

Equipment Fitting Guide - Fit to Play the Right Way

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When getting fit to play, a soccer player needs to be concerned with 5 main items: shirt (also known as a jersey), shorts, socks (also known as stockings), footwear and shin pads. Goalkeepers can wear tracksuit bottoms instead of shorts.

SHIN GUARDS

EVERYONE on the field — no matter the level of play — must wear shin guards. They protect you from kicks and hard shots. When buying them, you want to look for a large protection area and comfort while running.

There are three types of shin guards.

- 1. Ankle Shin Guards have attached ankle straps, which wrap under the foot and provides support and ankle protection.
- 2. Slip-In Shin Guards slide under your socks and protects just your shins.
- 3. Shin Socks have shin guards built into the socks for convenience.

Ankle Shin Guards are recommended for players 12 years old and younger, because the added ankle support is recommended for safety and comfort.



More advanced youth players (ages 10-12) typically prefer slip-in shin guards for the freedom of movement they offer. These shin guards push under the socks and do not cover your ankles. Try on shin guards with a soccer sock before buying. Slide the guards on and walk around a bit, even jogging if possible, and see if they stay snugly in place. Some socks are snug enough to keep the shin guards from moving, but many players prefer to use tape, stays or compression sleeves to keep the shields in place throughout the game.

Shin guards' size is based on your height. Shin guards come in the standard sizes from x-small to XL. Shin guard manufacturers offer sizing guidelines in their product description. Make sure to read the size chart carefully to ensure a great fit.

Consider Your Position

If you primarily play one position, you'll want to look for specific features in your shin guards to enhance your game.

- **Defenders:** Defenders can take a lot of punishment, so they should look for a heavier shin guard with ample protection, perhaps including ankle coverage.
- Midfielders: If you're a midfielder, you'll need a balance of protection and flexibility that won't restrict your movement.
- Forwards: Forwards need shin guards that allow for explosive bursts of speed and quick
 changes in direction as they elude defenders on their way to the net. Forwards will want to find
 the lightest, smallest shin guards available for optimum mobility.
- Goalkeepers: Goalkeepers require the least protection of all positions. Look for a lightweight option with minimal padding.

Ensure the shin guard protects at least 2 inches under the knee to just before where the ankle bends.

Get shin guards that comfortably mold to the width of your leg.

You want snug, complete protection around your shins. When looking at your legs from the front, the shin guard should cover the entire width of your leg.

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Plastic and Carbon Fiber are the two most common shin guard materials. Plastic is generally more budget-friendly, and carbon fiber is lighter and stronger.

Middle or high school soccer players must wear National Operating Committee on Standards for Athletic Equipment, NOCSAE, approved guards. All NOCSAE approved guards will be clearly labeled on the packaging when you go shopping.

FOOT WEAR

Shoes are designed to flex at the ball of the foot. Correct fitting properly positions the ball joint in the shoe and provides room for the toes so that they are not confined.

Improperly fit shoes can cause a variety of foot problems.

Always use a Brannock Device to measure feet A Brannock Device measures foot length (heel-to-toe), width and arch length (heel-to-ball).

For more information on using a Brannok Device visit: https://brannock.com/pages/instructions-fitting-tips



CLEATS

Your soccer cleats should fit snugly without discomfort or pressure points to ensure support and traction. When buying new soccer cleats, try them on indoors first to check for correct fit. Your toes should reach all the way to the front of the cleat but should not touch the end (look for a gap of 1/4 to 1/2 inches).

Consider the playing surface and the athlete's playing style when choosing a youth cleat.

PLAYING SURFACE

Kids just starting out in the game find firm-ground soccer cleats the best option. The hard-plastic cleats are permanently molded to the outsole of the shoe, and they're extremely versatile for a variety of field conditions.

• Firm ground - soccer cleats are best suited for most grass surfaces, and come with studs to allow for improved traction on the field.

- Artificial ground firm ground cleats work well on this surface, or there are soccer shoes designed specifically for artificial turf.
- Indoor soccer shoes are great for use in the gym or on hard surfaces like the street and have a flat rubber outsole which grips the floor, allowing the player to make quick changes of direction.
- Always check in with your local league for guidelines on legal cleat types



PLAYING STYLE

Beginners still developing their style or athletes who play in multiple positions, want a soccer cleat

that offers versatility. Here's a broad overview of what to look for based on position:

- Goalkeepers require a cleat that offers good traction for quick movements, as well as a strong strike zone for powerful, accurate kicks.
- **Defenders** look for a cleat that offers added protection; full backs may also look for a soccer shoe that assists with crisp passing and crossing of the ball.
- Midfielders need a cleat that offers maximum comfort and control.
- Wingers need a lightweight cleat made for acceleration and pace, as well as the ability to change direction quickly.
- Forwards are aided by a lightweight soccer cleat for quick movements, and a large strike zone to maximize shooting.

Cleats are made with leather or synthetic fabric uppers. Leather tends to stretch and break-in more over time. Synthetic fabric uppers are lightweight, versatile, hold their shape longer, are largely waterproof, and easy to break-in.

SOCCER BALLS

Soccer Ball guide: https://www.soccer.com/guide/soccer-ball-guide

SOCCER BALL SIZE CHART

SIZE	CIRCUMFERENCE	AGE
Size 1 (Skills Balls)	18-20	All ages: developing footwork skills/ball control
Size 3 (Junior)	23-24	8 and younger
Size 4 (Youth)	25-26	Ages 8-12
Size 5 (Adult)	27-28	Ages 13+

SIZE 3

Used for children under the age of 8. These balls are generally 23-24 inches in circumference and weigh between 11-12 ounces.

SIZE 4

Used for players between the ages of 8-12. These balls have a circumference of 25-26 inches and weigh between 12-13 ounces.

SIZE 5

This is the international standard size for all ages 13 and older. These balls have a circumference of 27-28 inches and weigh between 14-16 ounces.

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