



## Half Marathon Gear Guide

A guide to choosing shoes and apparel for distance running

Most women run a 5K race with the bare minimum running gear: a pair of running shoes and whatever sporty-looking item they can find in their wardrobes. Along comes the 10K race and the game is upped just a notch. They know that comfort is key and feeling good in their clothes (and maybe their own skin) will play an important role in getting those mental motors revved up. That's when body and soul team together to get you across that finish line.

The running gear you've used to run your 10K(s) is the very same that you'll need for the half marathon. Since you signed up for this 21K Course, we're going to assume that you already have a few pairs of running shoes. You might not yet own so much running gear that you have a special section in your closet, but we can bet you have the basics.

You may not need to buy anything new in order to start training next week, but let's go through basic running gear to make sure you'll all set.

## Running Shoes

While running and racing I have a bad habit of looking at the ground. Good form would have me looking serenely ahead to the horizon. When my head and neck is in the correct position the rest of my body aligns and my running style instantly improves. I correct myself constantly but when my gaze returns to the ground the first thing I look at are the shoes my fellow runners are wearing. I'm used to seeing anything fly at a 5K race, from "gym" shoes to army boots. But I become totally flustered when I see long distance racers shod with whatever they find at the Sports Authority sales bin. **Anatomically speaking, your feet play the most important role while you run, so running shoes are the most important component of your running kit.**

It's essential to purchase running shoes that suit your feet. A well-fitted, quality pair of shoes will:

- make you feel more comfortable when you run
- help you glide over any surface you choose to run on
- most importantly, help prevent injuries that can be caused by wearing the wrong shoe.



Choosing a running shoe in the 21st century is not only overwhelming, it can be downright paralyzing. There are so many companies out there and they are all trying to get a piece of a 13 billion dollar market pie. That's right, **billions** of dollars!

Nike  
Brooks  
Adidas  
Asics  
New Balance  
Reebok  
Puma  
Pearl Izumi  
Saucony  
Mizuno  
Karhu  
K-Swiss  
Newton  
Avia  
Etonic  
Zoot  
Merrell  
Spira  
Ecco  
Patagonia

These are the first companies that come to mind from my shoddy memory (pun intended!). I'm sure the list would easily double by looking up new companies from this year alone. Not included is the whole barefoot running trend with the Italian company Vibram in the foreground. Multiply these brands by the number of shoe models they have to invent, produce and market each year and you'll clearly understand why you may be confused about shoes!

I strongly recommend that you go to a **specialist running store** to make your purchases. This will save you both time and money. The running store staff are usually runners themselves and experienced in fitting people of all ages, shapes and sizes. They know what to look for and which models may work for you. If you return to them for a second or third pair of shoes they'll know you even better and can be of even more help in your running future. But nobody knows you as well as YOU, so make sure you are armed with some knowledge about your own feet. Here are the three main things to keep in mind when trying on shoes:

### 1. The biomechanics of your feet

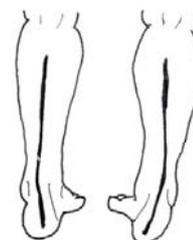
We all have a natural way of running; our own personal style. You probably weren't even aware that you had a style, but I guarantee that you do. If you were to go running and had a friend follow you and film you with a video camera, you'd notice that your running style would fall into one of the following categories:



#### Neutral

You're a pronator when your foot naturally rolls inward upon landing while running. A small degree of pronation is natural.

**Excessive pronation** (known as **overpronation** or **hyperpronation**) can happen when the arch flattens out, thus stretching ligaments, tendons and muscles, but in all my years of experience I have seen very few hyperpronators. Be careful of salespeople that want to convince you that you're a hyperpronator when in reality you just have naturally occurring pronation.



#### Underpronating (*supination*)

You're a supinator when your foot naturally rolls outward upon landing while running.

### **A word about “stability” and “motion control”**

Most people have a little natural pronation - very few are overpronators or underpronators. If you do happen to under or over pronate it's most likely something you've done all your life. It's not a good idea to try and correct over or under pronation unless it's truly creating problems for you while walking and running (which for most people it doesn't). That's why I recommend that when you buy your running shoes avoid “anti-pronation” protection or anything with “motion control”. The way you move your feet is the most important element in running efficiently. We want you to be able to move them naturally while protecting them at the same time. Look for a “neutral” shoe that allows your foot to roll as it should.



