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Photo: Ben FruminEach dumbbell is about 16 inches long. They have five weight plates on both ends, along with an easy and smooth turn-and-click dial to set a given weight.Depending on the load you set, some plates will stay in the rack, while others will attach to the dumbbell.So, for instance, if you set the dial to 10 pounds, one weight plate latches onto each end of the bar, and the other four stay locked in the rack.Increase the load to 25 pounds, and two weight plates stay on each end of the bar, with the remaining three on each side in the rack.Muscle it up to 50 pounds, and the four heaviest weight plates stay on each end of the dumbbell, with the fifth and final plate still racked.It's a nifty design. In my experience, it works exceedingly well—setting your desired weight and lifting the properly freighted dumbbell out of the rack is very easy. And because you can easily shift from light to heavy weights, these adjustable dumbbells work well for scores of different exercises.When you're done, the dumbbell slides smoothly back into the rack, ready to be set to your next desired weight.The dumbbells' handles are covered in a comfortable rubber coating that has just the right level of gripiness, and in my case that coating has remained in excellent shape even after nearly a decade of use.And the set has a notably small footprint—my dumbbells sit next to each other on a patch of basement floor that is barely 20 by 20 inches—so it's well suited for "gym corners" in small apartments, too. When looking for a proper set of adjustable dumbbells, you first want to look at the available weight range. Typically, most adjustable dumbbells will max out between 50-60 pounds, albeit with varying degrees of adjustability. This should be enough to cater to a beginner-level strength training routine, but there are heavier options available, like the Nuöbells from Smrtff. Speaking of, make sure you're comfortable with the adjustment features of your adjustable dumbbells, as there's no point in purchasing a piece of fitness equipment that's going to detract from your in-training progress. While some models boast easy-to-use toggles, others might require additional steps that take more time to adjust, leaving you less time to actually lift the structures. Both the Bowflex and Smrtff models chosen for this head-to-head feature premium adjustment toggles that are easily maneuvered for precise weight changes. Lastly, while storage is less of a factor in adjustable dumbbells — especially when compared to traditional freeweights that ultimately take up more space — it is nice to consider products that have proper stands and racks available. While we do admire the SelectTech 552s and Nuöbells for their standalone racks, the two brands do separate themselves from the pack due to the available dumbbell stands, which can bring the products closer to hip level for a more convenient storage space. Bowflex Rogue Test 1: Adjustability and Weight Range Both the SelectTech 552 and Nuöbell adjustable dumbbells showcase some of the most user-friendly adjustment features we've seen to date. Both processes were pretty smooth in testing with no real hangups or inconveniences. With that said, however, the Bowflex SelectTech 552s do require an additional step in making sure both sides of the dumbbell are set to the correct weight. While this wasn't a major issue, it did make for an additional step, which wasn't present in the rotating handle setup of the Smrtff Nuöbell. Are we splitting hairs? Absolutely. Should it make a difference in your purchase? Maybe? While the weight adjustments were more than comparable, Smrtff definitely stands out in weight totals. Yes, the Bowflex offering is impressive thanks to its 2.5-pound increments below the 25-pound marker, but with a max weight of 80 pounds, the Nuöbell is hard to ignore. As someone that routinely does heavier dumbbell exercises like rows, tricep extensions and other modalities, this was a welcome feature that often left me reaching for the Smrtff weight over its competitors. Ben Emminger Ben Emminger Bowflex currently makes some of the best-selling dumbbells on the market. But if you've ever considered buying a pair you'll know they aren't exactly cheap. This post explains if Bowflex adjustable dumbbells are actually worth it. Bowflex dumbbells are worth the money. They offer a cost-effective and space-saving way for people to build muscle or lose weight at home. However, there are also notable reports of durability issues. The Powerblock dumbbells are a better value option for most people.I've owned dumbbells from both brands (Bowflex 552 and Powerblock Elite).Below, I share my thoughts (as well as those from Reddit/Quora) on whether or not the Bowflex dumbbells give you true value for money/Having personally used the Bowflex 552 dumbbells (link for the hands-on review) for over 2 years, I feel they can be a great pair of weights for both male and female beginners/intermediates.However, the PowerBlocks are simply better in my opinion (I own both by the way).But