

SHOE SAVVY

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Putting your best foot forward is much easier if you have the right footwear. Most people agree that shoes are an important wardrobe item. Everyone wears them. Not only are they a necessity, but shoes are also a major fashion accessory. For such an important item, most of us know less about selecting footwear than any other element of clothing.

Foot Facts

We tend to take our feet for granted. Here are some facts to help you think about the importance of your feet and your footwear.

- The average person spends three-fourths of a day in shoes—approximately 18 hours.
- Each of us will walk the equivalent of 2 ½ times around the earth in a lifetime—approximately 65,000 miles.
- Each foot contains 26 bones; a pair of feet account for one-fourth the number of all the bones in the body.
- The feet have 250,000 sweat glands and produce a half pint of moisture a day.
- The average family of three buys approximately 14 pairs of shoes each year.
- Nearly everyone is born with perfect feet. But over half the adult men and three-fourths of the women in the U.S. have foot problems. Incorrect fitting shoes are the major culprit.

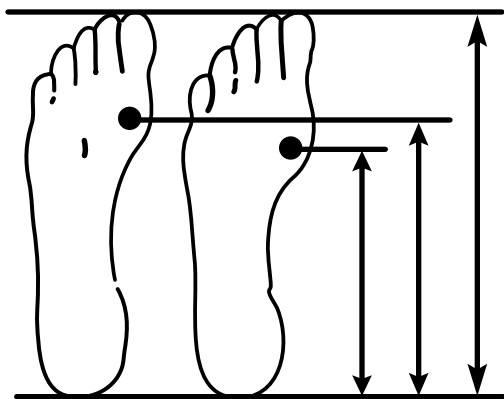
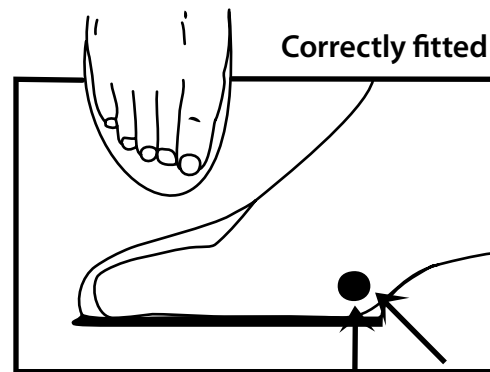
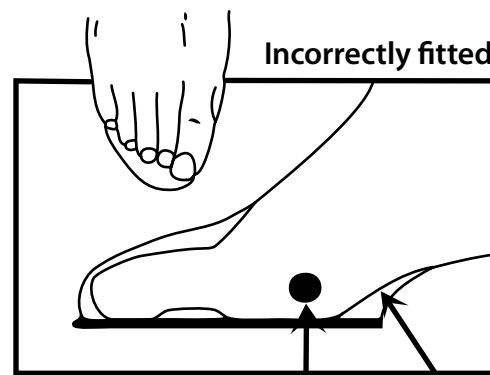
Fitting Shoes

Comfort, fit, quality, and fashion are important keys in selecting appropriate footwear. Choose shoes to fit the occasion and the intended use. Sturdy shoes with good support are needed for work, exercise, and athletic activities. Boots protect the feet and help keep them warm and dry. Sandals protect the feet while giving them a touch of fresh air. More delicate footwear styles are designed for dressy occasions, while heavier, sturdy styles are used for work and casual wear. Last, but not least, is the comfortable slipper which yields a covering to feet that need to relax.

A well-fitting shoe is critical to foot comfort. Select only comfortable, suitable footwear. A well-fitted shoe does not need to be broken in. If the shoe is not comfortable when you try it on, chances are that it does not fit your foot properly. If it doesn't fit, don't wear it; don't buy it! The better the fit, the longer your footwear will last. When you select shoes, consider the following:

- Shop for shoes in the afternoon, or after you have been on your feet for a while. Always wear or take along the socks or stockings similar to what you will wear with the new shoes.

- Have both feet measured to identify differences in feet and to determine a size/width identification point. Have feet measured while you are sitting down and standing up. Children should have feet measured each time shoes are purchased. Always accommodate the larger foot; fit in the other shoe can be adjusted.
- Try on both shoes. Stand up, walk around, wiggle your toes, arch your foot, sit down. Stand up and walk around again. If a shoe feels tight, if it cramps your foot, or just feels “wrong,” take it off and examine your foot and the shoe. White or red marks on your skin indicate unnecessary pressure points.
- Look for support in the instep. Check to see if there is one-half inch between the big toe and the inside tip of the shoe. The ball of the foot should be at the widest part of the shoe.
- The heel should fit snugly, but it can be adjusted with an add-on pad if the remainder of the shoe fits properly. Open-toe or open-heel shoes should fit so that the toe or heel does not extend beyond the shoe sole.



