

## What is the Best Shoe for Me?

Dressiness, styling and comfort are the main factors to consider. For the business world, these factors are boiled down into the selection of either a lace-up or a loafer.

**Lace-Ups:** In general, lace-ups are dressier than loafers and are best to wear with suits. Lace-ups usually have four to six pairs of eyelets and fall into one of two categories: bluchers or balmorals.



**Blucher**

In a **blucher**, the "quarters" (the part that begins at the laces) flap open, giving extra room at the instep.



**Balmoral**

In a **balmoral**, the quarters meet evenly with no flap.

Styling in lace-ups is provided primarily through the design of the toe.

**Wing Tip**



**Cap Toe**



**Plain Toe**



**Split Toe**



The **wing tip** is a business classic. It's distinguished by its swept-back "wings" and perforated patterns. Its bulkier proportions make it slightly less formal. It is particularly good with heavily-textured fabrics, such as flannels and tweeds.

The **cap toe** has a straight seam across the toe. It is either plain or has a medallion decoration on the toe. With a thinner sole and heel, it is dressier than the wing tip and exactly right for a navy or charcoal pinstripe suit.

Most formal, yet versatile, is the **plain toe** oxford. In black, it can be worn with any dark suit, but in cordovan or rich dark brown, it's perfect with an informal tan summer suit.

The **split toe** has a raised welt decorating the upper and the toe. It is an ideal "cross-over" shoe, because it can be worn with both a suit or a sport coat.

**Loafers:** As noted earlier, loafers tend to be less formal than lace-ups, but can still be quite dressy. They share many of the same toe designs as lace-ups, but distinguish themselves with a greater variety of styling options.



### Dress



The traditional **dress** loafer is typically finished with a wing tip or split toe and very little additional ornamentation. It is fine with a business suit or blazer.

### Monk Strap



The **monk strap** is usually plain toed with a strap and buckle that fasten across the instep. Its dressy plain front balances its sporty look, making it a good choice with either a suit or a sport coat.

### Tasseled



The **tasseled** loafer sports two small tassels of leather on a band across the instep. This look is most appropriate for sport coats and blazers or evening social attire.

### Kilted



The **kilted** loafer is finished with a fringed tongue of leather that is draped over the instep. This style is too informal for dressier suits, but is great with a sport jacket, blazer or casual wear.

### Bit



A **bit** loafer has a thin band of brass called a bit over the instep. It can go with a suit or a sport coat depending on the dressiness of the toe design.

### Penny



The classic **penny** loafer has a plain band over the instep. It can be worn with less formal suits or sport coats, as well as elegant casual wear.

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**Fit:** Shoes that are uncomfortable can't be altered like clothing, so the right fit is especially important.



Shoes are constructed on a wooden form called a "last". Because different styles are made on different lasts, they will fit differently - even the same size from the same manufacturer in different styles! Thus, a 9½ D in one style will not fit exactly like a 9½ D in another style if they were made on different lasts. If you find a size that is particularly comfortable, it is a good idea to seek out other styles from that maker that use the same last. Catalogs from better shoe makers identify what last is used for each style.

Shoes should feel comfortable from the moment you put them on. Good leather will stretch, so it is OK if they feel *slightly* snug at first. But you don't want them tight. Look for any discomfort within the first few steps from the heel, instep, ball or toe. This may indicate the length, width or last is wrong for the shape of your foot. There should be good support underneath the instep and the shoe should be widest at the ball of the foot. Length is largely cosmetic and shoe companies will use this as a design feature. If the ball of the foot fits comfortably into the ball of the shoe, and you can wiggle your toes while the heel fits snugly into the back of the shoe, then the shoe fits you properly.

If you have a high instep, you should consider a blucher. The blucher's open-throat fastening will be more comfortable over your instep. A monk strap will also allow a comfortable fit over the instep, because its tongue is broader than those used on most lace-ups and loafers. Since there's no lace or strap adjustment with a loafer, it's especially critical that the shoe is not tight. Occasionally, a loafer can be bought a half size smaller than a lace-up, because it is cut lower across the instep than a lace-up.

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