

Know Your Feet, Choose Your Shoes

Running-shoe selection often depends on foot type. There are three basic types of feet: those that have low arches (known as "flat feet"), those that have normal arches and those that have high arches (known as "cavus feet"). When you're shopping for a shoe, consider these important characteristics: firmness of the heel counter; the type of midsole; whether the shoe is board-, slip- or combination-lasted; and whether the shoe's construction is straight, semi-curved, or curved.

■ If you have flat feet or arches that flatten when you stand, you should consider a straight-construction, board-lasted shoe with a rigid heel. Flat feet often pronate excessively, so look for shoes that offer anti-pronation, stabilizing devices. In this guide, they're classified as motion-control shoes.

■ If your feet maintain high arches when you stand and tend to be rigid, look for a shoe that has superior shock absorption. This will help to protect your legs and feet from stress and shock-related injuries. Look for a flexible shoe that's slip-lasted, has a curved construction and offers extra cushioning in the midsole. Avoid shoes that have anti-pronation properties. The shoe's flexibility and cushioning should make up for what your feet lack. Many of the light models reviewed here should fit the bill.

■ If you have normal arches and you tend to run injury-free, consider a combination-lasted, semi-curved shoe that provides support and shock absorption. Runners with normal feet can often run in several types of shoe; consider the models that offer a blend of cushioning and stability.

Because many running shoes offer numerous features and do not always fall easily into categories, finding the perfect shoe for you can be difficult. For detailed information, consult your running-shoe store or a sports professional.

—Doug Tumen, D.P.M.