

History of Footwear Production

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1. Prehistoric Beginnings (? 40,000?–?4,000?BCE)

Period	Materials & Techniques	Key Points
Paleolithic	– Simple foot coverings made from animal hides, bark, or woven plant fibers.	First functional protection for the foot; primarily for warmth and basic injury prevention.
	– Fastened with strips of leather or plant rope.	
Neolithic	– Early tanning methods (brain?fat, smoke) to soften hides. – Introduction of simple stitching using bone needles.	Transition from purely protective coverings to more durable, reusable shoes.

2. Ancient Civilizations (? 4,000?BCE?–?500?CE)

Culture	Typical Footwear	Construction Highlights
Mesopotamia	Sandals with woven reeds or leather straps.	First recorded use of leather?working tools; sandals often indicated social status.
Ancient Egypt	Sandals of papyrus, palm leaves, or leather; “sandals of the Pharaoh.”	Decorative motifs (e.g., lotus, scarab) reflected religious symbolism.
Indus Valley	Simple leather sandals; evidence of early stitching.	Archaeological finds show standardized sizes, hinting at early mass production.
Ancient Greece	Kothornos (leather boots) and sandalia (strap sandals).	Use of bronze nails to secure soles; early “custom fit” through adjustable straps.
Roman Empire	Caligae (military sandals) and calcei (closed shoes).	Standardized patterns for legionnaires; introduction of the <i>cobbler’s workshop</i> (solea).
China (Shang/Zhou)	Leather boots with wooden soles; later silk?embroidered slippers.	Early use of wooden molds for sole shaping.

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Mesoamerica	Sandals of woven agave fibers; later leather moccasins.	Footwear often integrated ritual symbolism.

3. Medieval to Early Modern Era (500?–?1800)

3.1 Middle Ages (500?–?1500)

- **Materials:** Leather (full?grain, split), wood, felt, wool.
- **Key Developments:**
 - **Turnshoe** (c. 1300): Upper stitched inside?out, then turned; allowed a smoother interior.
 - **Patten:** Wooden platform worn over shoes to protect streets and keep feet clean.
 - **Guild System:** Emergence of organized shoemakers' guilds (e.g., London's Worshipful Company of Cordwainers, 1272).
 - **Regional Styles:**
 - *Poulaine* (pointed toe) in France/England (late 14th?c.) – status symbol, later banned.
 - *Sabatons* for knights – reinforced steel toe caps.

3.2 Renaissance & Early Modern (1500?–?1800)

- **Technological Advances:**
 - Introduction of **cork** and **rubber** (late 18th?c.) for soles.
 - Early **mechanical stitching** devices (e.g., "sewing frames") used by some workshops.
- **Fashion Influence:**
 - High?heeled shoes for men (originating in Persian cavalry, popularized in Europe by 1600).
 - *Moccasins* spread