what value does one person's opinion provide?I've little!To verify my claims, I have to Reddit and Quora to find the opinions of other Bowflex users.This gave me a more balanced perspective.Here are the 3 forum threads I tracked down and analyzed:And here are the compiled results:You can see that:56% of Bowflex users agreed their dumbbells were worth the money.24% of Bowflex users did not feel their dumbbells were worth how much they paid for it.20% of people agreed that adjustable dumbbells are worth it but the Powerblocks are better.Thus, I feel my claims- that Bowflex makes great dumbbells but Powerblocks are better- have been sufficiently supported by peer approval!Next, I'll detail the reasons why the Bowflex dumbbells can be good and some of the issues that make them not so great.Not sure how what the Bowflex dumbbells can be used for? You can check out my full-body Bowflex dumbbell workout!First, let's set one thing straight:The Bowflex dumbbells aren't terrible!They're just up against a very high-caliber competitor (Powerblock) that provides just that bit more oomph for your money.Based on personal experience and the results of my forum poll, here are some of the reasons why the Bowflex dumbbells can be worth your money:They replace 15-17 pairs of dumbbells. Depending on whether you get the Bowflex Selectech 552 or 1090, you have access to 15-17 different dumbbell weights. This can EASILY cost over \$1000 for a comparable set of fixed-weight hex dumbbells. So in this sense, you get great value for money with the Bowflex dumbbells.Their space-saving design is great for small-home gyms. The 15-17 dumbbell weights found in the Bowflex dumbbells are packaged into a single unit that measures just under 1 cubic foot. If you're home gym is tight on space, then adjustable dumbbells in general are well worth the money! You can check out my other post for more reasons why adjustable dumbbells are worth it.Dial-a-weight design is intuitive for beginners. I've tested numerous adjustable dumbbell models and can honestly say the Bowflex have one of the best adjustment mechanisms. It's easy for beginners to use and each turn of the dial emits this satisfying metallic "clink." Adjustment mechanisms from cheaper brands can often feel fidgety and cumbersome for someone who's never used this type of weight before.A slick adjustment mechanism leads to faster workouts. I've owned the Chinese dial-a-weight knock offs from Ali Express. And let me tell you, the dial is infuriating to use! It jams all too often. And this prolongs your workout. If you're going to get the Bowflex dumbbells, it's worth the extra hundred or so bucks to get the real ones! You can go to my other post to learn how to tell a fake Bowflex.Saves time by removing the requirement for gym commute. Have you ever thought about how much time you could save by not having to travel to and from the gym? Most people could save 30-60 mins per workout (assuming 15-30 mins one way). That accumulates to a lot of hours (and money!) each year that you could save by just having dumbbells at home.Free 1-year JRNY workout membership. This is the all-in-one trainer app released by Nautilus (Bowflex's parent company). It features video workout tutorials taught by real trainers that are tailored specifically to your abilities and goals. If you're an absolute beginner looking to burn belly fat or simply build some noticeable amount of muscle, then this Bowflex package can be well worth your time and money. Note: valid at time of writing.They provide enough weight for most people. The max weight capacity and number of weight increments in the Bowflex dumbbells make them suitable for a variety of exercises. They're also suitable for different goals at a beginner to intermediate level. Whether you're looking to lose weight or build muscle, the Bowflex dumbbells allow you to do it at home. The SelectTech 552 is an affordable all-rounder, whilst the SelectTech 1090 is more suitable for those who want to build/maintain muscle.If you're interested, you can find the cheapest Bowflex price here.Now for the negatives and what's wrong with the Bowflex dumbbells.Again, these points are based on personal experience and those expressed in my poll study.Here's why the Bowflex dumbbells may not be worth the money:Bulky design can be awkward to use. It's hard to tell from the pictures, but the Bowflex dumbbells are B.U.L.L.K.Y (yup I felt it needed upper case lettering for emphasis!). That's because the handle measures 17" from dial to dial. And the length stays the same no matter what weight setting you choose. The sheer size of the Bowflex dumbbells cause them to bump into each other in exercises like the bicep curl (especially if you have a narrow frame). This is obviously very impractical and annoying!Plastic internal locking plates can break. Having performed extensive research, it seems that most of the Bowflex dumbbells last for years without issue. But there's also a notable amount of cases where the plastic locking mechanism inside the dumbbells break. This renders your dumbbell obsolete. Needless to