

Find a faster you

While the minimalist fad has seen its heyday, the genre still lives on quietly in the industry. Some very popular models of running shoes survived the rise and fall of minimalist popularity, while others that have been around since before the advent of barefoot running peek their heads out once a year. What you may not know is that August - November at Sole Sports is the coming of the cross country racing flat - the original zero-drop minimalist shoe, at a lesser cost. These hardly-there, lightweight, flexible but tough little beasts excel at two things; keeping your feet protected from the elements and assisting you in moving faster than you're used to. The average difference in weight between a normal training shoe and a racing flat is about 4 ounces. That means that every 4 strides, you lift one less pound off the ground. Based on 160 total foot strikes (or strides) per minute, which most people are able to do, that equates to 40 less pounds of weight lifted each minute. For a 24 minute 5k runner, that's 960 less pounds one would have to lift when propelling oneself along if the person wore a shoe that was a mere 4 ounces lighter than their normal trainers. What does it translate to? Veteran runner, Sole Sports staff and Coach Flash Santoro argues that it's between 15-30 seconds faster per mile than a normal weight training shoe, based off years of fitting his runners in them. Of course, results may vary by individual.

Let's next touch upon who these shoes were made for, and who they aren't made for. Though shoes don't discriminate whose foot they go on, there are certain recommendations as to what kind of foot they'll work for best. First off, severe overpronators need not apply. These shoes have no support whatsoever in the traditional sense of a running shoe. Their specific definition of arch support generally means that the shoe will conform to your foot like a sock, with nothing to stop the arch from hitting the ground, bringing the knees in with it and pulling on the hips and lower back. Secondly, those who like a cushioned shoe should look the other way - these shoes have less than a 1/4" of cushion in them. They work best for distances from a mile to 10k, weight training and cross training where you need to feel centered and not off-balanced with a huge heel on the shoe. If you have already seen success with minimalist shoes such as Nike Frees or Vibram 5-Fingers, this is a great addition to the collection. Who are they really made for? Cross country athletes who are traversing all types of terrain. Again, they don't discriminate—they might work for you, too.

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