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### **How to Choose a Gold Pan**

A gold pan is both the beginning and the end of the gold prospecting process. It is used for sampling before you set up a sluice, highbanker, or dredge, and it is used for the clean up of concentrates that are collected by those larger pieces of mining equipment.

A gold pan is the most basic and least expensive piece of equipment, yet can be the most confusing because of all the choices in size, shape, color, and material. The most important thing is to select the correct size. Holding an empty pan is one thing, but once it is filled with heavy gravel and water, if it's too big you will end up with a sore back, shoulders, and arm muscles.

A good way to choose the best size for YOU is to hold a gold pan so that the open side of the pan lies against your forearm. Rest the rim against your elbow crease and notice where the opposing rim lies. Ideally, the pan should fit between your elbow and wrist crease. If the rim extends past the base of your fingers, it is probably too large, so select the next smaller size.

In addition to the traditional round shape, pans are now square, hexagonal, triangular, and even a blend of rectangular and round. The newest on the market is the [TurboPan](#) from Australia. Most prospectors favor a 10-12 inch round plastic pan, but it's really a matter of personal preference. Plastic is light weight and won't interfere with the use of a magnet, but steel pans are sometimes favored by old-timers. Color is also a matter of personal preference. Shiny gold shows up well against a black pan, but you may like green or blue or terra cotta better because the magnetic black sand that usually accompanies gold blends into a black pan. A [hot pink gold pan](#) is the newest color to appear on the market; green is the most common.

After selecting a pan or two, keep in mind that practice makes perfect in just about everything—it is no different when it comes to gold panning. Luckily you can practice in your kitchen or laundry sink so that when you head outdoors, you'll pretty much already know how to pan for gold and have your technique nailed down.