

# HOW TO CHOOSE RUNNING SHOES

# RUNNING SHOES

Trying to find a good running shoe lead to a minefield of advice, science, marketing and hype.

Finding the 'right' pair of shoes for you can be a confusing battle.

In this guide, we look at:

- How to establish your criteria for your running shoes
- What you need from a running store and it's staff
- What to look for when you try on the shoe
- Gait analysis – how it can be interpreted (and misinterpreted)
- What the experts, shop workers and experienced runners look for.



# CHOOSING RUNNING SHOES IS NOT AN EXACT SCIENCE

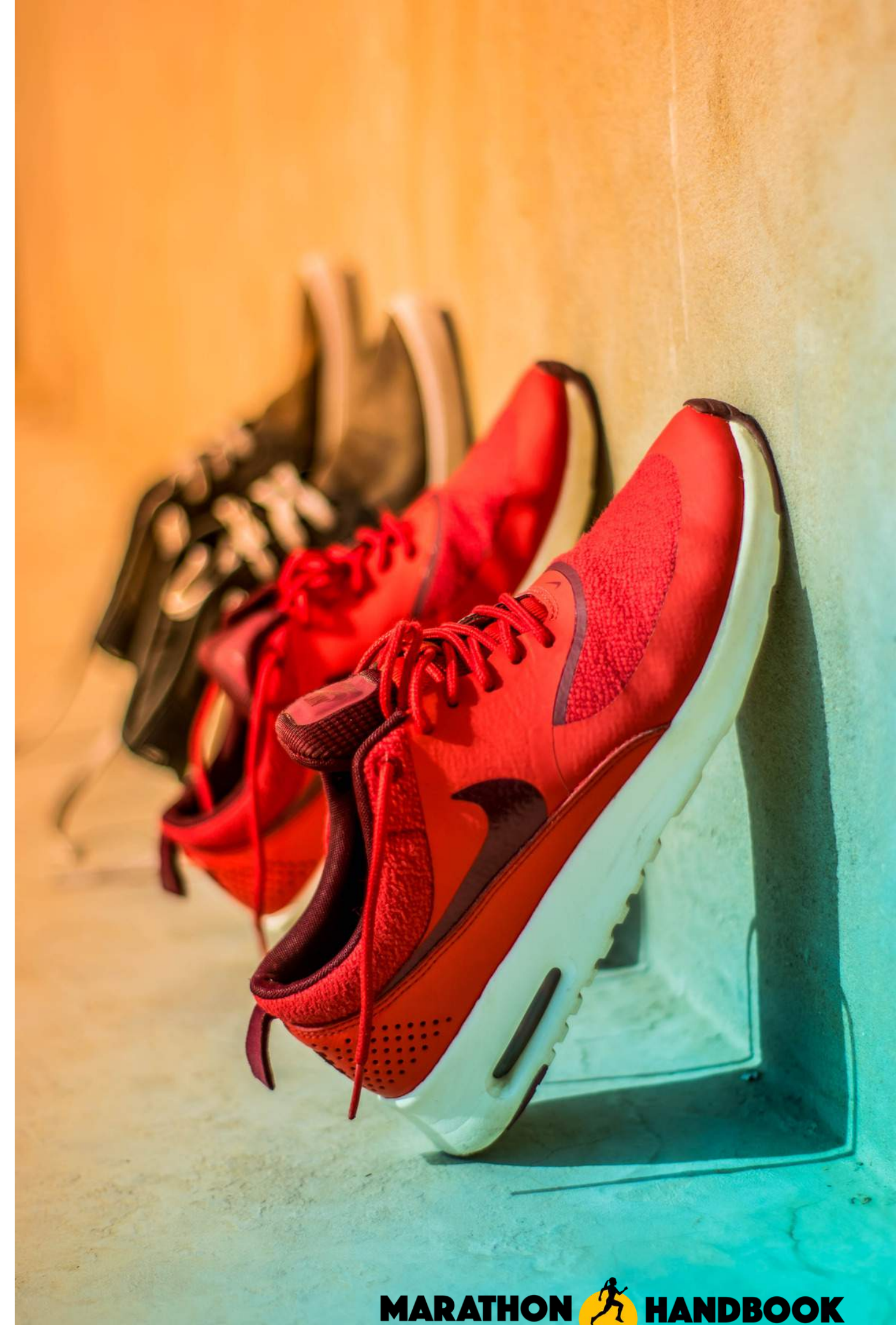
This is the most important point— there’s no ‘perfect’ shoe out there that fits everybody’s feet and suits everyone’s running style.

There’s no exact formula to follow that’ll lead you to your perfect shoe.

It’s trial and error, and as your body and running develop, your shoe requirements will change.

So instead, your goal is to find a pair of shoes amongst the many that helps you achieve your running goals, keeping you happy for many miles while not getting you injured.

