

Choosing your Footwear

Running shoes have become increasingly complex and specialised for individual sports. The cost has also risen considerably and each year sees a new system which has 'all the answers to your footwear problems'. There are many good running shoes available and these are not necessarily the most expensive. It is important that you consider certain components of the shoe whatever the price that may affect foot function.



Heel Counter - The upper rear part of the shoe provides rearfoot stability. It should be made of a rigid, firm plastic. Soft heel counters allow excessive pronation to occur. Look at the rear of your last pair of shoes - are they collapsing inwards? Are there abnormal patterns of wear on the sole?

Forefoot flexibility - a very rigid sole makes the calf muscles work extra hard in propulsion. The shoe should be flexible enough to allow easy motion of the foot flexing at toe-off. Test this by holding the shoe at the heel and pushing the toe of the shoe downwards. It should bend fairly easily.



Midsole - this is the part of the shoe between the sole and the shoe upper. It can be made in different materials e.g. EVA or polyurethane or contain 'air cushions'. Each has its own merits e.g. EVA is light and a good shock absorber but has poor durability. Midsoles that are too soft decrease the control of the foot. Some midsoles are dual density, that is they are harder on the inner aspect to try and prevent excessive pronation. You will see a midsole of two different colours in *dual density* shoes.

Excessive flaring of the midsole can increase the force of pronation and should be avoided.

Last shape - the shape of the shoe when observed from below. A pronated foot has more support on the inner aspect in a straight lasted shoe and little control in a curved last.



Last construction - the upper of the shoe is generally sown together underneath and glued to the midsole (slip last). This may be supported by fibre board in the rear half - *combination last*.

You may also have certain features relating to the anatomy and mechanics of your feet and lower limbs that would make certain choices more preferable. The table below may help your choice.

Shoe Features	Excessive Pronator	Normal	Excessive Supinator
Heel Counter	Rigid	Rigid	Rigid
Forefoot Flexibility	Yes	Yes	Yes
Midsole Density	Hard dual density	Intermediate	Soft
Last Construction	Combination	Slip or Combination	Slip
Shape of Last	Straight or slightly curve	Slightly curved	Curved or slightly curved