say, this is a strong reason why the Bowflex dumbbells may not be worth it. With that being said, these dumbbells should last you a good few years if you clean and maintain them properly.Weight plates can become jammed. Different types of adjustable dumbbells exist, and Bowflex are arguably the best for the dial-a-weight style of dumbbell. But these types of dumbbell have a tendency to get stuck. Bowflex even include a troubleshooting in their manual, clearly showing it's a common issue. For more information, you can check out my other post which explains how long Bowflex dumbbells last.They do not have the best handle grips. The neoprene sleeve is actually quite good. It's soft, grippy, and comfortable. The only issue is they only bothered to install it on the handle midsection and not all across it! As a result, the grip is nearly non-existent on the outer regions of the handle (the area closest to the weight plates) which is made from smooth chrome-plated steel.Weight cannot be upgraded. This is a big factor to consider when deciding if the Bowflex dumbbells are worth it. You'll need to upgrade the entire dumbbell if you find yourself outgrowing the Selectech 552's or 1090's. This may not be an issue for people who work out for fat loss and casual fitness. But for those looking to build serious muscle, it's worth considering the Powerlocks instead (which allow you to upgrade weight with retro-fitted added kits).Cannot support body weight. This is hardly in certain exercises like the dumbbell push-up where you need your dumbbells to support your entire body weight. Whilst the Bowflex dumbbells won't exactly buckle when body weight is applied every now and then, it's not recommended doing it too often. They simply aren't sturdy enough. You can check out my other post for a detailed comparison of Bowflex vs Powerblock dumbbells for pushups.2-Year Warranty is not the longest. The Bowflex warranty is slightly longer than the average 1-year warranty offered by most adjustable dumbbell manufacturers. But it's nothing compared to the 5-year warranty offered by PowerBlock. The latter believes in the durability of their dumbbells!If you're still keen on the Bowflex dumbbells, you may be interested in my other post which explains how the Bowflex dumbbells work.The Bowflex SelectTech 552 adjustable dumbbells are worth the money for beginners. They are easy to use, comfortable, space-saving, and replace multiple dumbbell pairs. However, most people will find the PowerBlock Elite dumbbells to offer better value for money overall.As I said before, the Bowflex dumbbells aren't exactly bad. They're a premium brand after all (you can check out a post to learn more about Bowflex as a company).It's just that the Powerlocks are better.As a beginner who has no point of reference, odds are you'll be very happy with a Bowflex 552 purchase.They're good all-round dumbbells and they are more than good for most people to build some muscle, burn fat, and get toned.But as someone who's compared them side by side over 2 years, I can also say that the Powerlocks offer more value for money overall.In fact, I've actually stopped using my Bowflex 552 dumbbells in favor of my PowerBlock Elites!You can find the cheapest PowerBlock price here.The Bowflex SelectTech 1090 adjustable dumbbells are worth it for experienced weight lifters. They offer very heavy weights that make them ideal for building muscle at home. However, most people will find the PowerBlock Elite with the stage 2 and 3 add-on kits to offer more value for money.The SelectTech 1090 dumbbells are not too dissimilar to the 552 dumbbells.They just offer more weight (90lbs vs 52.5lbs per dumbbell) and a different handle design.Just be aware that the Bowflex 1090 dumbbells are very expensive.The price has actually dropped since I last checked, but they still aren't cheap.After I realized that I needed to upgrade my Bowflex 552 dumbbells, I had 2 main candidates:Bowflex 1090 or Powerblock Elite with stage 2 and 3 add-on kits.Both options provide 90lbs of resistance per dumbbell.I went with the Powerlocks in the end.They were cheaper and did not have the durability issues of the Bowflex dumbbells.Was I happy about my decision?Yes!But if you like the design of the Bowflex 1090 dumbbells (which have a traditional dumbbell) shape, they are still very good dumbbells that receive a lot of positive feedback.You may also be interested in my other post for the 9 heaviest adjustable dumbbells.I've explained if the Bowflex adjustable dumbbells are worth it.My opinion- and that of most Reddit/Quora users- is that they are generally good adjustable dumbbells.However, a lot of people (including myself who has owned both) simply feel the Powerblock dumbbells offer more value for money.If you have no point of personal comparison, I'm sure you'll be happy with the Bowflex dumbbells. They are great dumbbells after all.But for those who want the most from their money, then unfortunately the Powerlocks reign supreme!What do you think about the Bowflex dumbbells?Feel free to send me a message if you have any questions! You can