(Remember to look at changing your running shoes after around 500 miles.)



# WHAT ARE YOU USING THE SHOES FOR?

The first thing you want to be clear on is what are your requirements of your running shoes.

It might sound obvious at first, but taking the time to think about your needs will make it easier to choose the right pair of shoes.

This will be important in selecting the type and various features of the shoe, and will be useful to tell the assistant at the running store when you go and start your search.

Things to consider:

- What are your running goals for these shoes? Are you training for your first 100km? Or your first 10km? Are you going to only be using them once a week on the treadmill, or are you going to run the streets every morning on the way to work?
- What terrain will you use the shoes in? Running shoes broadly fall into two categories – trail and road. Trail shoes have more grip and tread on the sole, road shoes have flatter, more efficient soles. If you plan to do a bit of street running and a bit of trail running, opt for trail shoes that have comparatively little tread.
- What's your running shoe experience and history? Did that pair of New Balance you had fit you perfectly? Great! You can start to explore similar models. Did those cushioned shoes leave you with shin splints? OK good, we know what to avoid.

# FINDING A GREAT RUNNING SHOE STORE

A good running store with interested, knowledgeable staff is worth its weight in gold.

Discount sports stores will give you just that – a discounted experience.

Brand stores will have the latest shoes, but won't have the range of brands, or quite likely the knowledgeable staff to help you.

If you're not sure where these are, google one in your area or ask a friend for a recommendation.

Once inside, the staff will be able to guide you in choosing running shoes. A good running store assistant will want to know a host of information before looking at a good shoe for you – your running experience, your current mileage, injury history (what it is, where it is, what aggravates it) and shoe history.



# HOW TO TRY ON RUNNING SHOES



- **Comfort is king.** More than any other possible factor, a shoe that feels right is the one for you. If a shoe rubs or irritates you in the store, that will only get exponentially worse when you go out for a run with them.
- Don't assume you know your size— every brand varies slightly. You want **a thumb's space between the longest toe and the shoe box.**
- The shoes should **NOT give friction, pain, discomfort** or feel too solid / hard. If you experience any of these, this isn't the shoe for you.
- **Overall feel.** Get up and walk around, if the shop has some little ramps go and see how the feet move inside the shoes when going up and down hills.
- Trial them. You should always **try running with the shoes on**, preferably on the street outside the store as opposed to the treadmill.
- In the end, **listen to your gut** – don't buy a shoe you don't feel 100% comfortable in. If the staff aren't listening to your needs, you can find another store.

# ATLANTA DRUMMOND – Runner, Gait Analysis Specialist and Running Store Assistant

*“I do believe that the perfect shoe is one that supports you where you need it but also allows your feet to move freely and naturally without compensating on the support.”*

*Currently I have found that the brand that covers a wide range of runners and has very high recommendations is Asics and in some cases Brooks.*

*For medium-major over pronators I have been recommending the Asics Gel Kayano and all of those runners have come back to me with 0 complaints. One shoe that does well due to it's DNA gait adapting midsole is the Brooks Ravenna 8. Adidas Ultra Boost is great for neutral runners wanting a highly cushioned, light, and smooth ride with maximum foot room.”*



# NICK NEWMAN – Runner, Runners Need Assistant Manager

*“I work for Runners Needs and the big thing for me is comfort. Although gait analysis is a useful tool I don’t personally think that it’s something that should be taken for gospel!”*

*When I’m serving someone I try and find out the customer’s history. Things like what type of running they’re doing, is it for general fitness or are training for an event. I try and find out some of their running history and what other activities that they are doing.*

*Ultimately I think that runners should go for a shoe that is comfortable. A couple of brands are going towards “preferred motion” and letting the body move in the way that it wants to move and the runners work to strengthen their body to cope with running.*

*“The gait analysis doesn’t really show the entire picture of a runner, things like shin rotation and hip position, it is a guide.”*



