



Choosing the right pair of hiking shoes is rarely a straightforward process. Everyone has differently shaped feet, so what works for one person is not necessarily going to work for another.

Here are the considerations that shoe fitters have 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.

So, if you're looking at buying a pair of hiking boots online or in store, read this first to get your mind ticking along with the sorts of features you may need to consider...

## **Types of Footwear**

### **Low- and Mid-Cut Shoes**

Low and mid-cut shoes of a fabric or fabric/leather construction suit short, day hikes, or those 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. They also won't last as long as a heavier, high-cut boot.



*Low-cut shoes are more suited to day hikes. Image: Salomon*

### **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. Allowing some time is usually needed to break these in. They will not be as comfortable as the lighter pair you might choose for shorter day hikes.



*High cut boots will keep you sturdy on longer hikes. Image: Vasque*

### **Eliminate Styles That Won't Fit**

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 displaying the 'personalities' of the boots and shoes we stock here at Snowys.

Foot volume should also be considered – i.e. 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.



*The shoe should firmly wrap your foot. Image: Thermacell*

### **What Time of Day Should I Try on Shoes?**

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



## Sizing

Start trying the shoes on 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 sock to try it with.

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.



*The sizes and fit varies between brands. Image: Merrell*

## How Can I Tell That They 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 stock shoes in our Adelaide store, not currently carrying footwear in Brisbane), and 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, but will settle down once they're broken in.

Take note of anything that feels to be digging in or creating a hotspot on your foot.



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

## Select Your Shoes or Boots

Remember, only you can tell if the shoe is comfortable. Most of the time, the right shoe 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 spilled 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](#).



*Wear them at home to check before taking them outdoors. Image: Columbia*

## Frequently Asked Questions: 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, as hot feet are more prone to blisters. Carefully consider when and where you will mostly be wearing your shoes.



*Depending on your adventures, you may need a waterproof model. Image: Vasque*

## 2. 'What is a Vibram sole?'

Vibram is an Italian company that manufacture the 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.



*Vibram soles are known for their quality. Image: Merrell*

## 3. 'What are the best hiking socks?'

The golden rule for hiking/trekking socks is to not wear cotton. Instead, choose wool, synthetic, or a blend of these fibres.

Good quality socks maintain a comfortable fit, while providing support and cushioning. They also last much longer than cheaper varieties, and those stitched from Merino wool or synthetic fibres have the added ability to 'wick' moisture away from your foot, drying a whole lot faster.



*The right socks make the world of difference. Image: Icebreaker*

## 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 and foot shape, you will probably find a different shoe that is just as suitable for you as another shoe is for someone else in the same circumstances.



*Merrell Moabs - otherwise known as the 'mother of all boots'. Image: Merrell*

## 5. 'Do I need insoles?'

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



*You might want to add an insole to your shoes for comfort. Image: Sidas*

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

In my experience, if the shoe fits correctly, you should not need to over-complicate the



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!



*You can try a few different lacing techniques. Image: Suunto*

## Did You Know: 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, and 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 (note that **Scarpa, Columbia, and Vasque are no longer in our range**).



Finding a pair hiking shoes that are comfortable and suited to the activity you're going to be doing isn't always simple. However, 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 2024.*

**Any hot tips for finding the perfect pair of hiking boots? Let us know in the comments.**