find my details on the "contact us" page.You may also be interested in the downloadable Kaibire Blueprint PDF which details exactly how I gained 40lbs of lean muscle (it's 100% free)! It details the exact exercises and nutrition (with printable worksheets) I used to go from skinny to ripped!Thanks for reading guys!Peace Out,Kai(Biochemistry BSc, Biomedical Sciences MSc, Ex-Skinny Guy) Here are the most notable alternatives. PowerBlock Dumbbells The PowerBlock Dumbbells have made a name for themselves due to their unique, stackable design and efficient weight change mechanism. The cube-like structure allows users to switch between weights rapidly, making them ideal for high-intensity interval training (HIIT) or circuit-based workouts. A distinct feature is the color-coded racks, which make it easy to identify the weight used. Based on my experience, the compact design also ensures minimal space utilization, especially for home gyms with limited space. Compared to Bowflex Dumbbells: While Bowflex is known for its dial-based adjustment system, PowerBlock offers a quicker pin-based selection, though some may find Bowflex more intuitive. PowerBlock Ironmaster Dumbbells PowerBlock's Ironmaster variant offers a blend of traditional aesthetics with modern adjustability. Made from durable materials, these dumbbells promise longevity and sturdiness. Their primary selling point is the quick-lock adjustment system, ensuring smooth weight transitions. This system also enables the addition of more weight plates, making it suitable for both beginners and advanced lifters. Our tests indicate that the Ironmaster's design also caters to those who prefer a more conventional dumbbell feel while retaining the adjustable features. Compared to Bowflex Dumbbells: Ironmaster focuses on durability and the traditional dumbbell experience, whereas Bowflex leans more towards innovative design and ease of use. Rogue Fitness Nuobell Dumbbells Rogue Fitness Nuobell Dumbbells present an elegant solution for those who prefer sleek design without compromising functionality. Users can adjust the weights seamlessly with a simple twist of the handle, providing efficient transitions between exercises. Its balanced weight distribution ensures a consistent workout feel, and the robust build quality speaks to its durability. The Nuobell's modern aesthetics and user-friendly mechanism make it a strong contender in the adjustable dumbbell market. Compared to Bowflex Dumbbells: Both brands prioritize user experience with their unique adjustment mechanisms, but Rogue's Nuobell leans more towards a sleek, minimalist design than Bowflex's bulkier build. Jump to Proud owner of a home gym? Or simply long coveted one? Either way, you've probably heard of Bowflex. Purveyors of quality exercise equipment, the brand has been killing out home fitness enthusiasts with kettlebells, benches, weight machines and more since its inception in the mid-eighties. But Bowflex is perhaps best known for its adjustable, space-saving dumbbells — part of the SelectTech range that also includes an adjustable kettlebell and barbell.Comprising of two weight ranges (2-24kg and 4-41kg), the SelectTech dumbbells are widely revered for their simplicity, space-saving abilities, large weight range, quick adjustments and comfortable grip — plus the fact that owning a pair means your awkward gym lingering days are behind you.But there's no denying these will set you back a few quid, with a single dumbbell starting from £209. So, in our quest to find the best adjustable dumbbells going, I took delivery of a pair to test whether they stand up to the hype and are worth the hefty price tag. Read on to find out what I made of them. Bowflex SelectTech 1090i Single Dumbbell (4-41kg)Weight settings17Weight increments4, 7, 9, 11, 14, 16, 18, 20, 23, 25, 27, 30, 32, 34, 36, 39, and 41kgDimensions44.4cm L x 24.2cm W x 25.3cm HIncludedOwners manual, unpacking instruction sheet, storage tray, restraint strap and allen keyExtrasFree JRNY trial for new membersRead more: The Best Adjustable Dumbbells for Home GymsLet's get down to brass tacks and explain exactly how these weights work, because when friends and family asked what the two giant boxes filling my hallway contained, the phrase "adjustable dumbbells" garnered reactions from bafflement to declarations of pure wizardry. And while I'll admit they're pretty clever, the mechanics behind the Bowflex adjustable dumbbells are actually pretty simple.View full post on InstagramEach dumbbell consists of slotted plates either side of a handle and sits in a sturdy plastic cradle. When you select your weight using the adjustment dial (located at the end of each dumbbell), the retaining mechanism clicks the desired weight plates into place and locks them to the handle, so you can lift the dumbbell up, the remaining plates are left in the tray. Lock in With This Year Long Dumbbell Training PlanWondering how to use the Bowflex adjustable dumbbells? It couldn't be easier. Set up your dumbbell (in its tray) on a stable surface. Select the weight you want by twisting the weight selection