



COBS Backpacking Boots



This document is a guide to help you decide which boot is right for you on your course, however you know yourself best and only you can decide which boot is the best fit. Alaska and Rocky Mountain course areas require a properly fit boot built to give you the support and performance you need to carry a heavy pack on snow, loose rock, soggy meadows, and hot, dusty trails. A good boot and a mediocre boot can mean the difference between focusing on course or focusing on the pain in your feet. A terrible boot can even make you so miserable that it stops you from completing the course.

On Page 2 you will find a list of boot types and models. These are suggestions based on brands and styles that students in the past have used and enjoyed.

Expect to spend between **\$100 - \$300** retail for new boots. Boots over \$300 are likely too much for your course, and boots under \$100 are likely too light or poorly made for your course.

Please do your best to try your boots on before you buy them. A boot that doesn't fit your foot will be very uncomfortable, even if it is the most expensive boot money can buy. Some boots are narrow, some are wide, some have boxy toes and others have rounded. Try and take your time while looking at boots and pick the best one for your foot, not the best looking one in the store.

After you buy them, please break them in. Wear them around for a week straight, take them for a hike, walk them through a puddle. A boot that isn't broken in can give you blisters and cause foot pain on course.



List of Appropriate Boots

Please purchase a boot from this list or a similar style – all of these are appropriate for your Outward Bound course. There are also lots of other boots out there that would be appropriate, if in doubt, contact your course advisor.

Men's Boots*			Women's Boots*	
Brand	Model		Brand	Model
Asolo	Fugitive GTX Hiking		Asolo	TPS-520 GV Evo
	TPS 520 GV Evo			Touchstone GV
La Sportiva	Trango TRK or Tech GTX		La Sportiva	Trango TRK or Tech GTX
	Trango Tower			Eclipse GTX
	Nucleo High GTX			Nucleo High GTX
Lowa	Baldo GTX		Lowa	Lady Light GTX
	Camino GTX			Mauria GTX
	Tibet GTX			Tibet GTX
Salewa	Crow GTX		Salewa	Alpenrose Mid GTX
	Alp Trainer Mid GTX			Mtn Trainer Mid GTX
	Mtn Trainer Mid GTX			
Scarpa	Charmoz		Scarpa	Charmoz
	Zodiac Plus GTX			Zodiac Plus GTX
	Fuego			ZG Trek GTX
				Kailash GTX
Vasque	Saga GTX		Vasque	Saga GTX
	St. Elias GTX			St. Elias GTX
Oboz	Wind River III BDry		Oboz	Wind River III BDry

**Footwear is generally marketed as gender specific. However, if you're not finding the right fit, we recommend trying on both men's, women's and unisex boots to see if they fit the shape and size of your feet better.*



Boot Shopping Tips:

BOOT DESIGN:

Boot Height

High cut boots provide good balance and ankle support for off-trail terrain and heavier loads. They are the most appropriate design for our course area. Mid- and low-cut boots do not provide much ankle support, tend not to be built for heavy loads or snow walking, and are not typically ideal for our courses.

Material

- *Synthetic*: These boots are made of lightweight, synthetic materials. Most modern backpacking boots are made of synthetic materials to reduce weight.
 - Pros: Lighter, more comfortable off the shelf, easier on the feet, easier to hike on-trail with
 - Cons: Less durable, waterproof GTX liner can wear out within a couple of years with heavy use (Waterproof/breathable linings, such as GORE-TEX, are generally denoted by a GTX in the model name)
- *Full Grain Leather*: Boots such as the La Sportiva Glacier are made with thick leather called full grain leather. This is the traditional material for backpacking boots.
 - Pros: Long lasting, durable, when cared for correctly, very water proof.
 - Cons: Heavy, requires a long break in period, doesn't let sweat vapor escape as well.

SOLE AND TREAD:

It is important to have a very stiff sole to kick steps into hard snow. Soles should have a heavy, lug tread that will improve traction in muddy or snowy surfaces. Vibram-brand soles are reliable and high quality. To test stiffness, try to bend your boot in half. If the boot folds at the laces it is too flexible (see photo below). If the boot does not fold at all, it may have too stiff of a sole for everyday comfort so look for a middle ground on your boots flexibility and stiffness.



The boot in the photo above is too flexible to be appropriate for your Outward Bound course.

TRYING ON YOUR BOOT:

When boot shopping, bring any special insoles or orthotics you regularly use. It is a good idea to get your foot measured by a salesperson and to try on at least three pairs of boots before deciding.

- To start, fully lace the boots and walk around the store to get a feel for the boot fit. If you can load a backpack with weights while you do this, even better. If your store has an incline ramp, walk up and down it several times.
- While walking, keep in mind:
 - Toes: You should have some room to wiggle your toes at the front of your boot. Your toes should not be pressed against the front.
 - Heels: Your heel may slip a little in the back of the boot, especially while walking uphill, but more than ¼" is too much. If your heel slips at all, try retying the boot tightly around the ankle



or switching insoles.

- Pressure Points: There should be no obvious pressure points. These don't break in, they typically become worse over time not better.
- Your boots should feel stiffer than your usual footwear, but should still be comfortable. If you are worried about your boots fitting correctly, ask the salesperson if you can wear them around the house for a few hours and bring them back if there is a problem.

BREAKING IN YOUR BOOTS AND FEET:

Once you have your new boots, it is important to break them in. Developing callouses and foot fitness will keep your feet happy on course. Wear your boots around town, to school and at home, as much as you can. If you have new, all leather boots, you can't wear your boots enough.

BOOTS NOT TO BRING:

- Boots with no waterproof liner
- Rubber ditch boots, jungle boots, or combat boots (ex. Muck Boots)
- Day hikers
- Cowboy boots
- Training/Running shoes
- Work Boots (ex. Timberlands)