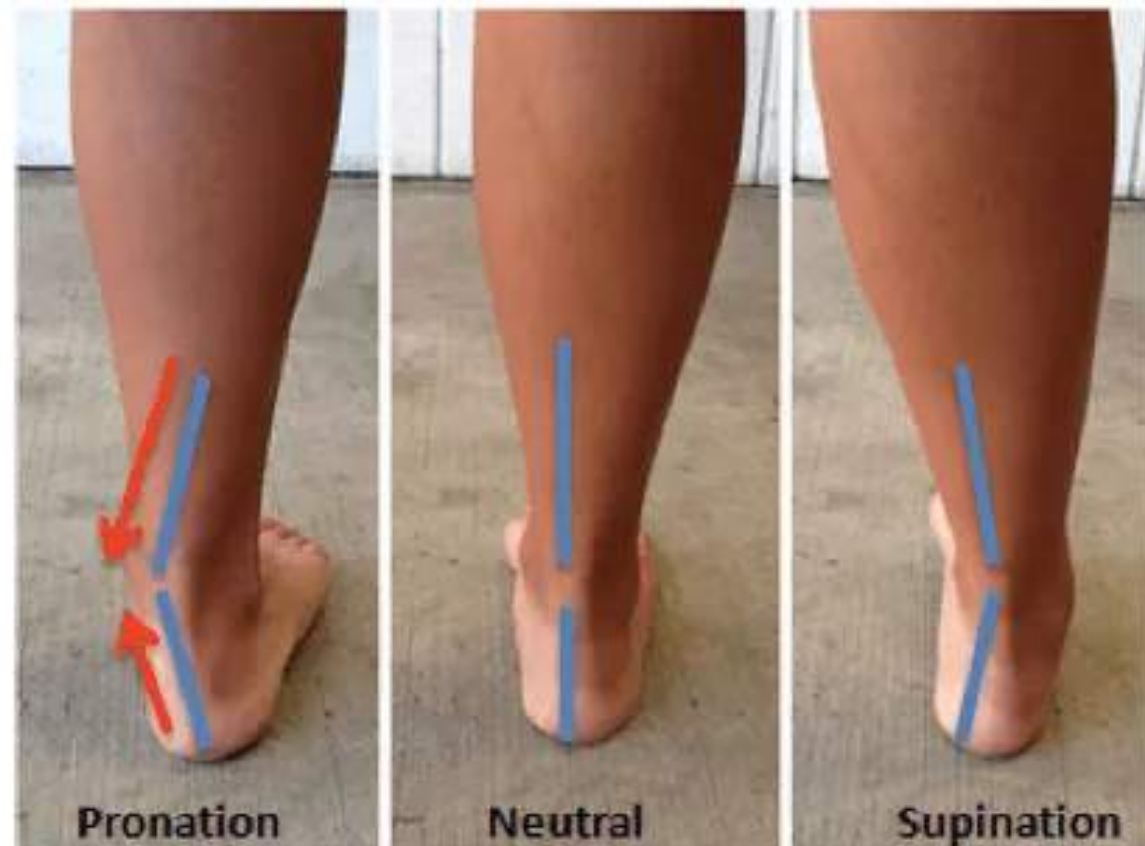
# GAIT ANALYSIS AND PRONATION



Gait analysis is the study of how a person's body moves – specifically while running, for our purpose.

The store assistant will usually have you run on the treadmill for a few seconds while she records a video of your feet and legs in motion. She'll then play back the footage, and use it to analyse your running style and prescribe running shoes.

One of the key pieces of information gained from gait analysis is how much you pronate. Pronating is the roll of the foot on each foot-strike, and the corresponding angle the lower leg takes on.



Someone who 'pronates' has a foot/heel movement that rolls inwards with each stride. The opposite is to 'supinate', wherein your foot/heel rolls outwards.

It's perfectly common for runners to either pronate or supinate – pronation is more normal. It is caused by the complex biomechanics of our bodies, and while it may be a sign of an imbalance, it doesn't necessarily need to be remedied if it isn't excessive and doesn't cause any issues.

“Over-pronation” is a term used a lot – it can be used to mean that you simply pronate, or that you pronate to an excessive level that is likely to cause injury.



# WHICH SHOE BRANDS ARE POPULAR?

- If you're looking for my latest marathon shoe recommendations, check out my [Best Marathon Running Shoes](#) page.
- Asics, especially the Nimbus line, prove to be a perennial favourite for part-time runners and people starting out. They provide good cushioning and support and have a decent build.
- Brooks are dependable and often used by novice – intermediate runners.
- For the more seasoned runner, Salomon shoes have become the 'go-to' for many seasoned distance runners – their trail running models such as the Speedcross have got a great build and a good reputation. For long distance ultras, Hoka One Ones, and other maximalist styles, have also taken over a huge section of the market and are probably a close second in popularity to Salomon. Inov-8, New Balance, Saucony, and many more are always visible at the start line of any good race.



# KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **Be clear in what you are going to use the shoe for** before you hit the stores.
- Finding a **good shoe store** and **knowledgeable, helpful staff** is paramount.
- **Comfort trumps every other variable.** Regardless of gait, pronation, foot shape, etc., how comfortable you find the shoe is a strong correlator to the chances of avoiding injury and having a shoe you are happy with for many miles.
- Try on the shoes, **spend time in them** and beware of sales and marketing.
- Gait analysis and other tools are useful – BUT they are only of value if the store person knows how to interpret them. **Gait analysis / foot type alone isn't enough to recommend a running shoe.** These are tools that can help guide you to the most appropriate shoe.
- If you're a beginner, **stick to the most common and popular beginner's shoes.** The average beginner runner shouldn't go for anything too extreme or exotic (barefoot, maximalist) – stick to the popular, tried and tested brands.