dials (one at each end) until the small arrows are aligned with your chosen weight.You'll hear and feel the adjustment dial click into place. If not, you won't be able to lift the dumbbell.Lift the dumbbell off the tray and get to work.When you're done or ready to adjust the weight, simply slot the dumbbell back into place on the tray, using a vertical motion perpendicular to the base. I tested a pair of the heavier dumbbells, the Bowflex SelectTech 1090i, which cranks up, via 2-3kg increments, to an impressive 41kg (the 24kg option increases in 1-3kg increments).Each dumbbell arrived in such an intimidatingly large box that I was immediately sceptical of their space-saving claims, however, diligent packaging is largely the culprit, and these measure up at a modest 44 x 24 cm footprint each. How they arrived before unboxing How they look and store once unboxedThe hardest part by far is taking the dumbbells out the box (I resorted to tearing it apart rather than try and lift the weights) out and transporting them to your room of choice. After that? There's very little you need to do — just use the provided allen key to unbuckle the straps holding the weights in place (this is a little fiddly) and get down to business. The dumbbells come fully assembled in their cradles ready for use. The dream. Pro17 weights in oneNo assembly required Space-saving!Deal for a wide range of exercisesEasy to use and adjust Good grip on the handlesPlastic construction means less noise Lock slick Built to lastFree JRNY app trialRequire little to no maintenance — just wipe off your sweat!dust every now and then I was really impressed with how easy these are to use — the weight transition is smooth and they slot back into place cleanly, with no forcing or awkward shimmying (as with some other models). The trays keep the weight plates standing up straight, so they don't knock against each other when not in use, and because of the largely plastic construction, there's no clanging sounds as you change weights (you're welcome, neighbours). Another brilliant feature was how you can switch straight from 4kg to 41kg without having to cycle your way through each weight increment — again, this is the case on some other adjustable dumbbells — so weight transitions are made that much faster. And it probably goes without saying, but given the wide weight range you can do pretty much everything with these, from lighter lateral raises to bicep curls, incline chest press and heavier single leg deadlifts. The versatility really cannot be understated. 34 Best Dumbbell Exercises for Building MuscleCons Difficult to moveHandles could be comfierExpensive and usually sold singly — but when you consider the cost of 17 dumbbells... Made with a lot of plastic, which is not as durable as some other materialsWeight changes can interrupt the flow of workoutsWhile the grip on these dumbbells is great, they're not the comfiest handles, so if lifting heavy you may want to invest in some weightlifting gloves. Another minor bugbear is the sheer size of them — because the length of the dumbbell remains the same whichever weight you select, when working with low weight you're still picking up a fairly sizeable dumbbell, which may not be ideal for some. Some may also not love the plastic lock (they are made with a lot of plastic) and it does raise questions over their durability. However, the dumbbells feel sturdy and well-made, plus we've heard of people using them successfully for over a decade, so we're not too worried about their longevity. You definitely want to avoid dropping them though. If storing the Bowflex adjustable dumbbells off the ground your surface needs to be sturdy — no IKEA stragglers from your uni days please. The brand recommends its own stands or storing them on the floor. This is the case for all adjustable dumbbells, but there's no denying that no matter how fast your weight transition, if you're in the middle of a workout that requires multiple weights, the time it takes to put the dumbbell down, switch weight and pick it up again can be disruptive. Is it enough to put us off? No. But it's worth bearing in mind. It's a rounding yes from me. The dumbbells perform well on durability, versatility, space-saving and ease of use. The only real drawback is the price, but when you consider that dumbbell sets with a similar weight range will set you back around £1000 (not to mention the giant footprint), they actually start to look pretty reasonable, erring on great value. It's worth too recognising the benefits of training with dumbbells: they offer a natural and functional range of motion, engage stabiliser muscles to promote better balance and coordination, and unlock a whole host of exercises to target every muscle group in the body. You can build strength, increase muscle mass or improve muscular endurance and maintain our services and site, improve the quality of Reddit, personalize Reddit content and advertising, and measure the effectiveness of advertising. By rejecting non-essential cookies, Reddit may still use certain cookies to ensure the proper functionality