

IN FOCUS

STYLE



▼ HIKING

1 This pair offers a pillow of protection between your soles and the rocky trail. Spun with recycled polyester and Merino wool in a wind-powered plant, they're also as green as they can be. **Teko EcoMerino Wool Women's Light Hiking Crew**, \$17, tekosocks.com for stores



2

Anatomically engineered to fit each foot, these ecofriendly socks—recycled polyester and organic cotton are in the mix—are free of blister-causing seams across the toe. A thin wicking layer cranks the A/C on hikes. **Keen Mt. Airy**, \$17, keenfootwear.com for stores

socks appeal

» Workouts just got easier, thanks to high-tech socks that keep your feet comfy and dry

Your pits aren't the only things that produce sweat when you exercise. According to the American Academy of Podiatric Sports Medicine, each foot gets bathed in up to a pint of perspiration during athletic activity (the sweat comes from both your tootsies and drippage from your legs). Wearing a pair of cotton socks during a workout will leave your feet damp, uncomfortable, and often sporting a blister. Technical socks—while costlier than a six-pack of cotton numbers—can send sweat packing, support your arches, and cushion the blow of every step. Here, eight great new pairs made for running, skiing, and whatever else your body can handle.

—Dimity McDowell

▼ SNOW SPORTS



3

This toasty wool-and-nylon blend is sectioned to match the needs of a boot-bound foot. Mesh windows keep air flowing, assuring this is one pair you won't kick off. **SmartWool PhD Snowboard Light**, \$20, smartwool.com

WHAT'S THE DIFF?

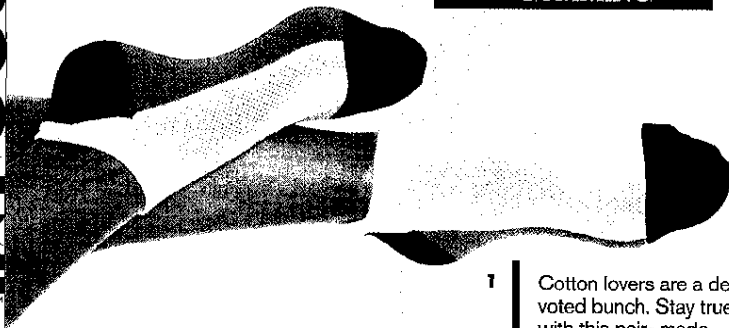
SHEEP VS. SYNTHETIC

Wool keeps feet cozy while you ski, but it also works for hikes on 90-degree days. "It breathes well, so it's a great temperature regulator," says Denise Friend, REI's product manager for women's footwear. What's more, wool doesn't retain odor, so it's your best bet for a backpacking trip. As for synthetics, they're super-comfy when you slip them on, and some even retain the cush when they get wet. But since they wick sweat like a fiend, save them for aerobic activities.

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IN FOCUS STYLE

▼ GYMMING



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TIPS FOR PICKING THE RIGHT SOCK

1. GET SQUISHY. Match the amount of padding to your activity. "The longer you're on your feet, the more cushioning you'll want," says Anthony Clark of the outdoor-gear e-tailer backcountry.com. Exception: running. Because shoes have more cushioning than ever, crazy-thick socks aren't necessary, even for a marathon.

2. GO FOR A TEST RUN (SORT OF). Try them on in the store, in the shoes you'll pair them with (yes, most stores will let you). With the shoe laced up, your foot shouldn't feel cramped or slosh around.

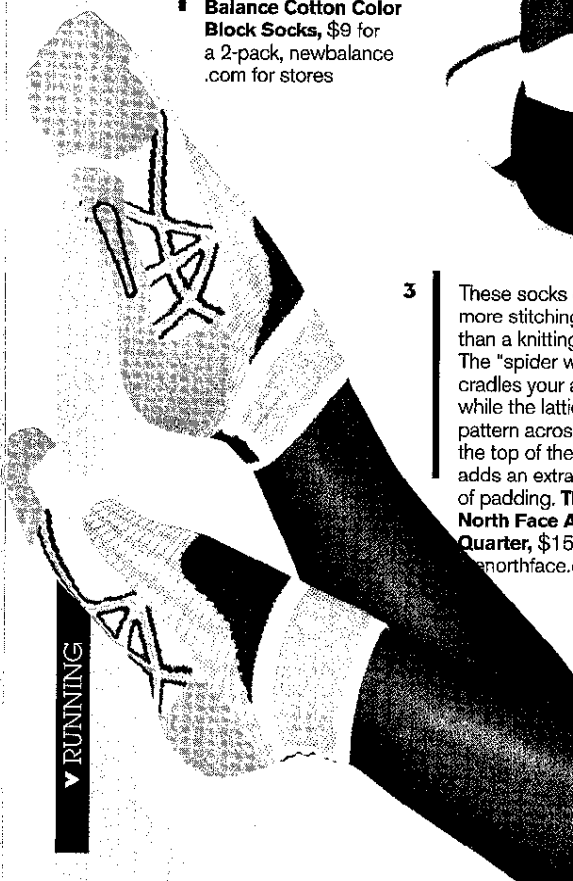
3. FOLLOW THE CURVE. Make sure the arch is in the right place. If it's too close to your toes, your shoe will gradually eat your sock and your Achilles tendon and heel will become open targets. If it's too near your heel, the sock is too big; the extra material will quickly become annoying.

4. HOLD THE LINE. The toe seam should keep a low profile—seamless is best. If you're blister-prone, look for non-chafing socks—both Wright Socks and Sole make them. They have two layers, which will rub against each other, not your skin.

5. CONSIDER LENGTH. If you're headed out on a trail, you'll probably want your ankles covered for protection from brush or ticks. If you're looking to turn heads at a 5-K, opt for low-cut styles that maximize leg length.

6. STICK WITH WOMEN-SPECIFIC SOCKS. They have less material than men's and typically have a narrower heel.

Cotton lovers are a devoted bunch. Stay true with this pair—made of a cotton/polyester blend and sporting a bottom layer of cush to take the jolt out of stair climbing. **New Balance Cotton Color Block Socks**, \$9 for a 2-pack, newbalance.com for stores



▼ RUNNING

These socks offer more stitching styles than a knitting circle. The "spider web" cradles your arch, while the lattice pattern across the top of the foot adds an extra layer of padding. **The North Face Arnuva Quarter**, \$15, northface.com

These made-for-speed socks have soft, cloud-like layers underneath your balls and heels (to ease the impact on your joints) and around your ankles (to prevent hot spots on the heels). **Bridgedale X-Hale Speed Diva**, \$16, garmontusa.com

HAPPY FEET If Dr. Seuss had designed socks, he might have come up with these. Surprise: They're functional!

Injinji Performance Tetratsok (\$12, injinji.com)

With a separate pocket for each piggy, these cool cover-ups suck up sweat and separate your toes, making blister formation there virtually impossible.

Capezio Foot Undeez (\$22, capezio.com)

Made for dancers, this lingerie-inspired ped has three nonslip suede patches on the sole to ground you in downward dog—even if there are puddles on your yoga mat.

Skins Powersox (\$40, skins.net)

Built to feel like a boa (the snake, not the feathers) around your calves, these lightweight stirrup socks promote blood flow to your calves, upping the amount of healing oxygen.

