



BEWARE THE INTERNET BARGAINS

A brief treatise on why you shouldn't buy cheap running shoes online.

BY HENRY GUZMAN

Would you buy a pint of chocolate mint ice cream online?

Would you buy new tires for your car from a mobile app?

There are a lot of great things you can and should buy on the interwebs. But your next pair of running shoes isn't one of them.

The best way to buy your next pair of running shoes is to walk into your local running specialty shop and spend a half hour trying on shoes with a knowledgeable shoe fitter. It doesn't matter if you're a young, speedy runner, a back-of-the-packer, someone who's been jogging for fitness forever or a complete newbie to the sport.

There are about 1,000 small, independent running shops in the U.S. and they've long been the heart and soul of running. Yes, they sell new running shoes and clothes, but they're all about community—your community. They support your local runners, as well as your local schools, races and training programs. And they can offer a wealth of knowledge about the sport and answer just about any running-related question that pops into your head.

Not only can they properly fit you to a pair of shoes that matches your foot shape and

running gait, they can also answer questions about why you might have a achy Achilles or sore hip flexor. Plus, your local running store is the best and most welcoming place to learn about training for your first 5K or tackling your first marathon.

By supporting your local running store, you're supporting your local economy. If you spend \$100 at a locally owned business, on average, \$68 stays in the local economy. Spend the same \$100 at a national chain and only \$43 stays local. Spend \$100 on the internet and who knows where it goes.

But like just about everything else in this world, the internet has significantly changed how running shoes are sold. Not only is almost every running brand selling directly from its own site, but dozens of shops that never before sold running shoes—most notably Amazon and Zappos—are also now slinging the latest and greatest high-mileage trainers, sleek racers and trail runners online.

Out there online, you'll find tons of last season's shoes at discounted prices. In fact, there is an entire cottage industry for selling outdated models, not unlike the sale table that some running stores offer.

Buying any old shoes online just because it's offered at a cheap price with free shipping isn't the best way to finding your next pair of shoes—in fact, it might be the most direct way to increase the risk of overuse injuries if it's not a shoe that's fit, build and purpose is meant for you.

Finding a specific pair that works for your foot size and shape, your running gait style and the type of running you do is extremely important. And it's essential to go through a thorough and educated try-on process, which can only be done at a running-specialty store with qualified shoe-fitters.

Remember, you can buy bread, milk, vegetables and ground beef at places like Walmart and Target, but you're probably better off going to a bakery, a butcher shop or at least a reputable grocery store. If you're looking for quality and service, you get what you pay for.

If you buy that pint of ice cream online, be prepared to deal with the mess that follows.

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