

Gear

Gear	1
Introduction	1
Trail Shoes.....	2
What's Important in a Shoe.....	2
How to Buy a Trail Shoe	2
Caring for Your Trail Shoes.....	3
When Do I Replace My Shoes?	3
Shoe Accessories	3
Bad Things	3
Hydration Belt or Pack	3
Cleaning Water Bottles	4
Drinking Water from Streams and Lakes.....	4
Watch.....	4
Technical Clothing	5
Lightweight water repellant jacket or vest	5
Technical top.....	5
Trail Socks	5
Shorts.....	5
Long pants	5
Long underwear	5
Running bra	5
Washing Technical Clothing.....	6
Gloves.....	6
Cap or Hat.....	6
Headlamp.....	6
Heart Rate Monitor.....	6
GPS Unit.....	6
Sunscreen and sunglasses	6
Handy Products	7
Wobble Board or Pillow.....	7

Introduction

Having the right gear will make your trail experience more enjoyable and allow you to be out on the trails for longer periods. This section outlines some typical trail gear and how you can take advantage of products to enhance your trail runs and provide safety.

When running a trail, you want gear that meets some general benchmarks for weight, breathability, dryability, aggravation and bonus features. The best products will hardly be noticeable; for example, a camelback that stays in place while you scramble over a rock field won't be noticed unless it slips and throws off your balance. Here is an explanation of some benchmarks:

Weight	needs to be as light as possible but serve its purpose
Breathability	must breathe so that you are not overheating
Dryability	must dry quickly and keep water away from you (wicking)
Aggravation factor	must not be annoying
Bonus feature	if two products are similar in price, which one has some classy features or more attention to detail?

For example, if you are searching for a jacket, all of the benchmarks apply. Aim for lightweight so that it folds up easily in your pack or around your waist but still provides the protection you need from rain or wind. Technical material will breathe and dry off quickly and keep water away from you. When trying the jacket on, check out the zipper, ties, hood, pockets and fit around your butt; now imagine running long distances with that jacket and ask yourself if something will annoy you (would it be better to have an outside rather than inside pocket)? Compare jackets in the same price range and check for finishing details; some jackets have handy hidden hoods and key buckles inside pockets.

Most manufacturers include the weight of an item in their promotional material and clothing tags. Read the label and compare products.

Trail Shoes

If you are serious about running trails, the appropriate shoe is your first priority. Trail shoes have several benefits over road shoes. They have a better grip on uneven surfaces, allow more lateral (side to side) movement, have less “height” bringing you closer to the ground and therefore, you are less likely to topple.

What’s Important in a Shoe

Fit is the most important aspect of buying a trail shoe. If you cannot get a proper fit, don’t buy the shoe. Size is critical; you need ample room for toe movement so it’s recommended that you go one half to one full shoe size larger than your usual shoes.

Get a shoe that is appropriate for the terrain; if you will be running technical trails, you need a shoe with more pronounced treads than a shoe designed for non-technical trails.

Weather is a consideration. In colder, wetter climates, you may want to try a waterproof shoe (with a gaiter to prevent water from getting in). Recognize that this type of shoe will be warmer, and if water gets in, it won’t get out.

How to Buy a Trail Shoe

Trail shoes are often less expensive than road shoes but getting your first pair might be challenging. Before you go to the shoe store, think about how you plan to use the shoes. If this is your first pair, take your road shoes with you so the sales person can get an idea of what works for you on even surfaces. If your existing trail shoes are over a year old, it is time to look at getting a new pair. The sales person may want to know:

- What distance will you run?
- How often will you run?
- On what terrain will you run (rooty, rocky, flat, mountainous)?
- How much are you willing to spend?
- How does your foot behave? Are you a pronator, supinator, or flat-footed? Do you have a rigid foot?
- Is this your first pair of trail shoes?
- How much support do you need? How much cushioning do you need?
- Which brands have worked best for you so far?

Some shoe manufacturers have women’s and men’s models. For women, try the women’s shoe but you can opt for a man’s shoe if the fit and comfort are good.

Trail Runner magazine puts out a special Gear Guide each year. It is a valuable resource for helping you decide which shoe to wear. Talk to other trail runners about their shoes and you'll soon know which ones are effective and which ones are breaking down too soon. Keep in mind that we are all different in how we run and how long our shoes last.

Caring for Your Trail Shoes

Brush them when they get dirty. Wash them if you can't stand them any longer; then stuff them with socks and let them air dry (do not put them in the dryer).