of our platform. For more information, please see our Cookie Notice and our Privacy Policy. From my small inner city apartment, I don't have the space for a home gym to store the best home gym equipment. But that doesn't stop me from thinking about how I'd deck it out if I did, and these adjustable dumbbells definitely make it onto my must-have list. I've seen the Bowflex SelectTech 552i adjustable dumbbells make it out just about every best adjustable dumbbell guide in fitness, including ours (check out our full Bowflex SelectTech 552 review). So I wanted to get more hands-on with them to see how they fared during high-intensity strength and conditioning programs. Call me old fashioned, but I prefer strength training with a sturdy pair of hex dumbbells when I'm training — particularly when lifting heavy weights above my head or positioning them on the floor during a drill's press or renegade row. But these adjustable dumbbells took me by surprise. Here's what I liked and a few sticking points I found during testing. You may like What are Bowflex SelectTech 552i adjustable dumbbells? (Image credit: Amazon)The Bowflex SelectTech 552i adjustable dumbbells come as a set for around \$300 (depending on where you purchase them) and offer weight ranges between 2-24kg (up to 55.6 pounds per dumbbell), which adjust in the dumbbell tray using a speedy selection dial. You can access 15 different weight settings suitable for cardio workouts, endurance training, or strength training programs alongside a home gym free access subscription to the on-demand workout library on the JRNY app. Subscriptions now range from \$9.99/month or \$149/year. (Image credit: Future owns/ Sam Hopes)Here's why I reckon these dumbbells should be a home gym equipment staple and a few pros and cons I discovered along the way. They're surprisingly sturdy!If you haven't seen these weights, the Bowflex dumbbells sit in trays with plates bolted on either side of the handles. Using the selection dial, you can choose your desired weight, then simply lift the dumbbells off the trays, and the plates sit securely on the dumbbells ready to use. Get instant access to breaking news, the hottest reviews, great deals and helpful tips.I spent the first 10 minutes flinching every time I lifted these weights above my head, fully expecting to be showered with plates, but they didn't budge an inch, and I was surprised by just how sturdy and secure they felt.I could swing them above my head during snatches and position them over my chest during a floor chest press (here's how to do a bench press here) without the plates sliding around or rolling around on the floor — exactly what you need from good quality adjustable dumbbells. Moreover, I could grip them in a high plank position without them rolling out and hurting my shoulders. They're bulky(Image credit: Fuure owns/ Sam Hopes)These aren't weights you can expect to carry on the go because you need the trays for weight changes, so expect them to be a stationary addition to a home gym. Once out of the tray, they're pretty bulky weights to hold, and I found myself craving the sleeker hex dumbbells I'm more familiar with. Although the SelectTech 552s are hardly wallflowers, if you can find some space to store them, they could save you a ton of money and space overall without the need for a space-consuming dumbbell rack to store individual weights. These adjustable dumbbells work well enough for moves like a press or renegade row, but I found them too bulky for exercises like tricep kickbacks, bicep curls, or learning how to do a kettlebell swing using a dumbbell instead. They're perfect for home gyms! see the need for adjustable dumbbells. They're convenient and (as I mentioned) save you space and money on multiple sets of dumbbells. Moreover, with the growing cost of spendy gym memberships, more and more people are building home gyms however they can with the space available. I see the need for them, especially if you enjoy doing strength training programs from home during your lunch break or outdoors in the warmer months. Switching weights is easyThe dial helps you select different weights in seconds, meaning you can quickly scale up and down during rest breaks, and it takes about the same amount of time as if you were picking up another pair of dumbbells. My program started with a strength component. I performed five sets of five heavy reps on the floor press, then moved into a WOD (workout of the day) consisting of an AMRAP (as many rounds as possible) of snatches, rowing machine, push press, farmer's hold, and handstands. I started at two reps (or calories) per exercise and added two per round. I chose this exercise format to put the adjustable dumbbells to the test regardless of training preference — could I transition seamlessly between weights? Were the weights sturdy enough during heavy lifting? Could they offer enough weight variation? Were they too bulky to wield? This model passed every test for me, but personally, they're just too chunky to play around with and can't be thrown to — or tapped off — the floor during high-intensity