



Choosing the right pair of hiking shoes is rarely a straightforward process. Everyone has different shaped feet, so what works for one person is not necessarily going to work for the next. In this blog, I will explain the things we as shoe fitters consider when fitting footwear, and the questions we ask to ensure you get a shoe that not only suits your needs but most importantly fits your foot.

The best time to try on shoes is at the end of the day, or after a long walk. Your feet are usually a little larger at the end of the day than first thing in the morning.

Also, a lot of the tips and advice in this blog is applicable for buying a pair of shoes online. So if you're looking at buying a pair of hiking boots online, read this first to get your mind ticking along with the sort of things you might need to consider.

Step 1 - Narrow down the range to a small selection that suit your needs

Low and Mid-Cut Shoes

Low and mid-cut shoes of a fabric or fabric/leather construction suit short day hikes, or for a user that's looking to hike fast and light. They can be used for longer treks with heavy loads, but it's important to note that while they'll be much lighter on your feet, they won't offer as much support at the end of a long day, and won't last as long as a heavier high cut boot.

High-Cut Boots

High-cut boots are better suited to longer treks as they provide more support around the ankle and through the midsole. They are generally of a heavier fabric/leather or full leather construction. Some time is usually needed to break these in. These shoes will not be as comfortable as their lighter counterparts for short day hikes with light loads.



There's quite a range of shoes and boots out there. First, narrow it down to those that suit your needs or activities.

If you're buying your boots online, ask yourself: Do I need a low or mid-cut shoe or a high-cut boot? What sort of walking am I going to be doing? And will one boot or shoe be enough?

Step 2 - Eliminate any styles that will not fit the shape of your foot

A good fitting shoe should feel like it's firmly wrapped around your foot, if you have particularly narrow or wide feet, ask a team member to direct you towards styles that will best suit (see table below showing the personalities of the boots and shoes that Snowys stock).

Foot volume also needs to be considered (how much your foot actually fills the shoe), inserts can be adapted to fix volume issues. Be sure to mention any previous problems you may have had with your feet, this could have an effect on what style best suits you.

Sizing

Try the shoes on starting with a size that you consider to be your normal foot size. Bring your own hiking socks or ask one of the staff for a suitable try on sock.



Don't get caught up on the number as you may find yourself going up or down a size from what you consider to be normal. Shoe sizes can be very inconsistent between brands, and even between different models within the same brand.

As a guide, you should have approximately a thumb's width of space between the end of your toe, and the end of the boot.

Fit

The shoe should feel like it's wrapping around your whole foot comfortably eliminating side-to-side slippage in the shoe. You should be able to wiggle your toes, and the shoe should not feel like it's crushing your foot in on the sides.

Take your time to walk around the shop (Just a heads up here! We only have shoes in our Adelaide store, we currently don't carry footwear in Brisbane) utilise the stairs, ramps, bumps etc. to best imitate walking on an uneven trail. Your heel should fit snugly in the heel counter and not have an excessive lift. A small amount is normal, particularly in stiffer boots, and will settle down once they're broken in.

Take note of anything that feels like it's digging in or anything that is creating a hotspot on your foot.



About a thumb width at the toe makes for a good fit.



Step 3 - Time to choose!

Remember, only you can tell if the shoe is comfortable. Most of the time, the right shoe is the one that instantly feels comfortable from the moment you pull it onto your foot.

At Snowys, we recommend wearing the shoes inside at home for 1-2 hours before taking them outdoors. If you're having any problems, and you haven't spilt your dinner all over them, you can bring them back to the store for exchange or return.

If you've bought your boots online from Snowys and they don't fit, get in touch with us and we'll walk you through the [return process](#).

Answers to frequently asked questions about hiking boots:

1. Do I need waterproof Boots?

While a waterproof shoe is great in cold and wet conditions, they can be counterproductive in hot conditions. This is because, while the waterproof liner is breathable, it isn't as breathable as not having it there at all.

In warm environments, a waterproof shoe is hotter than a non-waterproof model. This is important to know because hot feet are more prone to blisters. So you should carefully consider when and where you will be mostly using your shoes.

2. What is a Vibram Sole?

[Vibram](#) is an Italian company that manufacture outsoles of shoes. The yellow Vibram symbol is an indication of a good quality sole. However, some high-quality shoes utilise their own brand of sole, which shouldn't necessarily be considered inferior quality.

3. What are the best hiking socks

The golden rule for [hiking/trekking socks](#) is not to use cotton. You should use wool, synthetic, or socks with a blend of these fibres. Good quality socks maintain a comfortable fit and provide support and cushioning for longer than cheaper varieties. [Merino wool](#) and [synthetic socks](#) also 'wick' moisture and dry quicker. So if your boots do get wet on the trail, there's a good chance you'll have a dry pair of socks by the next morning.

4. My mate wears a pair of Merrell Moabs, he reckons they're great!

What works for one person, does not necessarily work for the next. Depending on your build, sex and most importantly, foot shape - you will probably find a different shoe that is just as



suitable for you in the same circumstances.

5. Do I need insoles?

The inserts that come with shoes provide cushioning and some support. If you have particularly high arches or a low volume foot, you may need to consider different inserts to make the shoe fit correctly.

6. What's the best way to lace a hiking boot?

In my experience, if the shoe fits correctly, you should not need to do anything overly complicated with your lacing. That being said, there are some techniques that can be used to fine-tune the fit of your boots - head to [YouTube](#) and check 'em out.

Shoes have personalities

Yep, you read right. Most hiking shoe brands have personalities. Some are true to size, some are smaller or larger, some are narrow, some are wide. Knowing these personalities will help you choose a boot or shoe that compliments your feet.

Here's our take on the quirks of all the different brands we stock:

Brand	Sizing	Sizing Focus	Shoe Personality
Asolo	True	UK	Not Wide, quite neutral, depend on shape of foot
Ahnu	True	US	Fit varies a bit from shoe to shoe
Scarpa	True	European	Tend to be on the narrower side
Keen	Trueish	US	Toes are quite square. Can be on the smaller side depending on the shoe
Merrell	True	US	Neutral
Salomon	Bigger	UK	Can be a bit square in the toe. Definitely on the bigger side
Hi-Tec	True	UK	Tend to be on the wider side
Vasque	True	US	Tend to be on the wider side
Teva	True	US	Tend to be on the wider side

Finding a pair hiking shoes that are comfortable and suited to the activity you're going to be doing always simple. But if you consider the above before making your decision - you should be on your way to finding the perfect pair!

This article was updated for 2017.

Do you have any hot tips for finding the perfect pair of hiking boots? Let us know in the comments below.