

BPE DofE Expedition Bitesize 01: Walking Boots

No other equipment will have a greater impact on the enjoyment of an expedition than your footwear. Boots are the most important piece of walking kit, so it pays to get the best fit you can. If boots don't fit properly, you won't have support for your feet and ankles, and you'll be prone to blisters, chafing and other foot problems. Too much room and they'll rub up and down, too little and your feet and toes will be scrunched up.

Here's our top tips for buying walking boots:

- You **must** wear boots that have ankle support to protect your ankle from twisting and sprains. Please do not wear trainers or trek shoes.
- Check that your boots have a hard-wearing sole that is injection molded and is not going to tear away from the upper part of the boot.
- Understand how your boot is waterproof, and what you need to treat the boots with to retain that waterproofing (e.g. products from Nikwax, Graingers etc). All boots will need to be cleaned and re-treated after use to keep them in good condition.
- Walking boots will either have a leather or fabric upper. Fabric boots are lighter in weight, and contain a waterproof membrane inside, but this needs to be regularly maintained by applying waterproofing spray otherwise they will start to leak. Leather boots should also be cleaned and regularly waxed, but tend to withstand tougher conditions. The choice is yours!!
- The best time to try on boots is in the afternoon as your feet may swell a little during the day.
- Your feet will almost certainly be slightly different sizes, so try both boots on.
- Buy boots that are a half size larger as your feet tend to be bigger in spring and summer.
- Wear medium thick walking socks when trying on boots.
- All boots have a certain amount of 'give' in them. You should be able to wriggle your toes.
- Push your toes to the end of the boot and then put your index finger down the back of the boot. If you can do this, you've probably got enough room for your toes to move about, but not too much so you'll slip around inside
- Wear your boots in the house after you buy them, and a fair bit more on shorter walks outside before the expedition.
- If you're not happy with them – take them back! (although you can only do this if you haven't worn them outside).
- Tie the laces up properly and tightly.
- When on the expedition, always carry some blister pads (e.g. Compeed) – just in case!