### **Let's talk about “Barefoot” running**

Here at Up & Running we advocate what we call “feet activation”. Your feet are your most important tools for running and you must learn to use them. Most runners don't, though this is by no means their fault. After years of stuffing our feet into stiff boots and sky high stilettos it's no wonder we don't know how to move them naturally. But before you jump on the barefoot running bandwagon first take the time to activate your feet. We'll be teaching you specific feet activating exercises in the next few months. If on the other hand you already buy minimalist running shoes, more power to ya!

## **2. Your body weight**

**Speaking strictly in athletic terms**, you're considered “light” if you weigh less than 130 lbs (60 kg), “medium” if you weigh between 130 and 165 lbs (60 - 75 kg) and “heavy” if you weigh over 165 lbs (75 kg). **This is not a judgmental call** and both men and women are considered equals here. I know some people that are really fast runners but have a big muscle mass so they fall into the “heavy” category.

### 3. How much, how long, a shoes lifetime

During the next twelve weeks you'll be running a *minimum* of 30km/18 miles per week.

Your mileage will increase slightly in the last month of training so you'll end up logging (very approximately!) 480km/300 miles. Running shoes have a lifetime span of anywhere from 700km - 1000km or 400 to 600 miles. That number changes according to your running style, your weight, the terrain you train on and the material the shoe was constructed with. If your running shoes have seen better days, **now** might be a good time to invest in another pair of shoes. When you buy a new pair keep a small diary or mileage chart so you know how many miles they've done.

## Shoe Models

After a few hits and misses you'll find a shoe that fits your foot perfectly. I won't name names but I tried five different companies before I found the one that was had my large, wide foot in mind while they sat at the project table! I've been faithful to them for more than fifteen years just because I know they fit me so well. Each company has their line of entry level shoes along with distance running shoes. I've picked one from a few of the largest running shoe manufacturers. Up & Running have no affiliations with any of these companies, though we have tried many of their shoes.

*Note: All prices mentioned were correct at time of publication and are in US dollars.*

### Nike

#### ***Pegasus and Lunar***

For Winter 2012 Nike rolled out the Pegasus + 28 which tells you how long it's been around. They change it slightly every year for marketing reasons, but it basically remains the same shoe. Look for the **+26** model if you want to save money and pay less than **\$50.00** since the **+27** model is already out on the market. **+26** = same shoe, half the price!



The Lunar series came out in 2008 using “Lunar Foam” developed by NASA. They are supposed to have excellent shock absorption and do have minimal weight. Try several models on to feel if they’re the right shoe for you.



## Asics

### *Gel*

If you really want to get confused about running shoes, go check out the [Asics shoe website](#).

Just know that every shoe starts with the name “Gel”. After that we have the sub series:

- ANYTHING 33: The Asics take on barefoot running
- CUSHIONED: Kayano, Nimbus, Cumulus, Impression, Galaxy, Equation
- TRAIL: Artic, Fuji, Trabuco, Kahana
- SPEED: DS, Speedstar, Landreth



I really like Asics for their fit. It seems like you can just slip them on, lace them up and go run from the very first day. Don’t be intimidated by the number of models they have but definitely allow your salesperson to guide you to the correct series. Pictured above are the Asics Gel 1170 - retailing at \$ 90.00, they are the perfect long distance running shoe.

## Adidas

### *Adizero, Supernova, Adistar*

While technically lagging behind the other shoe manufacturers in the 90’s, Adidas has caught up in the last few years with the added bonus that they don’t have so many dang models! This Supernova Glide 4 costs \$115.00 and is a perfect neutral shoe for all Up & Running Half Marathon Participants.



As I write shoe companies churning out new models and brand new sports companies are being launched. There's just no way to keep up with them. You can have a look online at the other companies from the big list above and see if anything grabs your eye. Then go to a shoe store and try them on. For a long distance running shoe you're going to be spending anywhere from **\$60.00** to **\$130.00** so shop around!

There are two more things to keep in mind while you are trying on the running shoes and deciding on your dream model:

1. **Make sure you have enough "wobble" room in the toe box area.**

This is really important because as you run your foot will be pushed forward a few millimetres. If you don't have a little room for play, you can say goodbye to a few of those nails (ouch!). On the other hand don't get them too big or you'll end up with blisters from the friction of your foot sliding back and forth.

2. **They must be comfortable right away.**

Trying on running shoes is a little bit like being Cinderella, you have to keep trying on different models until you find the one that fits your foot. We all have a different foot structure: wide, narrow, different length toes, high arches, no arches... the list goes on. Try on at least three or four different pairs and see how they fit you. Go for a test jog or walk around the store. I promise that when you find the right pair, you will know right away.

