

The Lacemakers

Aching feet, sore ankles, wobbly knees? There are loads of different types of training shoes for a reason – and here’s how to tell your lifters from your runners

Running Shoes

Running shoes are designed for forward motion, and they protect the front of your foot and heel. They are light and flexible, made to cushion or stabilise your feet during repetitive strides, and they have flatter, smoother soles to create a consistent surface for your feet. The ‘ride’ of your shoes is determined by the cushioning: The firmness of the foam and the thickness (also called the stack height) of the material between your feet and the ground. How thick or firm you want this to be is a matter of personal preference – some people want a plush, soft ride, while others don’t want that much cushioning. The best way to decide is to try on a variety of shoes and see how they feel. A good pair might help you avoid the common (and painful) runner’s issues such as shin splints, stress fractures and tendinitis. When shopping, look for overall shock absorption, flexibility, control and stability in the heel counter area (a hard insert used to reinforce the heel cup of a shoe), as well as lightness and good traction.

QUICK TIP

Experts agree that choosing the right athletic shoes is as important as the workout itself. The position of your feet while exercising influences alignment of every other part, muscles and joints of your body; some rehab can help strengthen your foot muscles and ease short-term aches and pains, but they can’t undo real damage from improper footwear.

Trail-Running Shoes

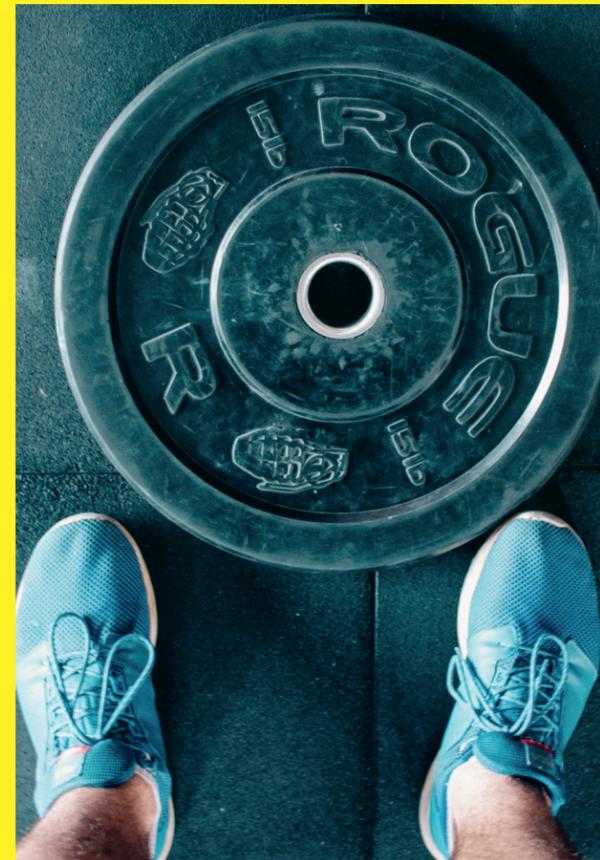
Trail-running shoes are designed for off-road tracks with rocks, mud, roots or other obstacles. They have a heavier tread than a road-running shoe, have more heel and side-to-side support to help stabilise your feet on the uneven surfaces, and some may even be fortified with plates underfoot to help protect your feet from rocks or sharp objects. Ever looked at a trail-running shoe and wondered why they’re so chunky? They have bigger lugs (or ‘cleats’) on the outsole, which help with grip on the terrain.

Cross-Trainers

These shoes are a good choice if you do more than one type of sport, because they combine several features so that you can participate in more than one activity – flexible in the forefoot, but also with good side-to-side support for cardio or aerobics.

Weightlifting Shoes

For weightlifting, the best shoes are flat and tight, with no cushioning. You’ve seen all the Instagram gymmers in them, and for good reason: The best non-fitness shoes for weightlifting are Chuck Taylors, because of how flat they are (and many experts believe that lifting in normal shoes will help build ankle flexibility and stability). Specially designated weightlifting shoes are flat on the sole, but have a solid elevated heel. The raised heels allow for better ankle flexibility to squat to full depth, and provide maximum strength and stability.



PHOTOGRAPHY: FREEPIK, ISTOCKPHOTO, UNSPLASH

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GET A GOOD FIT

Hiking Boots

Planning to head up a mountain? Shoes or boots for hiking give your feet a better grip on the trail to keep you on your feet. There are typically three types: Lightweight boots for well-maintained trails or short hikes; mid-weight boots for rocky terrain; and heavyweight boots for people carrying backpacks and walking on ice or rocks. **FL**

Try on shoes at the end of the day. Your feet swell throughout the day and will be largest at the end of the day, so you won’t buy shoes that are too small. Aim for a thumbnail’s length of space at your toes, so you can wiggle your toes. Try on both shoes. Make sure they’re comfortable from the get-go.