the new Polar sports zones for easy monitoring of your running intensity, the RS200sd has the features to support your running challenge. If your looking to enhance your running experience or improve your race time the Polar RS200sd will guide you to achieve your goals.

(08) 8100 8600 • [www.pursuit-performance.com.au](http://www.pursuit-performance.com.au)

