

## NATIONAL OUTDOOR LEADERSHIP SCHOOL (NOLS) FITTING INSTRUCTIONS FOR HIKING BOOTS \*

Your hiking boots are the most important pieces of equipment you will use during your course. It is imperative that boots fit correctly to minimize the chance of blisters or other foot injuries. A properly fitted boot is more important than a "broken in" boot. Please follow these instructions when fitting or purchasing hiking boots. It may be helpful to show these instructions to the salesperson. Please call NOLS Outfitting in Lander at (307) 332-4784 if you have any questions.

1. It is best to shop in the afternoon since feet tend to swell during the day. Always fit your larger foot. The key to proper fit is to determine the correct length. A boot which is too small (short) will cause more problems than one which is too large. Boots should fit comfortably with **2 pair of heavy ragg wool socks**. This sock combination provides warmth, cushioning and wicks moisture away from the skin helping to reduce the chance of blisters. A thin liner sock can be worn also, but not as a substitute for a ragg sock.
2. Start with a boot ½ size larger than your normal street shoe size and slip your foot in barefoot. Some shops may ask you to wear a thin liner sock. Slide your foot forward until your toes touch the front of the boot. As you lean forward slightly, there should be 1/2" to 3/4" (1 finger width) between your heel and the back of the boot. If there is not, the boot is probably too small; try a half size larger.
3. Now try on the boots with 2 pair of heavy ragg socks and the boots laced snugly. Your toes should be comfortable with just a bit of room to wiggle and the arch of the boot should feel comfortable under your instep. Walk around the store for a few minutes. Your heels should feel snug in the boot with just enough room to lift off the bottom of the boot about 1/4"; no heel lift is too little, 1/2" or more is too much. In general, the boot should feel comfortable, although a bit stiff, but with no obvious pressure points.
4. In a properly fitted boot, your toes will not jam the front of the boot when walking down hill. To determine this in the store either kick your foot against a wall or, if the store has one, walk down a ramp to simulate hiking downhill. If your toes hit on the first kick, or if they jam the front of the boot on the ramp, the boot is probably too small or not laced tight enough. Your toes should "nudge" against the front of the boot on the third kick. It is important to realize that a properly fitted hiking boot is going to feel slightly big. It's better to have a boot fitted slightly large than a boot that is too small.
5. Getting the proper fit takes time. Not all boots fit the same so try on some different brands and models. Walk around the store for 15 minutes. Think about your feet. Are they comfortable? Are there any pressure points? If so, try a different width, a different brand or a 1/2 size larger. Remember, take your time!

\* *The National Outdoor Leadership School's Wilderness Guide*, by Peter Simer and John Sullivan  
Published by Simon & Schuster  
Chapter 2, pages 83-85.