

# Running Shoes: Finding the Right Fit

There are so many different makes and models of running shoes that it can be hard to find the shoes that are right for you. Everyone's feet are shaped and sized differently, so what might feel comfortable for some people feels uncomfortable for others.

The first step in finding the right shoe is to determine your foot type.

## What is my foot type?

It can help to figure out your foot type, which is determined by the way you walk. When you take a step, your foot first contacts the ground on the outside of your heel and then rolls to the inside of your foot. As your weight keeps moving forward and your heel comes off the ground, the foot rolls to the outside again. Most people don't walk perfectly and tend to put more of their body weight on either the inside or the outside of their foot when they walk.

- If your foot leans too far to the outside when you walk, it is called over-supination. You probably over-supinate if:
  - You have a tendency to walk on the outside of your foot.
  - You have a high arch (even after putting weight on your foot).
  - The bottoms of your shoes get more worn on the outside.
- If your foot leans too far to the inside, it is called over-pronation. You probably over-pronate if:
  - You have a low arch (when putting weight on your foot).
  - Your ankle rolls inward when you walk.
  - You have calluses under your big toe or ball of your foot.
  - The soles of your shoes get more worn on the inside.

Some people just slightly pronate or supinate. If you cannot tell if you pronate or supinate, you probably have what is called a neutral foot.

## What is the right shoe for me?

Once you have identified your foot type, it's time to find the right shoe.

- If you over-supinate, a shoe with good cushioning is important.
- If you over-pronate, you'll need a shoe that gives more motion control and stability. A shoe that is too flexible will not give you the support that you need.

There are 3 main features of a shoe that you should consider when choosing a running shoe: shape, type of construction, and midsole.

### Shape

Shoes are built on either a curved last or a straight last. Look at the bottom of a shoe and draw a straight line from the middle of the heel to the top of the shoe (as if you were slicing the shoe in half).

- If the shoe has a curved-last, the line will not pass through the tip of the shoe. Instead, you will see that the shape of the shoe has a curved appearance. The right side of the shoe will not look the same as the left.
- If you have a shoe with a straight last, the line that bisects the heel will run through the tip of the shoe. The right half of the shoe will look about the same as the left half. A perfectly straight-lasted shoe is not that common but you will notice that some shoes are straighter than others.

If you over-supinate, you may find that a curve-lasted shoe is more comfortable for you because it can conform better to the shape of your foot.

### **Construction**

There are several methods of shoe construction that affect the overall stiffness of the shoe. For example, shoes may be constructed using either a slip-last or a board-last. Look inside a shoe and pull out the padded insert.

- In a slip-lasted shoe the fabric of the shoe is sewn together. You will see stitching running down the middle of the inside of the shoe. Slip-lasted shoes tend to be more flexible and therefore are good for runners who over supinate.
- In a board-lasted shoe, the bottom of the shoe is covered with cardboard. Board-lasted shoes tend to be stiffer and better for you if you over-pronate.
- Some shoes are combination-lasted. In this kind of shoe, the part of the shoe toward the heel is covered with cardboard and the part toward the toe is stitched. If your foot type is neutral, a combination-lasted shoe might be a good choice.

Another part of the shoe to consider is the heel counter. The heel counter is the part of the shoe that cups around your heel. All good running shoes should have a firm heel counter. Test the heel counter by pushing down on it. If it is firm, it should hold its shape.

### **Midsole**

The midsole is the base of the shoe. It provides the cushioning and shock absorption. There are many different midsole materials. A midsole made of a heavy or dense material gives more stability but less cushion.

- Single density midsoles offer good cushioning but are not great at providing stability. These midsoles can be OK if you over-supinate.
- If you over-pronate, it may be better to have a shoe with a dual-density midsole. This provides some shock absorption as well as some stability. Dual-density midsoles are often in 2 colors. The darker color is the stiffer material and is usually on the inner side of the heel of the shoe.

### **How should the shoes fit?**

Running shoes should fit more loosely than your other shoes. Your feet swell when you run, and looser shoes will be more comfortable. The arch, heel, and instep should be a snug fit, but there should be a thumb-width space between your toe and the tip of your running shoe.

If you're not sure about the best size, get the larger size. You can always wear thicker socks or use insoles. Base your decision on how the shoes feel on your feet rather than the size you usually wear.

## **When should I replace my running shoes?**

Midsoles tend to lose their effectiveness after 600 miles of use, depending on how much you weigh and the material used in the shoe. Some runners buy 2 pairs of shoes at a time and alternate them from day to day. However, shoes do have a limited "shelf-life." After a while the midsole loses its ability to absorb shock even if the shoes haven't been worn a lot.

Remember, brands and styles change every year, so the model of shoe that works for you this year might not be the best shoe for you next year.

Developed by RelayHealth.

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# Pronation and Supination

Supination



Ankles lean outward



High arch

Neutral



Ankles do not lean



Normal arch

Over Pronation



Ankles lean inward



Low arch (flat foot)

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# Running Shoe Anatomy

## Shape of Shoe



Straight-lasted shoe



Curved-lasted shoe

## Shoe Construction



Board

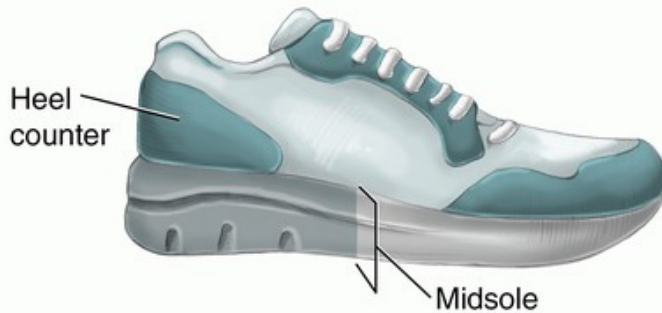


Slip



Combination

## Type of Midsole



Dual-density midsole



Single-density midsole

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