

Footwear Tips

Nothing can end a great outdoor experience quicker than painful blisters, pinched toes or even injuries caused by inappropriate footwear.

Socks

Having the right socks is one of the most important ways to avoid foot problems at camp or on the trail. Here are some tips:

1. **Safety Tip:** Don't wear cotton socks because they absorb water and perspiration and hold it next to your skin. If you get into a situation where you are hiking with wet feet and the temperature drops below freezing, you risk getting frostbite.
2. Wear two pair of socks. The first pair next to your skin should be polyester liner socks that "wick away" moisture. The second outer pair should be heavy-weave wool or synthetic rag socks for cushioning.

Shoes

Scouts usually outgrow shoes in a short time, so don't spend a lot of money on your trail shoes or boots.

1. **Comfort and fit are the most important features:**
 - When trying on boots, wear the socks you plan to wear on the trail.
 - Boots should feel snug but comfortable, so you can still wiggle your toes. Most hiking boots won't feel as instantly as comfortable as sneakers, but they shouldn't pinch, cause hot spots, or constrict circulation. They should fit securely around your ankle and instep.
 - When trying on boots, try walking down an incline. Your feet should not slide forward, nor should your toenails scrape against the front of your boot. If your foot slides forward, the boot could be too wide. If the back of your heel moves around, your boots might not be laced up tight enough.
2. Boots with a lug sole for better traction are usually a good choice, especially for rugged terrain.
3. Choose boots that are designed to support the load you expect to be carrying. If you plan to go backpacking with a full load, then you will need boots with more support.
4. Remember that great hiking boots do not have to weigh a great deal.
5. Today's high-tech materials have replaced the traditional metal shank and other heavy elements that provide stability in a boot. As a result, hiking boots are lighter, but still offer great support.
6. Consider the various advantages of fabric versus leather boots. Fabric/leather boots are lighter in weight and easier to break in. Many hikers today are returning to traditional leather hiking boots for added protection and durability in rigorous terrain.
7. Leather boots are supportive and water resistant, yet they still will allow your feet to breathe.
8. Consider the advantages of a waterproof boot. Today's top-quality hiking boots with a Gore-Tex® lining that lets perspiration escape while keeping water out. Gore-Tex® is more expensive, but you can walk through puddles and shallow streams and not get your feet wet.
9. Consider protecting your boots with some kind of spray-on water repellent.
10. **IMPORTANT:** Break-in your boots by wearing them for short periods well before you plan to use them. New shoes and camping/hiking are a guarantee of foot discomfort or worse.