Foot length and ball joint placement

Note: There is 1/6-inch difference in the length of shoes from size to size (example: size 7 to size 7 1/2). The standard difference in shoe girth for adult shoes is 1/4-inch from one width to the next (i.e. from A to B).

- View yourself in the shoes using a full-length mirror. Place feet close together. There should be close to a straight line from the heel to the ball of the foot. The V formed from the ball to the toe should be evident, but not too wide.

Quality Counts

The quality of footwear depends on how it is made and the materials used in construction. The manufacturer generally identifies the materials used. You must use a keen eye and a bit of knowledge about shoe construction to evaluate workmanship.

One of the most important distinctions is whether the shoe is made from leather or synthetic materials. To identify, look inside on the shoe counter close to the heel or on the bottom of the sole. For example, you may see the words “Leather upper, man-made trim & sole.”

In general, leather is considered a sign of quality; however, it may not always be the best choice or better buy. Leather “breathes” and gives with and molds to the foot. It is considered more comfortable than the synthetic materials used in shoes. When used in the sole, leather can wear faster than a man-made material. Some manmade materials, poromerics for example, look the most like leather and have good breathability. They are higher priced than their sister manmade materials urethane and vinyl.

Look for the following criteria in well-constructed footwear:

- If leather is used in the upper, it should be soft, pliable, firm and even in grain and color. If other synthetic material or fabric is used, it should be firm, yet pliable. Color, texture, and design should be matched or consistent throughout.
- Edges should be evenly trimmed and well finished. There should not be any excess glue or cement showing.
- Linings and inside sole should be smooth and soft, free from wrinkles.
- There should be no tacks, rough places, or heavy or open seams inside the shoe.
- Stitching should be firm, secure, and even throughout. Areas of stress should be double-stitched. There should be no loose threads.
- Perforation, if any, should be regular and clearly cut out. Trim, buckles, and fasteners should be firmly secured and function properly. Straps should have at least five holes for fit adjustment. Buckles should be attached (sewn) to an elasticized gore rather than stapled or stitched directly to the shoe.

When buying shoes, try to get the best quality you can afford. Fit is the most critical issue. The better the fit, the longer the shoe will last. A good quality pair of shoes will not service your feet well if they do not fit. Your old shoes can be an excellent guide to choosing new ones.

Care & Maintenance

Proper care and maintenance are important to the appearance as well as the serviceability of footwear.

- Avoid wearing the same pair of shoes two days in a row. Constant and continuous foot moisture can bring about early footwear destruction.
- Keep shoes and boots polished/brushed and in good repair. This is the single most important thing you can do to extend the life of your footwear. Brush or wipe shoes after each wearing. Don't wait until heels have worn completely away before having them repaired.
- Use a shoe-horn when putting on snug shoes or boots to prevent stretching. Store shoes or boots away from heat sources. Use shoe trees to maintain the shape of closed footwear during storage. Boots should be stored with supports in the shafts. A rolled up magazine or piece of cardboard works equally well and is less expensive.
- A new pair of shoes or boots will slip on and off the foot more easily if you spray the insides with silicone. This simple treatment will also cut down on foot odor. Using sandpaper to scuff the soles of new shoes will make them less slick on the bottom.

- Suede is a popular shoe material; however, it requires some special care procedures. Begin by using a piece of terry cloth, or an old wash cloth, to remove any loose particles from new shoes. Spray with a light coat of suede stain guard. After each wearing, use an art gum eraser to remove dust and dirt. Scuffs can often be restored by using a metal suede brush or the smoother side of an emery board or nail file.
- For synthetic and athletic footwear, buff with a soft cloth and clean with a cleaner designed for them. Do not attempt to machine or hand wash unless footwear it is marked machine or hand washable.

Emergency First Aid

If you know you are going to be out in the rain or snow, choose footwear accordingly. There are occasions, however, when we are caught off guard and must deal with rain or snow drenched shoes.

Remove the shoes from your feet as soon as possible. Wipe off loose dirt and debris. Stuff shoes lightly with newspaper to retain their natural shape. Set aside, away from any heat source, and let shoes air dry naturally. When dry, check for stains and condition the shoes with shoe conditioner appropriate to the shoe material. These products are available at reputable shoe stores or shoe repair centers. Follow up with polish if appropriate. A mild conditioner will usually remove ordinary stains. Stubborn or difficult stains should be left to the experts at the shoe repair shop.

Shoes and boots worn during the winter may encounter snow and white salt marks. If you are not able to attend to these stains immediately, seal footwear in a plastic bag for a few hours to keep the stain moist. Remove loose dirt and crusty salt residue. Mix a solution of warm water and white vinegar in equal parts. Using a soft cloth or sponge, dab solution over entire area concentrating on the stained portion. Allow footwear to dry naturally. Condition and polish as usual.

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