

June 2015 | myfitnesspal.com | Mackenzie Lobby | Fitness

*[NOTE: Some sentiments contained within "What We're Reading" articles may not strictly conform with Simple Again's nutritional outlook. We read articles containing opposing information all the time and derive our nutritional philosophies from the latest science, the opinions of experts worldwide and our anecdotal experiences in the field. We keep an open mind and a strong affinity for fact-based evidence to help make the world of nutrition "Simple Again" for you.]*

## How to Pick the Best Running + Walking Shoes for You

Understanding the components that make up a shoe from the ground up can help you find the best footwear for your feet.

As barefoot running and the special barely-there footwear rose to prominence in recent years, the trend sparked many conversations about what we should and shouldn't put on our feet. Along with challenging age-old philosophies about shoe prescription, it also put a spotlight on the pros and cons of shedding your shoes altogether.

Perhaps the biggest lesson we learned is that each one of us is highly individual. What works for your running buddy or walking partner may not for you.



Recent research suggests that feel is the best way to determine if a shoe is going to be the right one to support your active pursuits, and help prevent injuries.

"Comfort is the most important aspect of selecting shoes," says Paul Langer, DPM, a Minneapolis-based podiatrist and author of *Great Feet for Life*. "Runners perform better and are less likely to get injured when they run in comfortable shoes."

This fact is emphasized by the American Academy of Podiatric Sports Medicine, which asserts that certain generalizations can be made about shoe prescription by looking at someone's "foot type," but the majority of runners and walkers respond to shoes in highly individual ways. As a result, they recommend that you educate yourself on the anatomy of active footwear in order to make an educated guess on what might work best for you. Once you've honed in on a model you think is appropriate for your feet, you should rely on comfort as your guide.

We've put together a primer on the basic components that make up a shoe, as well as a few pieces of expert advice, so you can be an informed shopper. While a bit of trial and error is often involved in finding the best shoe, understanding a shoe's makeup will help simplify the process. This, along with the guidance from an informed salesperson at a running and walking specialty store, can go a long way in keeping you healthy and achieving your fitness goals.

# RUNNING SHOE ANATOMY



## OUTSOLE

The outsole is the piece of rubber that makes direct contact with the ground. It needs to be durable enough to withstand hundreds of miles over varied terrain. Generally, brands utilize carbon rubber or blown rubber for the outsole, the former being the sturdiest.

## MIDSOLE

The midsole of a running or walking shoe is like the meat of a sandwich—without it, the other components are pretty much useless. By utilizing different densities of foam, along with other proprietary technologies like gel and air, the midsole offers varying levels of support and cushioning. These buffers contribute most to comfort and injury prevention.

## UPPER

The upper of a shoe is the piece of material that encases your foot. This piece is sewn or glued to the midsole to keep your feet squarely over the platform of the shoe.