

THE RIGHT SHOES

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The right pair of shoes makes all the difference in the world. They will make your runs more enjoyable and help decrease your risk of injury. However, wearing the wrong pair of shoes can hurt your running and make you more prone for injuries. Usually, the first area of blame is placed on the shoes. Even if the shoes are highly rated and expensive, it doesn't always mean they are the best fit for that individual. With over 150 different running shoes available to choose from, it's no wonder people have difficulty finding the right shoe for them. Consider this. If you have suffered from any of the following injuries, it may indicate that your shoes are to blame: blisters, bruised toe nails, heel slippage, knee and/or shin pain, ankle pain, neuroma, or hip pain. The shoes you wear are designed to control and protect your feet while running. Everyone's feet has a natural pattern that it maintains whether you are running or walking, however, if you are in the wrong shoe this pattern gets altered or changed predisposing your body to injury.

To help determine your foot type, running pattern, and what shoe shape to look for, you can take the "Wet Test". First, dunk your foot in water and then stand on a surface that leaves an imprint of your foot. While not every foot completely mimics these three types, you can use the test to determine your general foot type. The three possibilities are: normal, flat, and high arch. (See pictures below)

Before talking about your foot type it is important to understand that shoes are made in three different shapes or lasts: straight, semi-curved, and curved all geared towards offering different degrees of support to help with the variety of foot types.

The Normal Foot as seen above: has a pattern where runners land on the outside of their heels then rolls inward slightly (pronation) which helps with shock absorption. Runners with this pattern and of normal weight will work best in a semi-curved shoe last with shoes geared towards stability with moderate control features.



The Flat Foot as seen above: has a pattern where runners land on the outside of their heels and then overpronates (rolls inward excessively) which over time can cause many different kinds of overuse injuries. Runners with this pattern will work best in a straight or semi-curved shoe last with an emphasis on motion control and stability to help control overpronation. **Avoid highly cushioned, curved shoes secondary to lack of stability and control.**

The High-Arched Foot as seen above: has a pattern where runners land on the outside of their heel but don't roll inward (underpronation or supination) therefore not work effectively as a shock absorber. Runners with this pattern will work best in a curved shoe last with cushioned shoes with plenty of flexibility to encourage foot motion. **Avoid motion or stability controlled shoes which reduce foot mobility.**

To make it easier for you to narrow down your search for the right shoe, I will divide training shoes into five categories: stability, motion control, cushioned, lightweight training, and trail.

Motion control shoes are the most rigid, give the foot the most control and support, and are the most durable. They are designed with the purpose of limiting and/or slowing overpronation (excessive inward movement of foot). These shoes are built with a straight last offering maximum stability and medial support. These shoes are appropriate if you: **overpronate or need shoes that are durable i.e heavy runner or have flat feet.**

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Shoes that feature stability offer a good combination of cushioning, medial support and durability and are usually built with a semi-curved last. These shoes are appropriate if you: have a normal arch, are a midweight runner who wants some durability and medial support.

Shoes that feature cushioning are designed to encourage the most amount foot motion. They are usually built with a semi-curved or curved last and are designed to help runners who underpronate. Runners with high arches usually do best with this design of shoe.

Lightweight training shoes are built on a semi-curved or curved last and are appropriate for fast-paced training or racing and if a runner wants a racing shoe with more support and cushioning than the superlight racing shoes.

Trail shoes offer increased stability and durability and are appropriate if you do a lot of off-road running, need extra traction, and protection against stone bruising.

Hopefully, after reading this article, you now have a basic understanding regarding running shoes and how important it is to determine your foot type (high, flat, or normal arch), body type (heavy, light, or normal weight for your body), and your foot biomechanics (overpronation, underpronation, or normal pronation). However, determining your foot type and whether you over/under pronate isn't easy and may require the consultation of a podiatrist, orthopedist, or physical therapist. Once you feel comfortable with your needs go and try on different brands of shoes and appreciate how much they vary regarding fit and comfort.

References:

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