
Consumer Decision Making Contest
1999-2000 Study Guide

WESTERN BOOTS

You see them everywhere--in school, at the mall, the rodeo, the football game. They're western style boots! Western style boots have become a wardrobe staple for lots of people in Texas

How do you buy boots?

Before you even walk in the store, know what you want the boots for. Is it for everyday, walking, riding, dancing, working?

Know how much you want to spend. Boots range in price for \$20 for composition boots to over \$1000 for a hand crafted pair.

Know how much you will use your boots. Composition boots that can be found more inexpensively at discount store may be fine to wear for two days a year at the stock show or for wear when you know they are sure to be ruined. For investment purposes for something to wear everyday with hard wear, be willing to spend more money for a boot that will be comfortable, wear well and be easy to care for.

Find a knowledgeable sales person to help you. Wear the socks you expect to wear with your boots.

Boot construction

A cowboy boot has 10 basic parts. Not all boots will have all these parts. The price and quality will influence which boot has what part.

The upper boot consists of the vamp, side welt, vamp fitting stitch, and a back quarter. Uppers are typically made of composition material or leather.



1. **SIDE WELT**
Seams and quarters are bevelled and stitched from the inside, trimmed close and pressed flat for better appearance and comfort.
2. **VAMP FITTING STITCH**
Multi-row stitching using alternative nylon thread gives the entire boot more strength and durability.
3. **VAMP**
The front foot of the boot that covers the toes and instep is stretched for perfect fit.
4. **TOE BOX**
The toe area is moulded onto the shape of the last for perfect shape and protection.
5. **COUNTER**
A stiff piece treated for best quality is inserted inside the boot to give the heel area n excellent support.
6. **GOODYEAR WELT**
A quality Goodyear leather welt, especially treated for best resistance, is sewn to the leather outsole with a strong interlocking stitch.
7. **STEEL SHANK**
A strong steel shank, shaped for the exact fit of the arch, is utilized to give the Boulet boot comfort and support.
8. **CORK PAD**
A pad made with compact cork, between leather insole and leather outsole, gives more comfort and better insulation. The insole will progressively mould to the shape of your foot.
9. **PEG**
One row of pegs firmly locks the shank area.
10. **BACK QUARTERS**
A piece of leather is sewn to the upper back of the book for additional support.

Leather used in boots is either full grain or split grain. When the hide comes off of a cow, it is too thick for uppers. The leather is split. An upper made from full grain leather is made from the top layer. It is tough and resistant to moisture. Split grain is the suede or bottom layer of the hide. Some boots have full leather uppers but they look soft and suede like because the surface has been brushed or textured. The texture finish is called Nu-buck.

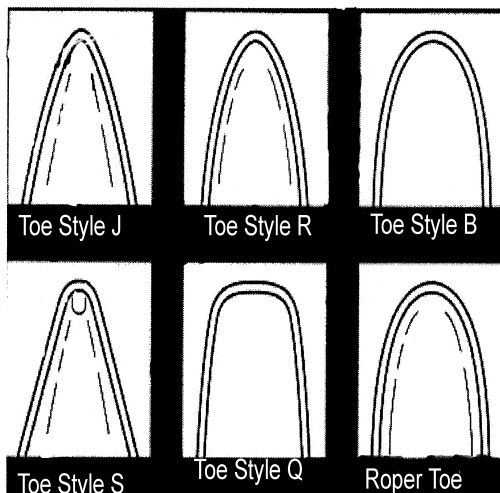
The shape of the toe box is important for function and fit. When cowboys started wearing boots in the trail days, they wore

Alligator is the most exotic leather used. It is not durable because it splits along the scales. So does every thing else with scales. Ostrich is a durable material. As more ostrich are raised and farmed, the price of ostrich becomes more affordable.

Check the stitching to make sure the seams are neat and stitching is complete. Run your hand inside the boot to make sure all the seams are flat and smooth.

tight pointed boots to show off the shape of their foot (back then size 8 was a big foot), keep boots tight to avoid getting caught in

saddle pieces, and to protect legs from thorns, critters and varmints. The point of the boot also helped the cowboy slide in and out of the stirrup easily. Women's boots were not even manufactured until the 1930's. Choose a toe box that will allow room for your toes to move and provide a comfortable walk. Round toe boots are a favorite choice because they provide ample toe room and are smooth which allows for easy in and out of the stirrups.



The back quarter is a strip of leather cut and stitched separately to the back of the boot above the heel. The back quarter adds stability and shape to the boot.

The side welt is the stitch that runs from the foot to the top of the boot. It brings the boot together as well as strengthening the construction. The elaborate stitches that decorate the boot have a purpose beside beauty. The stitches add strength and allow the leg of the boot to stand up and not bunch around the ankles. Stitches on the top of the foot made a cowboy's foot appear smaller. The stitches do serve an important function in keeping the lining of the boot

tight against the leather so it doesn't bunch up each time you put your foot in.

