

Choosing the Right Boots

Mountaineers Basic Wilderness
Skills Course 2015



What is the best Boot?

- The best boot is the one that best fits your foot and best meets your needs.
- Good boots offer:
 - Foot protection
 - Ankle support
 - Traction



Boot Types

- Light hikers
- Day hikers
- Backpacking boots



Light hikers

- Low-ankle, made of nylon and synthetic materials, more like a shoe than a boot. Best for short, easy hikes in good weather.



Light Hikers

- Pros:
 - Lightweight
 - Least expensive
 - Minimal care required
 - Breathable
 - Little or no break-in period necessary



Light Hikers

- Cons
 - Not much protection against moisture
 - No good on rocks, snow or off-trail
 - Least durable
 - Cannot be resoled



Day Hikers

- Usually a mix of leather, suede and synthetics



Day hikers

- Pros
 - Reasonable foot protection
 - Reasonable ankle support
 - Moderately water resistant
 - Moderately breathable
 - Stiffer shank
 - Not too expensive



Day Hikers

- Cons
 - Usually cannot be resoled
 - Requires some care
 - Break-in period required



Backpacking Boots

- Made of all or mostly leather, heavier and with a stiff shank.



Backpacking Boots

- Pros
 - Good water resistance
 - Good foot protection
 - Good ankle support
 - Long-lasting, durable
 - Often can be resoled



Backpacking Boots

- Cons
 - Heavy
 - Break-in period required
 - Regular care required to maintain leather
 - Expensive



Other Boots

- Not recommended for hiking
 - Cowboy boots
 - Moon boots
 - Ski boots
 - Steel toe boots
 - Rubber Wellingtons



Boot Anatomy

- Sole
 - Usually made of rubber
 - Tread may be “deep” or “shallow”



Boot Anatomy

- Rand
 - Found in many day hiker & backpacker boots
 - A strip of rubber that covers the junction of the sole with the upper
 - Sometimes only found on toe of boot
 - Provides extra protection against scuffs, moisture
 - Subject to peeling



Boot Anatomy

- Pay careful attention to the area where the sole connects to the Upper; this is a weak spot and often fails first, leading to leaky boots.
- Most day hiker boots have the sole glued to the upper
- More expensive boots have the sole stitched to the upper

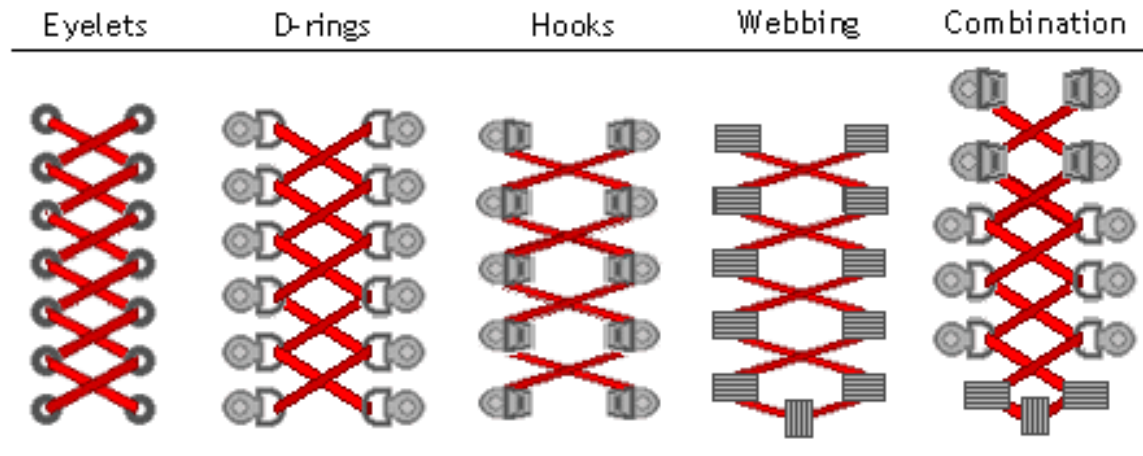
Boot Anatomy

- Upper
 - Leather, synthetic or a mix
 - How high does it go up your ankle?
 - A higher 'rise' provides more ankle support and water resistance



Boot Anatomy

- Laces
 - Should go all the way up the rise
 - Can they be easily replaced?
 - Are the loops, catches or rings easy to thread?



Boot Anatomy

- Shank
 - Solid plastic or metal insert, between the sole and the footbed
 - Depending on the shank the boot may be more or less stiff

Boot Anatomy

- Liners
 - Insulation (primaloft)
 - Only for winter, too hot for summer
 - Gore-Tex liners can help keep water out
 - Reduce breathability, more foot sweat



Tips for Trying on Boots

- Wear hiking socks
- Boots should be firm, not tight; your feet should not slide around
- Walk up and down stairs in the boots, crouch down, do a pushup
- Check for spots that pinch, rub or bind your foot
- Backpacking boots will not be comfortable the first time you try them on!

Tips for Trying on Boots

- Hold the boot in your hands, with one hand on the heel, the other on the toe. Bend the two ends inward, towards the top of the boot. How flexible is the boot?
- Flexible boots will make your feet tired quicker
- Stiffer boots are better for rocks, roots and heavy loads

Boot Prices

- Light hikers: can be had for less than \$150
- Day hikers: \$150-250
- Backpacking boots: \$250 and up



Boot Prices

- Backpacking boots will last longer and can be re-soled, so the higher upfront cost is somewhat compensated for
- Cheaper boots will not last as long
- Check E-bay, Second Ascent and various sales for good deals

The Best Boot

- The best boot is the one that best fits your feet and best meets your needs.

