

Since 1999, Bluetooth technology has helped make wireless communication the wave of the future. Allowing two devices to “talk” to one another over low-frequency radio waves, the necessity of wired devices is becoming more and more a thing of the past. Bluetooth headsets are both the most-sought-after device of this trend as well as the most confusing. Most people simply don’t know what to look for to make sure that they’re getting a high-functioning, quality device for their money, and the money is still not in the easily affordable range.

When deciding which Bluetooth headsets to buy, there are several factors that can help ensure that it’s the right device for your needs. From functionality to range of use, to compatibility and style, here are a few tips to acquiring the Bluetooth headset that fits both your needs and your budget.

- 1) **Quality.** The headset is a receiver for many of its functions and clear and strong sound quality is a must to help with a weak connection. The headset should also be light to wear and if it has either a boom or a clip-on for attachment, the connection between the two parts of the device should not feel flimsy.
- 2) **Comfort.** If the device has a clip, make sure that it fits comfortably around your ear. If it has a boom, be sure that it seems sturdy and well connected to the headset.
- 3) **Pairing.** Device pairing is the ability of your Bluetooth headset to search for and recognize another device, like your phone, printer or music device. It should be able to find and function with up to seven devices within its range of use.
- 4) **Range of Use.** The headset should have an unobstructed range of at least 10 meters (about thirty feet) – which is standard for Bluetooth Class 2 devices. You can verify this range by using the headset in obstructed and unobstructed distances from the phone or wireless device so you are sure of its capabilities.
- 5) **Ease of Use.** Is there voice-activation for hands-free use? Can all or most of the functions be managed this way? Make sure the device can be used hands-free keeps you out of danger of many states citing no-cell-phone laws while driving.
- 6) **Price.** Price can range anywhere from about \$20.00 up to almost \$200.00. In many cases, the higher the price means the higher the quality and better functionality, but it’s not necessary to go straight to the top in cost. Keep your cost between \$65.00 and \$100.00 to ensure a device that will be good quality with solid functions.
- 7) **Battery.** A common complaint among Bluetooth headset users is lack of battery life.
 - a. Look for 10 hours of talk or play-time, up to 100 hours when idle.
 - b. Make sure the battery is replaceable.
 - c. Understand how the battery charges and how long charging takes.
 - d. Battery should be compatible with Bluetooth 1.1 or later.
- 8) **Compatibility.** Should comply with at least Bluetooth 1.1 technology.
 - a. 1.2 is becoming more common. This version helps to eliminate radio frequency interference with a frequency hopping option for better security.
 - b. Version 2.0 has been introduced with some devices and goes a step further with noise reduction and echo cancellation features.

- 9) **Functionality.** All functions should be accessible through either voice –activation or hands-on-maintenance. Some functions to look for are:
- a. Last number redial
 - b. Transfer call to or from phone
 - c. 3-Way Calling
 - d. Mute
 - e. Music playback, forward, rewind
 - f. Volume control
- 10) **Style.** Last but not at all least is the style of the device. There are two major categories for current Bluetooth headsets – boom or no boom. A boom is a mouth-piece attachment that looks like something an operator would wear.
- a. Boom options – While they can be heavier and bulky, they offer higher clarity.
 - b. Non-boom options can either be placed in the ear, which can be less comfortable but more secure than devices that are worn around the ear via a folding clip.

Keep in mind that Bluetooth technology is constantly evolving. Make sure that the device you choose is compatible with the optimal amount of Bluetooth versions and devices, while allowing for battery replacement to ensure a longer-life and better value for the future.