



The Inside Scoop on Hoop

What is a hula hoop?

Why is it called a hula hoop?

What is the best hoop for beginners?

Should I get a weighted or a light-weight hoop?

If you've found yourself asking any of these questions, you've come to the right place! Read on to learn all about this remarkably round prop.

Hoop History

Hoops have been around for thousands of years in some form or other. Back in 3000 BC, Egyptians made hoops from reeds and rattan which were then spun around the waist, thrown in the air, and pushed along the ground with a stick. Ancient Greeks used grapevines to make hoops which were used for both exercise and as toys. Native North Americans used hoops to hone their harpoon skills by rolling the hoop along the ground and throwing poles through it as it moved.

Hoops are particularly important to the Lakota people (a native North American tribe) who use hoop dance to tell stories. These stories are often told by a single performer who uses as many as 30 hoops to turn themselves into various animals and other elements of their story. The hoop also symbolises the circle of life for the Lakota people.



In Australia, children used wooden hoops as toys and as a form of exercise, and this is where the idea for the modern Hula Hoop originated. Arthur Melin and Richard Knerr, founders of toy company Wham-O, were inspired to create the new toy after seeing children in Australia playing with their hoops.

In 1958, Wham-O released the Hula Hoop, and it's estimated that around 25 million hoops were sold in just the first four months! While the extreme popularity of the hula hoop was short lived, it never completely disappeared. Nowadays there are numerous types of hoops available, with hooping now a common form of exercise, dance, and performance art.

Materials

When it comes to hula hoops, there are generally three main types of material used. They're all somewhat similar but there are some differences that are important to be aware of.

Material	Info/Pros	Cons
Polyethylene (PE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Made from petroleum ● Commonly known as alkathene pipe in NZ ● Can be purchased from hardware stores 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Can feel too heavy for some faster tricks ● Extended hooping can become painful with a heavier hoop

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Easy to purchase small amounts of pipe and joiners ● Tube size is measured in ID (inner diameter) ● Easy DIY beginner option 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Prone to kinking during fast reverse moves ● Can soften and sag in hot conditions
Medium & High Density Polyethylene (MDPE & HDPE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Same chemical makeup as PE, but lighter, stiffer and harder ● Density is rated in bars or psi (pounds per square inch) ● Higher rating = denser and heavier tubing ● Tube size is measured in OD (outer diameter) ● Fantastic mid-weight hoop material - easier to learn with than super lightweight options ● Extremely durable ● Lightweight and responsive ● Handles the cold well 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Not great for bouncing moves ● More heat resistant than PE but can still soften in intense sunlight ● Requires more effort/force than PPE/Polypro
Polypropylene (PPE/Polypro)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Made from polymer plastic ● Very hard wearing material ● Super lightweight ● Extremely responsive ● Great for fast and complex moves ● Very little drag when moving ● Excellent for 'flow' hooping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The lighter weight is not ideal for building muscle memory when learning new tricks ● Highly sensitive to extreme temperatures (hot/cold) ● Rapid temperature changes can cause the PPE to shatter

Sizes and Styles

There are SO MANY hula hoop variations available, and as with all props, we understand that there is no 'one size fits all' guide to finding the right hoop for you. We recommend trying out different sizes, weights, and styles to find which ones suit your own awesome style the best.

Although it may seem backwards, a lighter, smaller hoop will not necessarily be easier to use, especially when you're just starting out. Most hula hoops are sized by their overall diameter (the length of a straight line from one side of a circle to the opposite side). A guide for finding the right sized hula hoop is to measure from the ground to your belly button – this will give you an excellent starting diameter to work with.



Knowing what you want from your hula hoop can help with being successful in your hooping journey, and there are a few things you can think about to help you decide which hoop is right for you. Do you want your hoop primarily for exercise and for waist hooping, or are you wanting to incorporate more dance and off-body tricks into your hooping?

There are typically 3 main styles of hula hoop – fitness, dance/regular, and lightweight – and they each have their own characteristics. Many hoopers will have an array of hoops that they can switch between based on the style of hooping they're doing.

Fitness hula hoops are a great option for beginners. They're usually larger and thicker, which makes them easier to learn on. A larger hoop will circle slower than a smaller hoop, giving you more time between rotations to predict how the hoop will react. Fitness hula hoops are often made from tubing around 25mm diameter (the size of the tubing itself, not the overall size of the hoop) and are the easiest hula hoop to learn waist hooping with due to being relatively steady. One of the downfalls of larger fitness hoops is that they are generally heavier and can sometimes leave bruises if they hit your body the wrong way. They're also not really ideal for some of the more complex hooping moves.



Dance hula hoops are a midweight choice, often made from tubing around 20mm diameter. While it's recommended to stick with the belly-button sizing for this style, some moves will be easier with a slightly smaller diameter hoop. Dance hula hoops will open up an array of new moves that can be too tricky to master with a heavier fitness hoop, and are still great for waist hooping too.

Lightweight hoops are much lighter than the other 2 styles and are often made from tubing around 16mm diameter. These hoops are excellent for off-body moves as they are much lighter, but they're not so great for waist hooping. It's generally recommended to go slightly shorter than your belly-button for lightweight hoops. You can go even smaller, although the tricks you can do with smaller hoops become much more limited.

Travel hoops are collapsible hoops that can either break down into segments, or twist into smaller circles, making them excellent travelling companions. Travel hoops can be found in a range of sizes and the break-down style ones are often a little heavier than their non-collapsible counterparts as they have extra components/connection points.

LED hoops, or glow hoops, are often made from HDPE and are essentially a clear, circular tube with LED lights inside. Some LED hoops have basic coloured lights, while others have more complex lights that create a pixelated image when the hoop is in motion. LED hoops will often be heavier than their non-LED counterparts due to the extra components.



Fire hoops are often regular hoops with wicks attached to the outside. These wicks are usually about 15cm away from the actual hoop, meaning there is plenty of space between the hooper and the flame. You can check out our hoop range here, including easily attachable, lightweight fire wicks. Don't forget to check out our [wick care and fire safety guide](#) to ensure you keep yourself and those around you safe while playing with fire.



Fun Facts About Hula Hoops

- The name Hula Hoop was derived from the Hawaiian Hula dance as hooping uses the same hip and waist movements.
- In 2015, Australian hooper Marawa Ibrahim set the world record for the greatest number of hoops at one time with a colossal 200 hoops! This was her 4th time breaking this record.
- In 2019, Australian hooper Jenny Doan set the world record for the longest hooping marathon at a whopping 100 hours.
- Toy company Wham-O also made slingshots, frisbees, slip 'n' slides, and hacky sacks.
- Hooping has been combined with other forms of exercise to create entirely new ways to keep fit, such as Hoop-Yoga, Hoopilates, and HoopChi.