power training. The handles got slipperyThe rubber and steel grip makes them more ergonomic than other models we've tested at Tom's Guide. However, anyone planning to use these adjustable dumbbells should consider grip gloves or chalk (I swear by liquid chalk) if you plan to get sweaty during a workout. After a few rounds of my chosen AMRAP, my hands started slipping on the handles, and snatches became pretty precarious. Bowflex SelectTech 552i adjustable dumbbells: VerdictIf you want a reliable pair of adjustable dumbbells to target major muscle groups, burn calories, or strengthen your limbs, look no further. Bowflex dumbbells are super popular in the fitness industry for a good reason and could power any functional, full-body strength workout without the faff of fumbling around for plates or changing out dumbbells, but there's just nothing subtle about them. More from Tom's Guide The SelectTech 552s adjust across the weight range from the outside in, meaning lighter totals will sit further toward the dial than heavier totals. While there's no problem with this from a balance standpoint, the aesthetics can be compromised for some. These dumbbells are big and bulky, no matter which weight you choose.Photo by Jack Soemer for Gear Patrol Also, the size of the dumbbell never changes, unlike what you'd experience with traditional weights. This means that a 5-pound dumbbell is going to be as long and wide as a 45-pound profile. You definitely feel as if you're using an adjustable dumbbell with these Bowflex options, so if you prefer that more traditional feel of free weights, you're not going to find it across this frame. Bowflex SelectTech 552 Adjustable Dumbbells: Alternatives The Bowflex SelectTech 552s aren't the only adjustable option on the market anymore, and there are a few silhouettes that have caught up to the process. The Nuöbell from Smrtff, for example, is the closest profile to a traditional set-weight dumbbell with impressive knurling, outward expansion and a metal design. You'll be paying for these impressive advancements, though, to the tune of nearly double that of Bowflex. If you prefer the dial-style silhouette, Ativatf's 66-pound Adjustable Dumbbell is another beginner-friendly model. You also get an increased weight range of 11 to 66 pounds, but there's no micro-adjustment feature at the lower totals. Here are the most notable alternatives. PowerBlock Dumbbells The PowerBlock Dumbbells have made a name for themselves due to their unique, stackable design and efficient weight change mechanism. The cube-like structure allows users to switch between weights rapidly, making them ideal for high-intensity interval training (HIIT) or circuit-based workouts. A distinct feature is the color-coded racks, which make it easy to identify the weight used. Based on my experience, the compact design also ensures minimal space utilization, especially for home gyms with limited space. Compared to Bowflex Dumbbells: While Bowflex is known for its dial-based adjustment system, PowerBlock offers a quicker pin-based selection, though some may find Bowflex more intuitive. PowerBlock Ironmaster Dumbbells PowerBlock's Ironmaster variant offers a blend of traditional aesthetics with modern adjustability. Made from durable materials, these dumbbells promise longevity and sturdiness. Their primary selling point is the quick-lock adjustment system, ensuring smooth weight transitions. This system also enables the addition of more weight plates, making it suitable for both beginners and advanced lifters. Our tests indicate that the Ironmaster's design also caters to those who prefer a more conventional dumbbell feel while retaining the adjustable features. Compared to Bowflex Dumbbells: Ironmaster focuses on durability and the traditional dumbbell experience, whereas Bowflex leans more towards innovative design and ease of use. Rogue Fitness Nuobell Dumbbells Rogue Fitness Nuobell Dumbbells present an elegant solution for those who prefer sleek design without compromising functionality. Users can adjust the weights seamlessly with a simple twist of the handle, providing efficient transitions between exercises. Its balanced weight distribution ensures a consistent workout feel, and the robust build quality speaks to its durability. The Nuobell's modern aesthetics and user-friendly mechanism make it a strong contender in the adjustable dumbbell market. Compared to Bowflex Dumbbells: Both brands prioritize user experience with their unique adjustment mechanisms, but Rogue's Nuobell leans more towards a sleek, minimalist design than Bowflex's bulkier build. Bowflex SelectTech 552 Dumbbells: Specs Price: \$400 Weight Range: 5 to 52.5 pounds Dumbbell Size: 15.8 x 9 x 8 inches Dumbbell Weight: 105 pounds (52.5 pounds each)If your home gym is ready for an upgrade, the Bowflex SelectTech 552 Dumbbells are ready to help you reach your fitness goals, without the hefty gym membership. With a range of 5 to 52.5 pounds each, these adjustable dumbbells offer plenty of weight for most gym-goers — without taking up too much space. Strength training is a