

WHAT TYPE OF SHOE DO I NEED?

There are three types of shoe for different types of runner, so work out which one you are before making your purchase

There is no quicker way for runners to get injured, or for their performance to suffer, than wearing unsuitable or ill-fitting running shoes - so make sure you choose yours sensibly and correctly. They come in three main categories: neutral cushioned, stability and performance. Heavier runners (men over 13 stone, women over 11 stone) usually need a stability shoe, but your arch type and how much you pronate (the inward roll of the foot that

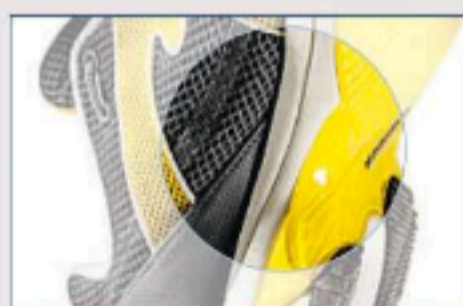
helps the body dissipate shock) will help determine which category best fits your feet. When working out which shoe is best for you, first, conduct our "wet test" (right) to determine your arch profile - are yours "high", "normal" or "low"? Then use the results with the categories below, to see whether a cushioning, stability and performance shoe suits you best. Along with your pronation, only a proper evaluation of these criteria will accurately determine which is the correct running shoe for you.



NEUTRAL CUSHIONED
This type of shoe is recommended for runners who need maximum midsole cushioning and minimum medial support. They are best for biomechanically efficient runners (who have minimum pronation) and midfoot or forefoot strikers with high, rigid arches or normal arches.



STABILITY
Recommended for runners who are mild to moderate overpronators and who generally have low to normal arches. The people who fit these categories tend to need a design that offers a combination of overall support and midsole cushioning, such as stability shoes.



PERFORMANCE
Recommended either for racing or, if you're biomechanically efficient, for training. Performance shoes have varying degrees of support and cushioning but they're generally lighter than neutral cushioned and stability designs (most weigh around 250 to 300g), and fit like a glove.

THE WET TEST

Do it to find out the kind of foot arch you have

DIP THE SOLE of your foot in water, step on some brown paper and compare the imprint with the arch types below.



HIGH, RIGID ARCHES
need more impact protection. These runners do best in neutral, cushioned shoes.



NORMAL-ARCHED
runners can wear shoes from all categories, depending on their weight.



LOW, FLEXIBLE ARCHES
are often found on overpronating runners. They should wear stability shoes.

IMAGES: RW

WHAT IS PRONATION?

THE BODY NATURALLY dissipates shock by rolling the foot inward, or pronating, just after impact. But too much (or too little) pronation can cause injuries. While you can't change how much you pronate, you can buy shoes optimised for your biomechanics. There are three ways to do this: identify your arch type (see The Wet Test, left), study old shoes to see how the tread has worn down, or ask your specialist running shop to analyse your gait.



UNDERPRONATION
When a foot underpronates the foot doesn't roll inwards enough after the outside of the heel lands. Impact is concentrated on the outer part of the foot. High arches and wear along the outside of the shoe are the classic characteristics of an underpronator.

NORMAL
The outside of the heel lands first, then the rest of the foot rolls in about 15 degrees for contact with the ground. This distributes the impact evenly. This level of pronation is usually associated with a normal arch and wear on the heel and ball of the shoe.

OVERPRONATION
Here, the foot rolls in more than the ideal 15 degrees, so the foot and ankle have problems stabilising the body and the big toe must do most of the work to push off the ground. Overpronators have wear in the heel and the inside edge and flat arches.



HOW MANY PAIRS OF RUNNING SHOES DO I NEED?

Perhaps more than you might think if you're going out regularly. If you run around twice a week, one pair is fine. If you run between three and six times a week, you should switch between two pairs. Is it worth the cost of the extra shoes? Changing them prevents injury - each pair stresses your feet in its own peculiar way.

BASICS

HOW LONG DO RUNNING SHOES LAST?

MANY SHOE MANUFACTURERS recommend you replace your running shoes every 400 miles, but it's entirely normal for runners to hang on to theirs for a more economical 600 miles plus. There's no formula here, only a rough guideline. How long your shoes last depends on your running style and preferred surface. Running shoes last longest for forefoot strikers over forest trails or tracks (400 to 800 miles). Heel strikers, who do most of their running on pavement, should retire shoes earlier: between 300 to 500 miles.