

The perfect fit: A 'shoe-in' for a great start to school

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Well-fitted school shoes are important for children to feel comfortable at school.
Credit: UniSA

As the back-to-school rush begins, podiatry experts at the University of South Australia are encouraging parents to get their children's school

shoes professionally fitted, as new research confirms that ill-fitted footwear can significantly impede foot movement and comfort.

In a new study, researchers tested the effect of shoe size on foot motion and comfort among children aged 8 to 12 years, finding that shoes that were one size too small restricted the normal movement of the heel, arch and big toe joint during walking.

The study also confirmed that a comfortable shoe fit can be determined by a 'rule of thumb', where the wearer's thumb width from their longest toe to the end of their shoe is an effective and accurate measure for comfortable fit.

Lead researcher and musculoskeletal expert, UniSA's Dr. John Arnold says that well-fitted [school](#) shoes are important for children to feel comfortable at school.

"Thousands of school shoes are purchased every year with children wearing them for more than seven hours a day during school," Dr. Arnold says.

"If a child's shoes don't fit well, they're likely to experience discomfort and pain, which can impact their participation and enjoyment of everyday activities such as play and sport.

"Importantly, our research found that when children's shoes were too small, they restricted foot and joint movements, which could create problems for [children](#)'s feet in the future."

Co-researcher and podiatry expert, UniSA's Dr. Helen Banwell says when it comes to the back-to-school rush, parents cannot afford to overlook the benefits of a well-fitted school shoe.

"The start of a new school year can creep up quickly, and it's easy to overlook or rush through the purchase of new shoes," Dr. Banwell says.

"Our research shows that [school-aged children](#) can easily help identify a good shoe fit, by rating their level of comfort in the heel and toes.

"A good [shoe](#) fit will absolutely start your [school year](#) on the right [foot](#)."

More information: Elsa Matthias et al, Children's school footwear: the impact of fit on foot function, comfort and jump performance in children aged 8 to 12 years, *Gait & Posture* (2021). [DOI: 10.1016/j.gaitpost.2021.04.025](#)

Provided by University of South Australia

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