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CHOOSING THE RIGHT SHOE

To make it easier for you to narrow your search for the right shoe, we divide training shoes into four categories: stability, motion control, cushioned and lightweight training. The first step to finding the right shoe is to match your running and biomechanical need, including the surface (road, gym, trail, etc.) you most often train on, with one of the four categories.

The second step is making sure you buy a shoe with the right shape for you (see "Know Your Foot Type" below).

To begin, here are the four shoe categories and information about the types of individuals who should choose the shoes in each category.

Motion - Control Shoes

Description: Motion-control shoes are the most rigid, control-oriented running shoes. Designed to limit overpronation (or slow the rate at which a runner overpronates), motion-control shoes are generally heavy but very durable. They may include features such as a medial post (for pronation control), a polyurethane midsole (for midsole durability) and a carbon rubber outsole (for outsole durability). Many are built on a straight last, which offers stability and maximum medial support.

You should buy these shoes if: you are an overpronator who needs control features and places a premium on durability. Or: if you wear orthotics and want a firm midsole and deep heel counter. Or: if you are a heavy runner who needs extra durability and control. Runners with flat feet often do best in motion-control shoes.

Stability shoes

Description: Stability shoes offer a good blend of cushioning, medial support and durability. To provide stability, these shoes often have a medial post or dual-density midsoles. They are usually built on a semicurved last.

You should buy these shoes if: you are a midweight runner who doesn't have any severe motion-control problems and wants a shoe with some medial support and good durability. Runners with normal arches often do fine in stability shoes.

Cushioned Shoes

Description: Cushioned shoes generally have the softest (or most Cushioned) midsoles and the least medial support. They are usually built on a semicurved or curved last to encourage foot motion, which is helpful for underpronators (who have rigid, immobile feet).

You should buy these shoes if: you are an efficient runner who doesn't overpronate and doesn't need any extra medial support. Runners with high arches often do best in cushioned shoes.

Lightweight Training Shoes

Description: Lightweight training shoes are lighter versions of standard trainers. Usually built on a semicurved or curved last, lightweight trainers are for fast-paced training or racing. Some lightweight trainers are relatively stable, others are not.

You should buy these shoes if: you are a quick, efficient runner who wants a light second shoe for fast-paced training. Or; if you want a racing shoe, but want more support and cushioning than you would get from one of the pure racing shoe.

KNOW YOUR FOOT TYPE

The next step is to determine your foot type. This will ensure that you buy a shoe with fit characteristics that match your feet and your biomechanical needs. It is not rocket science, so do not get scared off.

First, you will often find that the shoes in a given category are already appropriate for your foot type. The shoe companies know, for example, that many runners with motion-control problems have flat feet and should be wearing straight-lasted shoes.

Second, you can take the simple wet test to determine what kind of foot type you have and what shoe shape you should be looking for. Basically, shoes have one of three different shapes: straight, semicurved and curved. To take the Wet Test, dunk your foot in water and then stand on any surface that will leave an imprint of your foot.

When you look at this imprint, you should find that you have one of three most common foot types. While not every foot completely mimics these three types, you can still use the Wet Test to determine your general foot type and the shoe shapes most likely to benefit your activity.

The Normal Foot

Description: Normal feet have a normal sized arch and leave an imprint that has a flare but shows the forefoot and heel connected by a wide band.

Foot Characteristics: A normal foot lands on the outside of the heel, then rolls inward (pronates) slightly to absorb the shock. Individuals with normal feet and average weight are usually considered biomechanically efficient and do not require motion-control shoes.

Best last: Semicurved

Best shoes: Stability shoes with moderate control features such as a dual-density midsole.



The Flat Foot

Description: Flat feet have a low arch and leave a nearly complete imprint. That is, the imprint looks like the whole sole of a foot.

Foot characteristics: This imprint usually indicates an overpronated foot that strikes on the outside of the heel and rolls inward (pronates) excessively. Over time, this can cause many different kinds of overuse injuries.

Best last: Straight or semicurved.

Best shoes: Motion-control shoes, or stability shoes with firm midsoles and control features that reduce the degree of pronation. Stay away from highly cushioned, curve-lasted shoes that lack stability and control.



The High-Arched Foot

Description: High-arched feet leave an imprint showing a very narrow band connecting the forefoot and heel.

Foot characteristics: A curved, high-arched foot is generally termed a supinated or underpronated foot (the terms are synonymous). This type of foot does not pronate enough, so it's not an effective shock absorber.

Best last: Curved.

Best Shoes: Cushioned shoes with plenty of flexibility to encourage foot motion. Stay away from motion-control or stability shoes that reduce foot mobility.

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Questions ???

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