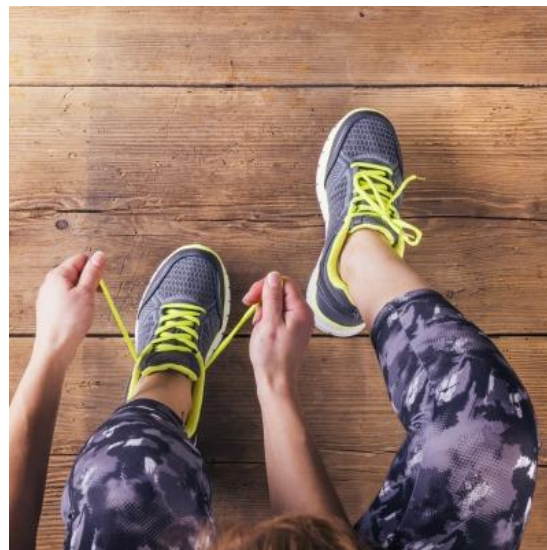


Find Your Sole Mate

Proper-fitting shoes make all the difference whatever exercise you engage in. Choose the wrong athletic shoes and you could end up lying on the couch nursing shin splints or aching heels instead of enjoying a brisk walk or run. Follow these tips to find your sole mate.

1. **Don't make shoes multitask.** Walking shoes are stiffer; running shoes are more flexible, with extra cushioning to handle greater impact. If you do both activities, get a pair for each one.
2. **Know your foot.** Feet come in a variety of shapes, and knowing your foot's particular quirks is key to selecting the right pair of shoes. One way to determine your foot's shape is to do a "wet test"--- wet your foot, step on a piece of brown paper and trace your footprint. Or just look at where your last pair of shoes shows the most wear.



If your footprint shows the entire sole of your foot with little to no curve on the inside, or if your shoes show the most wear on the inside edge, it means you've got low arches or flat feet and tend toward overpronation (your feet roll inward). Overpronation can create extra wear on the outside heel and inside forefoot. You'll want a motion-control shoe with maximum support.

If the footprint shows only a portion of your forefoot and heel with a narrow connection between the two, or if your shoes wear out mostly on the outside edge, you have high arches and tend to underpronate (your feet roll outward). Underpronation causes wear on the outer edge of the heel and the little toe. Look for a cushioned shoe with a soft midsole.

If your footprint has a distinct curve along the inside and your shoes wear out uniformly, you have a neutral arch. Look for a stability shoe, which has the right mix of cushioning and support.

3. **Measure your foot frequently.** Our foot size changes as we get older, so have your feet measured twice a year. Sizes also vary between brands, so go by what fits, not by what size the shoe is.
4. **Go to a specialty store.** The staff will provide valuable input on the type of shoe needed for your sport as well as help with proper fitting. For example, the Running Room offers a free gait analysis.
5. **Shop toward the end of the day.** Feet swell over the course of the day; they also expand while you run or walk, so shoes should fit your feet when they're at their largest.
6. **Bring your own socks** -- the ones you wear while running or walking. If you wear orthotics, bring those, too. Shoes need to fit with the orthotic inside.



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7. **Don't believe in breaking in.** Running and walking shoes should feel comfortable right away. Walk or run around the store a bit to make sure they feel good in action. Many running stores have a 30-day return policy where you can try the shoes for 30 days (as long as they are only worn inside) to see if they are the right ones.
8. **Use the rule of thumb.** There should be about 3/8-1/2 inch between the front of your big toe and the end of the shoe -- about a thumb's width. The heel should fit relatively tightly; your heel should not slip out when you walk. The upper part of the shoe, which goes over the top of your foot, should be snug and secure but not too tight anywhere. When fitting into an athletic shoe, you should be able to freely wiggle all of your toes when the shoe is on.
9. **Only wear them to workout.** Your workout shoes should be your workout shoes and not your running-around-town shoes. You'll break down a pair of shoes standing in them or wearing them to the mall and running errands much faster than when you're running or exercising. Buy yourself a pair of casual shoes for running around town, and put your good workout shoes in the closet as soon as you get home from your run.
10. **Know when to replace them.** If you are exercising on a casual basis you can make your shoes last a year but if you are working out most days, 6 months or 550 – 650 kilometers, is pretty much your limit. The shoe may still look good but all the support has broken down. The support is the reason you buy the shoe in the first place and you'll start feeling strange aches and pains in your knees, hip, and back if you continue to exercise in them.



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