

Tips on Buying Proper Footwear

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Proper shoe fit for both activity and everyday wear is poorly understood and certainly poorly done. This dilemma is as much the consumer's fault as it is the manufacturer's. When buying footwear, the following should be considered:

1. Determine length and width of the foot, and fit the forefoot width first. Both feet should be measured and the shoe fitted to the *largest* foot because it is always easier to add parts to a shoe. *The length of the shoe should not be increased to improve the width* as this increases the length of the lever under the toes and contributes to hyperextension of the toes. This is the most common error in fitting shoes.
2. To test for proper width, the athlete should put full weight on the shoe. The shoe upper should not over hang the sole. On the other hand, if wrinkles appear on the top of the shoe, then the shoe is too wide.
3. To ensure a properly fitting "upper shoe", ensure that the lacing is such that the eyelets (lace holes) are parallel from the top to the bottom.
4. One study reported that 88 percent of women wear shoes between one and two sizes smaller in width than their feet. *A shoe should never have to stretch to fit and one should not believe that shoes will stretch to fit.* Ice hockey players commonly wear skates that are one to two sizes too small to ensure a good snug fit, and they claim that it gives them better control. Such action however increases the chances of foot problems and pathology.
5. The end of the toe box (the front of the shoe) should be 1-1.5cm from the end of the longest toe. The toe box should be wide enough and long enough to allow the toes to extend fully and to allow good alignment of the first toe on push-off.
6. The shoe should be designed to bend at the level of the metatarsophalangeal joint (the balls of the feet). If it does not, excessive stress is placed on the foot and the Achilles tendon.
7. Shop for shoes at the *end of the day* when the feet are at their largest, or at least at the time of day when you plan to use the shoes.
8. "Run around" in the store before purchasing to ensure a comfortable fit.
9. Search for defects in the shoes workmanship (ex. crooked stitching). If they are present, ask for another pair of shoes.
10. ****Have your foot assessed *before* you go to purchase your shoes by an expert. *Employment at a shoe store does not an expert make!*