

BOOTS

The choice of walking boots available is extensive. From lightweight trail shoes to winter mountaineering boots. Shops may refer to trail shoes, approach shoes, trekking boots, hiking boots, hill walking boots, mountain boots, 3 season boots, 4 season boots, mountaineering boots and maybe some other designations as well. Different shops will have their own designations.

“...do nothing in haste, look well to each step, and from the beginning think what may be the end...”

Edward Whymper 1840 - 1911



As a school we lay down requirements based primarily on the experience of the Duke of Edinburgh instructors. We would ask you, therefore, to keep to these guidelines. Incorrect footwear can be dangerous and as a result, if we consider any student's footwear inappropriate, they will be prevented from going on the expedition.

Tell the assistant that you require proper boots that are suitable for backpacking. At bronze you will be walking primarily on good paths, but if you expect your boots to last for silver as well, the terrain will be more rugged and some of the walking will be away from paths.

The instructors are more than happy to give advice on any aspect of the suitability of boots you are considering.

There is a lot of overlap and duplication in the categories and no simple definition of what defines each category. To a certain extent the definition is arbitrary. Also experience plays a large part in the type of boots that can be worn for any given activity. On the same walk an experienced walker with strong ankles may be able to wear a pair of lightweight trail shoes whereas someone with less experience would require proper boots. As a result of this, walking boots elicit perhaps the most debate over what is acceptable and what is not. You may find that a shop will try and sell you more lightweight and less rugged footwear than you need.

Guidelines for boots

- Proper boots are required. Boots provide better ankle support to inexperienced walkers on rough ground and therefore help to guard against twisted ankles;
- For the avoidance of doubt, trail shoes or approach shoes are not acceptable;
- Fashion type walking boots (such as timberlands) are not acceptable as the soles do not have sufficient grip.



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How to buy your walking boots

- * Allow at least an hour for fitting, maybe more.
- * Make sure that the shop offers the facility to wear the boots at home and take them back if uncomfortable. If not, go to a different shop.
- * Make sure you have confidence in the shop assistant, If you don't think they are experts, go somewhere else.
- * Buy from a shop with an incline board so you can see how the boots feel walking down hill.
- * Go in the afternoon as your feet will have swollen throughout the day.
- * Get your boots fitted with the socks you are going to wear walking in them.
- * Don't worry about what size you are told the boots are. Make sure they fit.
- * Don't worry about the style or the make, fit is more important – the same goes for colour.
- * Wear your boots around the house and if they do not fit, take them back.
- * You should feel that the boot is holding your foot firmly. The heel should not move and your toes should not be touching the upper or end of the boot.

Looking after you boots

When you get your boots home give them a good clean. Brush off any mud and dirt and rinse the boots under the tap taking care that you don't get water inside the boot. Dry the boots away from direct heat and stuff them with newspaper if they are wet inside. Once dry, treat them with a waterproofing agent according to the manufacturer's instructions.

Wearing in your boots

Modern walking boots should be comfortable out of the box and do not need wearing in as such. They do, however, mould to your feet and you should not turn up on the expedition with brand new boots. Wear them for short walks to allow the uppers to soften and to eliminate any places where the boots may rub.

1

Look for boots that have a good shock absorbing sole. You will be carrying a heavy rucksack and you will not want sore feet.

2

Fabric boots are light and very comfortable. The fabric upper is not waterproof and so a waterproof liner, often gore-tex, is used. This reduces the breathability of the boots. In heavy rain, without proper proofing, the outer fabric can become waterlogged reducing breathability even more. Since a foot can produce up to 250ml of sweat in a day, if the boot doesn't breath, you get wet feet.

3

Leather boots are hardwearing and waterproof without the need for a waterproof lining. They tend to be heavier than fabric boots though and also need a few walks before they are completely comfortable. Provided they have been well proofed, in heavy rain they do not loose their breathability as much as fabric boots.

4

Deep lugs in the sole will give good grip and help to prevent slips.

