



Shoes for All Kinds of Feet

Designing shoes for all kinds of feet and activities is a complicated process. Designers get help from scientists who study foot motion and materials. They also talk to athletes. Using their imaginations, they make drawings and models. Sample shoes are then tested in the lab and on the street. If the design works, the shoe goes into production.

New Looks Begin Here

This map shows where most sneakers are designed. Much of this work takes place in the United States. Designers often work closely with the sports stars who will wear and promote the shoes that they design.

32.3 Designing a Global Sneaker

In Britain, they are called trainers. In Australia, they're known as 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 during the mid-1800s. They were used for sports like tennis, croquet, and running. Later they became popular for basketball.

For the next one hundred years, the designs of sneakers changed very little. The upper part of the shoe was fashioned from cotton canvas, and the sole was made of rubber. Buyers could choose from only a few brands and styles. There were high tops or low cuts, usually available only in black or white. Most consumers 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 a wide variety of purposes. Athletes still wear them, of course, but so does just about 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 innovative new designs and materials for their shoes, resulting in improvements in both 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 more to wear the articles of clothing that their favorite stars are wearing.

Where Sneakers Are Designed

