



# Walking shoes and boots

## NEED TO KNOW

Different sorts of walking need different footwear, so think about the type of terrain you plan to cover.

### APPROACH SHOES

So called because they were originally used to approach mountain-climbing areas, these are great for country walks on gentle ground as well as pounding pavements on a city break.

They're a cross between a walking boot and a trainer, and have a tough protective sole but less ankle support than boots. They're perfect for summer when boots can feel a bit heavy and hot.

You can choose from low- or mid-cut versions. Low-cut is perfect for a Sunday afternoon stroll or walking the dog in a country park, while a mid-cut version gives more ankle support, so is best if you're going on to uneven ground.

### WALKING BOOTS

These are a must if your walks will be more strenuous and you'll encounter steep ascents and descents over uneven, rocky or boggy ground. The cushioned pad around the ankle will protect bones, muscles and tendons if you slip and will also cushion against prolonged impact on a long walk. In seriously soggy conditions, you'll probably appreciate how a higher-cut boot helps prevent water seeping over the top.

If your walking is varied and you can afford it, you might consider buying both boots and approach shoes.



1 Merrell  
LOW-CUT

### BEST BUYS

We've chosen Best Buys for low-cut shoes, mid-cut shoes and three-season walking boots. We've included three boots to see how the lower-cut, lighter shoes compare with these previous Best Buys. As well as our tough lab tests, the shoes and boots were put through their paces by two experts, on a range of terrain.

All of our Best Buys will keep your feet dry in the wet, and cool after walking for several hours. They're well built and our experts found them comfy and supportive.

### LOW-CUT

The **Merrell (1)**, £85 from Blacks and Snow+Rock, were one of our experts' favourites. They stayed comfortable and cool after a day's city walking and are sturdy and well made. They're most suited to summer hill walking, trekking and city walking and come in practical colours in men's sizes 7 to 13 and women's 4 to 8.

The **Grisport (2)**, £69 from independents, are good-value shoes that offer excellent heel support and all-round comfort. Our experts thought the inner padding might show signs of wear over time but they're a decent shoe for dog-walking and country strolls,

and the shock-absorbing soles make them ideal for city walks. They're available in leather or Nubuck in sizes 36 to 47.

The Raichle (3) and Hi-Tec (4) are also worth considering although the Raichle were less good at absorbing shock and gripping, and the Hi-Tec didn't fare well in our tests for grip.

### MID-CUT

The **Merrell (11)** mid-cut shoes also impressed. They're made of soft suede and mesh for excellent breathability, have a sewn-in tongue to keep out small stones and water and fit well around the ankle. They cost £90 from independents, in men's sizes 7 to 13 and women's 4 to 8. Shock absorption is excellent, so they'll prevent jarring on the legs on harder terrain, and they're perfect for hill walking and trekking. They're quite large so you may need a size smaller than normal.

The **Salomon (12)**, £80 from Blacks, are great for easier country walking, city walking or just for taking Rover out. They're durable and have a rubber rand (see 'Sole', opposite) to protect toes and good padded ankle support. They come in men's sizes 7 to 13.5 and women's 4 to 9.5.

We found the sizes a little short, so check the fit carefully.

The **Scarpa (13)** are excellent all-purpose boots, which were immediately comfortable. The cut is quite high for lots of ankle support and they're suitable for hill and mountain walking as well as trekking. Vent holes in the tongue allow feet to breathe and the firm sole flexes enough for comfort. They're £100 from Field & Trek, Nevisport and Snow+Rock, in men's sizes 40 to 48 and women's 36 to 42.

The Boreal (14) and Karrimor (15) are worth considering as a mid-cut boot for hill walking or trekking.

### BOOTS

Our three previous Best Buys still impressed but for trekking, mountain and hill walking we still recommend the **Brasher (20)**, £100 from Blacks, Millets and Nevisport, in men's sizes 6 to 14 and women's 3 to 9. They're traditional leather boots, which don't need much breaking in. Surprisingly light, they'll keep feet comfy after a day's walking. However, their shock absorption isn't great, so to prevent leg fatigue, the Berghaus (22) are a better choice for hard surfaces such as tarmac.

# Boots

## SOLE

A good sole helps to prevent slipping and provide support. Light boots with more flexible soles (right) are ideal for flatter ground, while more rigid soles are best suited to rocky terrain. A sturdy 'rand' (rubber band around the base of the uppers) at toe and heel, as on this Merrell, will protect shoes from scuffing in rough terrain.



**BEST BUY**

**2 Grisport**  
LOW-CUT

## TONGUE

Look for a sewn-in tongue (left) like the one on these Scarpa boots. This helps to stop small stones and water from getting into the boot. A

padded tongue can also help you achieve a neat fit, but it shouldn't be too bulky, as it makes it hard to tighten the laces sufficiently to get a snug fit.