In order to save a little cash you can order your shoes over the internet but you **must** go try them on first. Running shoes and sports shoes in general tend to run smaller than street shoes, so don't gasp when they tell you that you take **a size and a half bigger than usual!**

Here's a few links where you can find discounted models online:

- Road Runner Sports - <http://www.roadrunnersports.com/>
- Sports Basement - <http://www.sportsbasement.com>
- Holabird Sports - <http://www.holabirdsports.com/>
- Running Shoes.com - <http://www.runningshoes.com/>
- Wiggle - <http://www.wiggle.co.uk/>
- Amazon - <http://www.amazon.com>
- Paragon Sports - <http://www.paragonsports.com>

## Socks

When you purchase your running shoes, throw in a few pairs of running or regular sport socks. They're made without any visible seams from a sweat absorbing material that will keep your feet dry and help avoid blisters from forming. Sports stores sell many types, from super light weight to heavily padded. Try a few pairs to see which you feel most comfortable with. They cost slightly more than regular socks but if you just use them for running they'll last longer.

## Running clothes

While you train and race you need to feel comfortable and fabulous. The combination of the two will make you run faster. Plus, there is nothing worse than running with a wardrobe malfunction! You don't need to invest a lot of money in sports clothing. Shop around, wait for sales and know that if you happen to spend a little more on a wind breaker or jacket, they last a long time. What you wear will also depend on the season and the climate in your area.

You definitely want to invest in some technical running clothes. Unlike cotton clothing, synthetic fabrics, such as CoolMax or Dri-Fit, wick moisture away from your skin. Although the technical fabric running clothes may cost a little more, you'll appreciate the comfort, especially during longer runs. I have to say that I do love modern running clothes - wearing a great capri pant and wicking shirt really beats the baggy cotton sweat pants and old t-shirt.

## The essential item: a good sports bra

I know you already wear a sports bra. This is just a reminder to buy a new one or get a better fit if you happen to lose some weight or hang onto it for too long. When women drop a few pounds running they run out and buy a new pair of running pants or shorts but forget about the running bra. Unfortunately we lose weight in our chest also, just make sure you update your bra size!



*Compression Bra*



*Front Closure Bra*

In general there are two models for sports bras - compression and front closure. Most women opt for the compression bra since it's easy to slip on and off and makes everything stay in place. If you are well endowed you may want to try on a front closure bra. They are designed for D cups and up.

## Sports watches, GPS devices and heart rate monitors

For the Up & Running Half Marathon Program at the very least you'll need a watch with a chronograph to use during your workouts. If you're a device geek you'll most likely add in a watch with GPS for measuring your routes or a watch with a heart rate monitor. You might even want to plunk a chunk of change down and get the whole shebang rolled into one watch. If you happen to have a smartphone you can find many of these features in an app.

### Timex T5K287 IRONMAN 150-Lap TAP Screen Watch

This is the watch I currently own and I've been using it for two years now. I love the tap screen! You don't have to search for the button to start, lap or stop. Just tap the screen without even looking at it. It's a little more expensive but you'll be using it for several years to come. Approximately **\$60.00**.



**Smartphone tip:** Use your "stopwatch" feature; it takes splits too.

### Polar Heart Rate Monitors

The Polar company from Finland was the very first manufacturer of commercial HRM's for running and cycling. I still think they make a nice HRM but they seem to be lagging behind on the whole GPS concept. They still have the best software on the market for all their downloadable models. You can stick to a basic model like the FT4F pictured here. It retails for \$89.95.



**Smartphone tip:** There are apps that calculate your heart rate but you have to take your own pulse and plug the numbers in. That's really difficult to do while you're running...

## Garmin

I resisted buying a Garmin GPS watch for years, but then my athletes started sending me training updates by just giving me the Garmin link where it was all laid out with groovy graphs. Geeky device envy took over and I had to get one. I bought the Forerunner 410 model (pictured here) with the heart rate monitor incorporated (and separate strap) and we lived happily ever after. There's been three new models since mine came out, driving down the price of the older models. Keep your eyes peeled for sales.



**Smartphone tip:** For free GPS capabilities try iMapMyRun, RunKeeper and iRunner. There are many more apps, so experiment to find which suits you better. Please note that they don't work perfectly and may nudge you more towards a real GPS watch.

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**If you have any questions or comments you can:**

- **Get in touch on the Forum – <http://www.upandrunningonline.com/forum>**
- **Email us at [hello@upandrunningonline.org](mailto:hello@upandrunningonline.org)**
- **Send us a Tweet [@runningonline](https://twitter.com/runningonline) or**
- **Leave a message on the Up and Running Facebook page.**

**Happy shopping!**

**- Julia**