

How to Buy and Take Care of Soccer Cleats

Since soccer is synonymous with the feet, footwear is the most important item you'll buy for a youth player. Cleats are the mark of a soccer player, and they facilitate safety and efficiency of play. Most parents do not realize that buying soccer cleats is not similar to buying tennis shoes. Below are some suggestions:

Understand fit. Cleats should fit snugly, with no more than a ½ thumb's width of space between the toes and the front of the shoes. More serious players want close-fitting shoes to facilitate the best touch (the feel for the ball).

Remember, leather stretches and then molds to the foot and usually provides a better touch with the ball compared to synthetic leather (which can get slippery during wet weather and cause bad and unpredictable touches).

Leather Benefits

- Offer the best feel and fit of any soccer shoe, but are also generally more expensive
- *Full-grain leather* shoes are strong and durable, while variations such as *Kangaroo leather* are more flexible and offer an even better feel of the ball.
- The softer the leather, the better the feel for the ball, but also the less durable the shoe
- Absorb more water than synthetic shoes and are not recommended for constant use on wet fields; however, water treatment options are available.

Fit tips

- High-quality leather shoes will generally stretch a bit when worn. They will actually mold to the shape of your foot, so they should fit snugly when new.
- Shoes that are too small are one of the major causes of foot pain and problems with athletic footwear; however, soccer cleats should naturally fit more snugly than other athletic shoes because of their design.

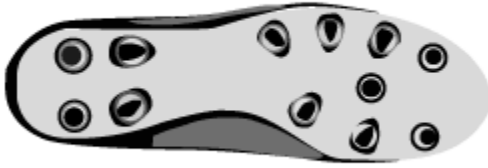
Types of Cleats

Footwear for soccer depends on a number of factors: the level of your game, the types of fields you play on, and how much you want to spend. Most leagues require you wear the proper type of soccer cleat during play, so it is most important to understand which type you need.

Molded cleats

- Basic soccer shoe design
- Non-removable rubber, or hard plastic formed on the bottom of the shoe is used to help provide traction and control
- Ideal for beginning and intermediate level players
- Suited for play on almost all field types and in all weather conditions
- Required by many youth programs for safety reasons

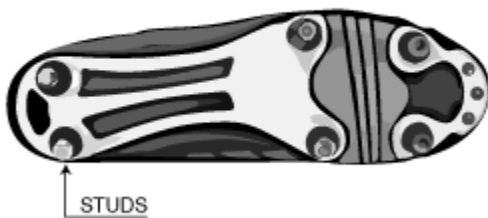
MOLDED CLEAT



Detachable cleats

- Feature studs on the bottom that can be screwed on and off and be replaced easily
- Cleats vary in length and are usually made of hard plastic or plastic with metal tips
- The type and length of the studs can be changed depending on the weather and field conditions of that day's game or practice
- Ideal for experienced players who can tailor the cleats to their playing field and weather conditions
- Suitable for use on wet, soggy fields, or on well-groomed, soft grass fields

DETACHABLE CLEAT



Try on cleats with soccer socks and shin guards to ensure proper fit.

Buy for the short term. Attempting to purchase cleats to last two seasons (fall and spring) may result in roomy shoes that cause blisters. When buying better shoes for players still growing plan on buying new cleats each season to ensure appropriate fit and better touches on the ball.

Never wear cleats for the first time at a game. Break them in at a few practices before the game.

Always clean cleats after playing. Never leave mud in between the spikes.

Never wear cleats on sidewalks and parking lots if you can help it. It wears down your cleats and causes slipping when playing on the field.

Turf shoes

- Contain various raised patterns on the bottom in place of studs, for use on harder outdoor surfaces and on artificial turf
- Generally good training shoes that could serve as a back-up game pair for hard-surface conditions

Indoor shoes

- Resemble low-cut, lightweight sneakers
- Designed for playing indoor soccer in a gym or recreational facility
- Feature a flat, rubbery-type bottom for better traction on indoor courts and fields
- Required by many indoor soccer facilities when playing on artificial turf, so the turf does not get torn up

Sandals

- An important footwear add-on for all soccer players
- Worn before the game to save wear on your soccer shoes
- Easy to slip on and off when soccer socks and shin guards are on
- Allow you to immediately remove your playing shoes after a game to rest your feet
- Many sandals have special massage-type features for the bottom of the foot for added comfort