

Put Your Best Foot Forward

Choosing the right athletic shoe for your lifestyle

Forget your feet and you can just about forget about fitness, because pain and injury are likely to be right on your heels.

One type of shoe just doesn't do it all. For best results—and greatest comfort—athletic shoes should be specifically geared for your sport.

Sorting out the options

If you're confused about which shoe fits your lifestyle, podiatrists Douglas Tumen of Kingston, New York, and Paul Taylor of Georgetown University Hospital offer the lowdown on today's footwear:

Cross-trainers are a new, improved version of the old sneakers, suited for a number of athletic endeavors. Their multipurpose reinforcements make them somewhat heavy, but if you just dabble now and then in several activities, they're for you. If you become serious about a sport, go with one of the following sport-specific shoes.

Aerobics shoes have good lateral or

side-to-side support and shock-absorbing qualities. Court shoes won't substitute because they don't absorb shock as well, and running and walking shoes lack that important lateral support.

Court shoes have good lateral support and a reinforced toe box, but they have less heel cushioning than other shoes. Their outer sole material helps you stop on a dime.

Walking shoes lack lateral support. Good walking shoes have good heel support and shock-absorbing qualities, but less expensive walking shoes lack both. Folks who feel unfashionable in athletic shoes often opt to buy oxford-type walking shoes.

Running shoes, like walkers, lack lateral support, but they have great heel pro-

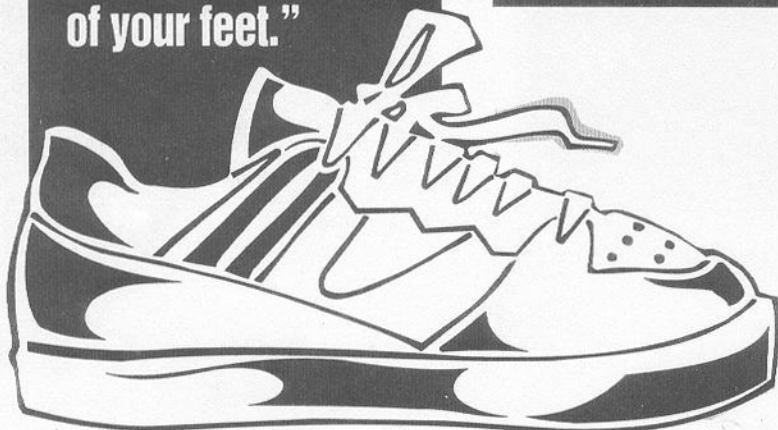
tection and shock-absorbing qualities. This makes them well suited for running because each time a runner's foot strikes the ground it produces a force on the foot three to four times body weight. (In walking the force is only one to two times body weight.) Tumen says the superior cushioning of running shoes makes them ideal for walkers, too.

Don't pinch pennies

Depending on how much you exercise, you'll need to think about buying new shoes every six months or so. Expect to pay \$50-\$100 a pair.

Too costly? No, says Taylor: "People exercise for their heart and health, but in most cases, to take care of your heart you have to take care of your feet." □

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