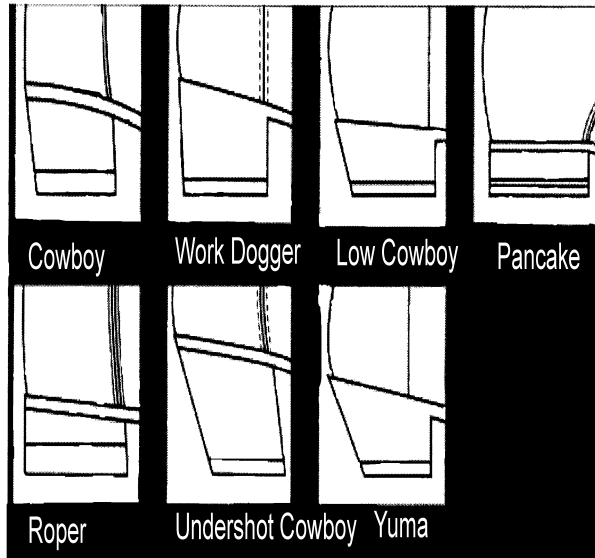
Composition materials are man made materials that can take on a variety of finishes. Composition materials do not breathe and can cause your feet to perspire more. However, composition boots tend to be more water-resistant.

The insole is between your foot and the outer sole. It consists of the shank, pad, and the counter. The counter is a stiff piece inserted in the heel area of the boot to give support to the heel and back of the foot. Not all boots will have a counter. It will depend on the brand. The shank is the piece of boot that shape and provides arch support. Shanks can be made out of a variety of material. Make sure your arch is supported comfortably by the shank in whatever boot you choose. A pad is a piece added around the ball of the foot to provide extra comfort and insulation. Most pads are made of cork. A peg locks all parts of the shank area together.

The outer sole is the part that hits the road. The soles can be made of leather or composition material. Here is where you really need to know the purpose of your boots. Composition soles are what you want to wear for meat judging in a freezer: Leather soles are great for dancing and sliding.

The cowboys of the past wore a boot heel that was 2 inches high and extremely underslung. These heels made it easy for a cowboy to ride in the stirrup and the best chance to shake loose if thrown from the saddle. But those same cowboys would take their boots off if they had to walk because they were meant for riding, not walking.

The boot heel provides the center of balance and support when you walk. The flatter heel with little under sling is the most comfortable for standing and walking. Fashion stacked heels are the tallest heels. Utility heels give height and are slightly underslung.



Boot Fit

Unlike a lot of shoes, boots are made true to fit. That means that you buy your true shoe size. Boots are meant to be snug through your instep and slightly lose through the heel area.

There will be resistance when you first put on your boot. If your foot slides in too easily, the boot is too big.

Make sure the boot toe has ample room for your toes to wiggle. Stand up and press your foot forward. In a well fitting boot there will be no pressure. Different shapes of toe boxes will provide different fits. The slightly rounded Roper seems to be a

classic. The very pointed styles offer a different fit with less toe room.

The instep should be snug. As you wear your boot this area will break in and conform to the shape of your foot. If the instep is too loose, the boot will slip around on your foot and cause foot problems. To test the fit, run your thumb and index finger along the instep. The leather should slide over the top. If it bunches it is too big and if it doesn't move it is too tight.

The ball spot is the most important check point. Make sure the widest part of your foot hits the widest part of the boot. Push on the bottom of the boot to locate the ball of your foot and visually check to make sure it is at the widest part of the boot.

The heel should allow your foot to move up and down slightly as you walk. A well-fitting boot has some space allowed for natural foot movement. The boot bottom will flex with age and wearing.

Many boot styles are appropriate for either males or females to wear. In general, men's boot size is two sizes bigger than women's boot size. The important thing is to get a boot that fits well and not worry about the labels.

Boot Care

Good quality boots are an investment. As with any expensive purchase, you will need to take care to get your money's worth out of your boots.

Here are some tips:

- * Dirt and Dust are the two worst enemies to leather. Simply wipe your boots with a slightly damp (not wet) cloth to prevent the fibers from breaking down.
- * Conditioners make leather soft and pliable. If you want to condition leather, a lanolin base is best. Apply conditioners when boots are clean and dry.
- * Avoid too much wax and oil. They clog the pores in the leather and cause it to dry out.
- * If your boots get wet, let them dry naturally. Contrary to popular belief, they should not be dried near heat or sunlight. They should not be stuffed to hold their shape while they dry. Just the opposite - dry un-stuffed.
- * Condition snake and alligator whenever it looks or feels dry.
- * Boots can be weatherized using a non-silicon water and stain protector. Mink oil does not waterproof boots, it conditions them.
- * Scuff marks can be removed from boots with a soft pencil eraser.
- * Store boots in a warm dry place. Boots will mildew if kept in a damp place.
- * Always put your boots where they can air out after wearing.

- * Help your boots to look like new by applying a boot cream in a color that closely matches the leather. The cream will cover blemishes and leave a glossy finish. Creme based polish is better than wax. If you want to use wax, use the cream first.

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Developed by Connie Shepard, Extension Agent-ENP, Bexar County, November 1998.