

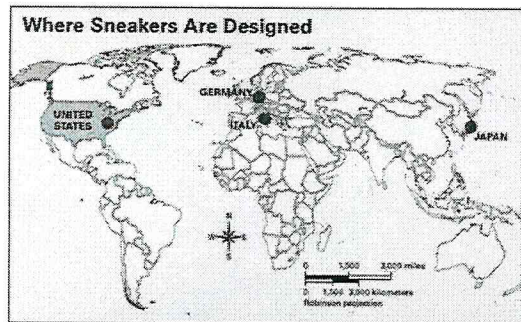


In Britain, they're called trainers. In Australia, they're called sand shoes. Their most common name, though, is sneakers. This name came from an American who noticed how quietly people walked when they wore them. Until the late 1960s, sneakers were relatively simple shoes. Today they are far from simple.

Design Then: A Simple Sports Shoe Sneakers were first made in the mid-1800s. They were used for sports like tennis, croquet, and running. Later, they became popular for basketball.

For the next 100 years, sneaker design changed very little. The upper part of the shoe was made of cotton canvas. The sole was made of rubber. Buyers could choose from a few different brands and styles. There were high tops or low cuts, usually in black or white. Most people thought of sneakers only as athletic shoes.

In the 1950s, though, people began to change their view of sneakers. The shoes were not just for sports any more. They became casual shoes for everyday use. Men, women, and children began wearing them as fashion items.



Design Now: A Complex Fashion Statement Today's sneakers are designed for many purposes. Athletes still wear them. But so does everyone else. There are sneakers for all types of activities, from running and rock climbing to playing tennis or just walking around.

Sneaker companies have come up with new designs and materials for their shoes. These changes have improved performance and comfort. Today companies compete with each other to design the "latest and greatest" sneaker.

New designs and colors have also given sneakers more fashion appeal. To increase that appeal, athletic shoe companies often hire athletes and musicians to promote their sneakers as "cool." They know that many people will pay to wear what their favorite stars are wearing.