When Do I Replace My Shoes?

You will know it is time to replace your shoes when the shoe starts breaking down, creases and splits form on the edge of the shoe, you have bald spots on the treads, or your shins start to hurt. If you are putting in a lot of mileage, replacing them every six months is recommended. That may seem expensive, but your shoes are your most important investment. If you are only running occasionally, you will get more wear from them.

For road running, the general rule calls for a new pair about every 300 to 500 miles, with the range depending on body size (smaller or lighter folks can usually go longer), how hard you strike the ground and the terrain you fancy.

On trails, it's harder to judge, but Garry Gribble, owner of Garry Gribble's Sports in Kansas City, Missouri, recommends a change every 400 to 600 miles. He also has two other tips: buy a good footbed for better support. And if you run every day, buy two pairs and alternate so each can dry out between wearings, allowing the midsole to last longer. He also notes that if you run on rocky trails, the midsole will endure more pounding and wear more quickly.

"When in doubt, get a new pair," he says. "It's an investment in your health."

Shoe Accessories

Here are some accessories to enhance your running experience.

Snow accessories	Add-ons like Yaktrax enable you to run in snow.
Insoles	For cushioning, remove the standard shoe insoles and replace them with foam insoles for added comfort.
Gaiters	To prevent snow or grit from entering your shoes, attach gaiters over your shoes and around your ankles. A strap goes under your shoe to keep them in place. They help keep your feet dry and save you time having to remove grit.

Bad Things

- Don't buy based on appearance, or because someone else has the shoe; find out if it will work for you.
- Don't buy without trying them on (unless you already know the shoe).
- Don't put your shoes in the dryer.
- Don't let your ego allow you to buy shoes that are too small.

Hydration Belt or Pack

For runs longer than 5 km, you need a hydration belt or pack for several reasons. With the water that you are losing as sweat, you must replace it with water or you will get dehydrated. Your performance suffers significantly when you are dehydrated (example: a 2% loss in

hydration leads to a 10% loss in performance). If you break down, you place a burden on your friends who have to get you safely out of the trail. Running trails puts you further away from town and all of its resources, so you need to be smart about hydration. **Remember that a 10 km trail will take a lot longer than a 10 km road run so judge your water needs based on time out there.**

Here are some considerations for buying a belt or pack:

- Distance and time. Will it be able to handle increased mileage in the future?
- Is it comfortable? Will it stay in place?
- Do you prefer it around your waist or on your back?
- Will you need more than one type for different distances?
- Are there pockets available for keys and food?
- Will you need pockets for gear?

Your choice is a personal preference; there is no right or wrong product. Whatever works for you is right for you.

Here are some features and limitations of various belts and camelbacks.

Product	Feature	Limitation
Waist belt with one bottle at back	Less expensive, some have padded section for comfort, pockets available.	Only one type of liquid can be carried, access may be awkward.
Waist belt with two bottles at back	Less expensive, some have padded section for comfort, pockets available.	Access may be awkward.
Waist belt with multiple smaller bottles	Balanced load, variety of liquids, velcro fastener keeps belt in place, can vary the number of bottles carried, ease of access.	May need pocket add ons to carry more supplies.
Camelback	Ease of access, holds large quantities, hands-free movement, some have storage pockets or bungee straps for holding extra layer of clothing.	More difficult to clean and refill (but newer models are improving).
Hand-held bottles	Ease of access, double the amount of single bottle with 2, protect your hands in a fall.	Cannot grab onto things like rocks.

Cleaning Water Bottles

Bacteria builds up in unwashed water bottles so it is very important to wash them out after use. Also, store-bought bottled water containers are designed for single use only and should not be re-used.

Drinking Water from Streams and Lakes

Drinking water from streams and lakes can be hazardous to your health. You must use a water purifier or run the risk of catching various nasty bugs like beaver fever which can sideline you for some time.

Watch

A basic watch with a stopwatch component is ideal; it doesn't need all the bells and whistles. It will help you compare your times during your training. It is a safety feature for keeping track of time out so that you head back before dark (unless you are planning a night run). A watch with a heart rate monitor is also very helpful for keeping within your ideal output range.

Technical Clothing

Lightweight water repellent jacket or vest

A lightweight washable, jacket takes up little room in your pack or around your waist but it can block wind and rain when you need it most.

There are washing products available for water repellent fabrics which help restore the repellency. Some manufacturers recommend that you dry your jacket or vest in a dryer to renew the water repellency.

