



## Racing Flats

A racing flat is a more minimal, lighter weight performance shoe than a regular running shoe. With less bulk and weight, flats help give runners extra speed for shorter, higher-intensity sessions like track workouts, tempo runs and, of course, racing. Most running specialty stores carry a few racing flats, some that feel barely there, others with a bit more "meat" to them, that are much lighter than your regular shoe.

They're not for beginners, though. It takes at least eight months to a year of consistent running to build the leg strength and gait efficiency to handle the minimal cushioning and support of a flat without risking injury. Based on your running experience, you should definitely give them a try, but you'll want to transition to flats gradually. First, try your racing flats during training, for an interval session or a short tempo run. You don't want to spend all your time in them during the first workout, however. Warm up or cool down in your regular shoes and use your flats only for the specific workout. If your legs respond well, and you don't experience any pain or an unusual amount of soreness, then you should do well in flats. But give yourself a few weeks to break them in before your race.

Many runners can safely enjoy the lighter, more performance-oriented feel of the racing flat in shorter races such as 5ks and 10ks. However, longer distances must be treated with more caution. If you're an over-pronator or under-pronator with a foot type needing extra support, motion control or cushioning, transition gradually to flats in longer races. For example, if you plan to use them for a half marathon, train in flats at least a month before the race doing a few long runs (10 to 15kms) to get your body used to absorbing some of the shock that your more cushioned training shoes usually absorb.

We don't recommend using flats for races longer than 20kms, leave that to elite and professional runners who have the years of serious training and superior physical conditioning to safely handle marathon distances in flats. Also, if you wear inserts or orthotics in your regular shoes, use them in your racing flats as well.

They do not have anywhere close to the level of comfort or cushioning that you are use to in your jogging shoes. When buying running racing flats there are a few things you should be aware of;

- 1.) You need to find a shoe, which is completely stiff on the back heel. You should be able to take your hands and put your thumb on the sole of the shoe and your fingers on the back of the shoe and have a tough time crushing the back and towards the front.
- 2.) Another thing you need to look for when buying racing flats is that the area of the shoe where the ball of the foot is; is completely flexible and you should be able to bend it all the way back towards the laces extremely easily.