

Keeping Your Feet on the Ground

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Sports stars sometimes look like monsters on the field. Helmets, shoulder pads, and gloves make them look huge. They don't wear sports equipment to look cool, though. They wear it to keep themselves safe from flying balls and crashing people.

There's another kind of sports equipment: shoes. Players can't perform well without the

right shoes. In addition, shoes keep players safe. They protect players' feet from getting hurt. They also keep players from sliding and falling when they run.

Cleats are a type of shoe worn by people who play on grass. Today, most cleats look like tennis shoes with low backs. However, the soles of cleats look different. They have small rounded metal or plastic spikes. Each cleat grabs the grass and helps keep a player from slipping and falling.

In the 1800s, players wore thick leather shoes. Then they pounded metal studs into the soles of their shoes.

The metal and leather made the shoes very heavy. In fact, when it rained, their shoes would double in weight. Cleats today are light so players can run fast.

Track runners wear shoes called track spikes. Like cleats, each spike grabs the track and helps keep runners from slipping. Pole jumpers have spikes only on the front of their shoes so they can plant their feet before they leap into the air. High jumpers have spikes on the back and front of the sole to keep them from slipping both while they run and when they jump.

Ice skates are another type of sports shoe. They look like boots with blades attached. The first ice skates used bone as the blade and were first made as early as 1000 BCE. Today, blades are made of metal. Skates used in figure skating also have pointed edges on the front that help skaters stop quickly.

The right shoes help people perform on the field. They can make a difference between playing—and winning.



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