Technical top

Layers can accommodate many weather conditions. Check out base and mid layers. Take off a layer to cool down. Fit should be reasonably snug so that the fabric can do what it was designed to do, such as keeping you warm but keeping water away from your skin. Avoid cotton.

Trail Socks

The ideal sock stays in place, provides cushioning, dries quickly and provides warmth or coolness when you need it. Trail socks go hand in hand with trail shoes. Their subtle tones allow them to get dirty without showing the dirt. They are often thicker offering protection for your tootsies which are closer to the ground. Some socks actually grip your arch so that you won't have extra material. Some socks contain wool. Avoid cotton because it holds water.

Shorts

If you run in the summer, you will really appreciate a pair of lightweight shorts that dry quickly after you jump in a lake after a run. A dunking in cold water helps your muscles recover.

Long pants

When temperatures get below 10°C, long pants will protect you from the elements. They are suited to varying conditions; some are very lightweight and suited to cool temperatures; some are lined with a thin layer of fleece for warmth and some are thicker and suited to nasty temperatures.

Long underwear

In some parts of the country during winter, long underwear is considered essential. Look for clothing manufactured for running so that it is lightweight, warm and breathable.

Running bra

Fitting snugly against your body, a running bra offers support and comfort. And if you need to shed your clothes, it is presentable as your base layer. Some women wear two for added support. A running bra should never see a birthday.

Washing Technical Clothing

Wash your tops, shorts and pants in cool or warm water and hang them to dry. Wash water repellent vests and jackets in cold water and throw them in the dryer. There are special soaps available for vests and jackets to renew their repellency, for example Nikwax makes Techwash non-detergent soap and wash-in waterproofing products (available at Coast Mountain Sports).

Products like Febreze are handy for maintaining odor-free clothing. Just spray clothes before washing.

Wash your shoes by hand or in a washer; stuff them with socks and let them air dry; do not put them in the dryer.

Gloves

Your extremities get cold first. By protecting your hands and head, you retain more body heat. Gloves or mitts will make a run on a cold day a lot more enjoyable and you can stay out longer. They don't take up much room. There are gloves to suit varying extremes in temperature.

Cap or Hat

Not only will a cap keep your head warm, it will keep the rain off your face. It protects from sunlight and heatstroke. In cold or winter conditions, carry a lightweight toque.

Headlamp

A headlamp gives you the freedom to run at night. Battery-operated units are lightweight and can provide exceptional lighting. Petzl offers a wide range of headlamps; many lights have self-contained batteries so a waist pack is not needed. Fresh batteries provide the best light.

Heart Rate Monitor

A heart rate monitor is invaluable for helping you maintain your ideal output range in your training session or race and helps prevent overtraining. A chest strap and wrist monitor work together to provide you feedback (and optionally beep if you go over your maximum).

GPS Unit

A global positioning system (GPS) provides a readout to let you know where you are according to standard global coordinates. You can pre-set your route and then check to see that you are on track. Or, on the trail, you can add waypoints to record a route for the future. Routes can be downloaded from other sources so you can go out and follow the same trail.

There are some limitations though. A GPS unit relies on satellite information to give you a readout; if you are in dense bush or in a valley, you may not be able to receive that information. You will need an open location to check your position. I haven't met too many runners who are willing to stand still long enough to check a GPS unit (I think they'd rather get lost) but for hiking, this is a great resource.

Something to check when buying one: smaller models (like wristwatch ones), are great on the road but not on trails. Handheld models are more likely to provide readings on trails. Note that wristwatch model distance results vary by up to 3-4 km.

Sunscreen and sunglasses

In locations where you are exposed to the sun, sunglasses cut down the glare and sunscreen provides protection.

Handy Products

Here are some great products for trail running.

Antiseptic wipes	This is a small, individually-wrapped antiseptic towellette which is very handy for scrapes and bobos. Clean a scrape with water and then wipe with a product like Wet One. Make sure you carry out the package so it is not left on the trail.
Body Glide	Indispensable product for preventing blisters and chafing. It comes in a stick form like deodorant. Rub on your toes, and under underwear such as bra strap.
Portable water pouch	For dog owners, a lightweight portable pouch is great for giving your dog a drink along the trail, especially when water is not accessible. Clips onto your water belt or clothing. Available in pet stores.
Moleskin	Dr. Scholls' moleskin covers blisters and chafing with a smooth, comfortable surface.
Duct tape	Handy for emergency situations like blisters and split shoes.

Wobble Board or Pillow

Practice balance and positioning using a wobble board. See also Proprioception.