pivotal part of any fitness regimen, and the best adjustable dumbbells let you power through each workout without fumbling around with loose weight plates in between sets. In fact, standalone dumbbells are one of the most fundamental pieces of gym equipment you can own; they're great for high-energy HIIT routines, helping you burn more calories and bulk up your limbs — one muscle group at a time. As you'll see in this Bowflex SelectTech 552 Dumbbell review, this set isn't meant for powerlifters per se, but they're still a rock-solid option for your next sweat session if you can swing the cash. You may like Bowflex SelectTech 552 Dumbbells: Price and availabilityThe Bowflex SelectTech 552 Dumbbells are available from the company's website for \$400, which is significantly cheaper than NordicTrack's Select-A-Weight 55 Lb Dumbbell Set (\$600), a competitor that offers nearly identical specs. The latter purchase, however, comes with a one-year iFit Family membership — a \$396 value — which is half the draw. However don't let that put you off, as the SelectTech 552 Dumbbells don't skimp in the personal training department. Instead, they're compatible with Bowflex's SelectTech app, which includes individual workouts and longer training plans, completely free of charge. (More on that below.) For \$900, Bowflex bundles the SelectTech 552 Dumbbells with a dumbbell stand and stowable weight bench. I didn't get the chance to test out either of these products just yet, but if your home gym has the space for it, a weight bench is a handy tool to have.Bowflex SelectTech 552 Dumbbells review: Design and build The dumbbells' 15.8 x 9 x 8-inch footprint (when maxed out to full weight capacity) is somewhat bulkier than old-school steel dumbbells, but each one is fully adjustable between 5 and 52.5 pounds in 5-pound increments. Swapping out those mini-weight plates is as simple as twisting the knobs on either end of the dumbbell to the desired weight, and you're good to go. A safety strap connects the dumbbells to the dumbbell tray, which takes a 7/64 Allen key to remove. Up close, the Bowflex SelectTech 552 Dumbbells look rather futuristic and robotic. The base weight of each dumbbell starts at 5 pounds, and as you select higher weights with the rotating dials, the appropriate plates click into place, leaving the unused ones behind as you pick the dumbbell up. Overall, it's a similar style to NordicTrack's offering, which is comparably priced and similarly customizable. Note: Don't try attaching any loose plates back onto the dumbbells without putting them back into their proper tray slots first, or using the dumbbells to support your body weight. They're not built for that.(Image credit: Bowflex/Bowflex SelectTech 552 Dumbbells review: PerformanceAdjusting the knobs on each dumbbell is a snap — literally. It's easy to ensure each plate is locked into place before you pick the dumbbells up, too. After using the Bowflex SelectTech 552 Dumbbells for a variety of HIIT and CrossFit-style workouts, I was impressed with how well they complemented the rest of my fitness gear. The storage trays do their job, and the whole package is pretty attractive, in a rock-solid sort of way. The dumbbells' rubber-and-steel grip feels substantially more ergonomic than the plastic ones on NordicTrack's Select-A-Weight dumbbells, which got a little slippery if my hands were too sweaty. (You could use wrist wraps as an additional safety measure for some exercises, though.) The grip style isn't really meant for two hands, but you can load weights on just one side of the dumbbell for skull-crushers and sumo squats. Just remember that these dumbbells are simply not designed for powerlifters, especially since dropping them on the floor is a big no-no. Bonus tip: get some quarter-inch exercise mats for your workout area to save both your joints and floor.The BowFlex SelectTech app is fairly basic — in a good way. It includes dozens of dynamic exercises you can perform with your new dumbbells, along with six targeted workouts, a six-week weight-training program, and a digital journal. It's a genuinely useful app, and you just can't argue with the price. (Image credit: TJ Fink/Future)Bowflex SelectTech 552 Dumbbells review: VerdictWhile I was initially impressed with everything NordicTrack's \$600 Select-A-Weight 55 Lb. Dumbbell Set had to offer, the \$400 Bowflex SelectTech 552 Dumbbells simply have better ergonomics, more intuitive (read: smoother) adjustment mechanisms, and a subscription-less fitness app for \$200 less. Looking to save even more cash? The 25-pound Flybird Adjustable Dumbbells are very similar in style, and they function in roughly the same way. (Just remember: it costs \$200 for the pair.) Long-story-long: If you're ready to build some muscle, look no further than the Bowflex SelectTech 552 Dumbbells. Not only are they extremely easy to use, but they save a ton of time and space in the long run...err, lift. Reddit and its partners use cookies and similar technologies to provide you with a better experience. 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