

85th Renfrew & Inverclyde (1st Inverkip)



Boots Buying Guide

We are often asked what we recommend for Scouts buying a first (basic) pair of boots for hillwalking. We normally assess the footwear of parties and will limit the trip based on the suitability of footwear. Here's some things to look for. At time of writing Millets do a reasonable leather boot in children's sizes for £35. Remember scouts get a 10% discount at Millets – just bring your neckie.

1. Most walkers prefer to wear thick woollen walking socks. This often means buying a pair of boots slightly larger than normal. Most shops should have a pair of socks available when trying a pair of boots on.
2. Material: Fabric. Many boots include suede, nubuck or nylon, sometimes with some leather sections. These often have a Gore-Tex membrane for waterproofing. In general, these types of boots are more comfortable than leather boots, but are not as waterproof – whatever the manufacturer claims. They are most suitable for low to moderate rainfall. They can become wet and uncomfortable in prolonged heavy rain or when walking on wet snow. These types of boots are acceptable for most scout trips, but we prefer leather boots for winter hillwalks to avoid having to limit our route.
3. Material: Leather. Full leather boots are the ideal. They are slightly less comfortable than fabric, but more waterproof and warmer than fabric. Wax can be wiped on with a cloth to maintain good waterproofing. More or less essential for winter hillwalking.
4. Ankle Support – one of the boot's most important features is the protection it gives the ankle. Make sure it comes up over the ankle.
5. Crampon Connection Points – These aren't essential as a scout as the troop owns the 'strap-on' variety of crampons, however older scouts / explorers may consider this if planning to also buy 'step-in' crampons of their own at some point.
6. Rigidity – Older scouts / explorers may prefer to buy more rigid (and more expensive) boots which are most suitable for winter hillwalking and climbing. For hillwalking, these allow you to kick steps in hard packed snow more easily. These boots are less suitable for summer and longer distance walking as they're far less comfortable. They are typically made of leather or even plastic.

Boot Care

More boots are damaged by heat than any other single cause. Wet leather cannot tolerate direct heat. After returning from a wet walk, it is a good idea to stuff your boots with newspaper. Allow your boots to dry slowly in a cool, airy place away from any direct heat source (radiators or sunlight). If they need re-proofed, remove the laces while also making sure the uppers are clean before applying wax.