**BEST BUY**



**11 Merrell**  
MID-CUT



**BEST BUY**

**13 Scarpa**  
MID-CUT



**BEST BUY**

**12 Salomon**  
MID-CUT

## WATERPROOF LININGS

Special linings, often made of Sympatex or Gore-Tex, as on this Salomon (below), should keep your feet warm and dry. We tested the shoes and boots by dunking them in water and flexing them for seven and a half hours. Most passed the tests and will still allow feet to breathe.



**20 Brasher**  
BOOTS

**BEST BUY**

# WALKING SHOES AND BOOTS

## USING THE TABLE

We tested 19 of the latest approach shoes from best-selling brands and three previous Best Buy walking boots.

## Specification

**Price** For Best Buys, we give the cheapest widely available price as we went to press. Prices for other models are a guide to what you should expect to pay.

## Performance

**Shock absorption** How well the boots absorbed shock at the front of the sole, at the heel, and across the whole foot. **Grip** How well the boots resisted slipping at the front of the sole on uphill and downhill slopes and at the heel on downhill slopes, in both wet and dry conditions. **Breathability** How well the upper released water vapour. **Waterproofness** Models

with a ✓ didn't leak after being suspended and flexed in a tank of water for seven and a half hours.

## Expert assessment

Based on two experts' assessments of build, support, and comfort.

## Durability

**Adhesion** How securely the soles are attached to the upper.

**Abrasion resistance** How well the soles resist wear.

## SCORE

Ignores price and is based on:  
Performance 40%  
Expert assessment 40%  
Durability 20%

## KEY

★ ☆ ○ ● ●  
Best —————> Worst  
■ Best Buy

## Buying tips

Getting the right fit is vital if you want to avoid sore, aching feet. Follow our tips to keep your feet comfortable.

- Try on pairs from different brands, as size and fit vary. Wear the socks you'll walk in and go in the afternoon when feet are largest. Try going up or down a size if your usual one doesn't fit.
- Check initial fit. Your feet shouldn't feel pinched across the width, the arch should be supported, and the boots should feel snug but not tight at the ankles. You should be able to wiggle your toes without touching the front of the boot.
- Unlace the boot and move your foot as far forward inside

as possible. You should be able to slide a finger down inside the boot at the heel. If you can't, the boot is too short and will cause bruising to the toes. If the gap is too big, your foot will slide about, causing friction and blisters.

- Test the boots on a slope. Many outdoors shops now have ramps for this.
- Most models we tested have men's and women's versions. Women's typically have a narrower instep, smaller heels and a tighter ankle cuff. So if you're a woman with wider feet, the men's may fit better.

## Walking shoes and boots

### LOW-CUT

	Spec	Performance					Durability		Score
	Price (£)	Shock absorption	Grip	Breathability	Waterproofness	Expert assessment	Adhesion	Abrasion resistance	(%)
1 Merrell Chameleon II Gore-tex XCR	85	☆	☆	★	✓	★	★	○	82
2 Grisport Dartmoor	69	☆	★	☆	✓	★	●	☆	80
3 Raichle Axis XCR MS	90	○	○	★	✓	★	○	★	78
4 Hi-Tec Sierra V-Lite II WP Low	40	★	●	★	✓	★	●	☆	77
5 Brasher Diablo Low XCR	70	☆	☆	★	✓	○	☆	★	74
6 Blacks Plateau Sympatex	50	★	○	★	✓	☆	○	●	71
7 Berghaus Zero G III Low XCR	80	★	☆	★	✓	○	●	★	68
8 Karrimor ksb Cyclone Low eVENT	55	★	○	★	✓	○	☆	☆	67
9 Meindl Wave XCR	80	○	○	★	✓	○	●	★	65
10 Peter Storm Newport X-Terrain	40	○	★	●		☆	●	●	46

### MID-CUT

11 Merrell Chameleon II Gore-tex Mid	90	★	☆	★	✓	☆	○	☆	78
12 Salomon Extend Mid XCR	80	★	○	★	✓	☆	○	★	77
13 Scarpa ZG 65 XCR	100	☆	○	★	✓	☆	○	★	77
14 Boreal Tempest Mid Dry	85	☆	○	★	✓	☆	○	★	75
15 Karrimor ksb Java Mid eVENT	65	★	○	★	✓	☆	○	☆	75
16 Meindl Maine Mid GTX	95	☆	○	★	✓	☆	○	☆	71
18 Hi-Tec Multiterro Mid WP	50	☆	☆	●		☆	☆	☆	55
17 Hi-Tec Sierra V-Lite Fastpack WP	55	☆	●	●		★	○	☆	55
19 Peter Storm Brecon	45	○	★	●		○	☆	●	42

### BOOTS

20 Brasher Hillmaster GTX	100	●	○	★	✓	★	○	☆	73
21 Boreal Atlas	100	●	○	★	✓	☆	☆	☆	71
22 Berghaus Explorer IV GTX	80	☆	○	☆	✓	○	☆	★	70