

Make Shoe Repair Part of Your Ecological Footprint

SAVE THE EARTH



Do you want to minimize your ecological footprint? You can start, quite literally, by looking at your own two feet.

Shoe repair is among the oldest forms of recycling, and your neighborhood shoe repair shop has likely been keeping footwear and leather goods out of landfills since long before recycling was fashionable. In fact, each year, the shoe repair industry keeps some 62 million pairs of shoes out of landfills and on consumers' feet. Here are some tips on how you can take your first steps.

Quality First

Extending the life of your shoes starts with purchasing quality shoes. There are three keys to choosing quality footwear. First, look for a shoe with solid construction that will give your feet the support they need. Next, look for quality materials that will make your feet comfortable and keep them healthy. Finally, make sure you buy shoes that fit properly.

Take Care of Your Shoes

The next step to make your shoes last longer is to establish a home care regimen. Caring for your shoes is a four-step process -- cleaning, conditioning, polishing and weatherproofing.

First, clean the surface with a leather cleaner to remove surface dirt. After cleaning, you should condition the leather. Conditioners soften and lubricate leather, keeping it feeling and looking new.

Once the shoes have been cleaned and conditioned, it is time for polish. Polishes contain dyes and pigments to renew color and cover scuffs; waxes to provide shine and protection; and conditioning agents to moisten and renew the leather.

The final step is weatherproofing. Though polishes provide some sealing qualities, if you live or work in a wet, muddy or oily environment, the protection of a weatherproofer is a must.

Repeat this process seasonally, or more frequently for shoes worn regularly in harsh environments. Your shoe repair professional can point you to the products that will work best for you.

Repair and Save

Finally, make regular visits to your shoe repair shop to keep your shoes in top shape. Quality, well-maintained men's shoes can be resoled seven to 10 times at a fraction of the cost of new shoes. With new soles and heels, and reconditioned uppers, the shoes will look like new, yet retain that broken-in, comfortable feel. It is not uncommon for a man to get 30 years out of a good pair of shoes. Quality women's shoes can be resoled three to five times.

Don't wait until you have holes in your soles or your heels are completely worn down to visit. Worn heels will change your gait. When you are not walking properly, your feet, ankles, knees, hips and back can all suffer.

So if you want to minimize your ecological footprint, and do something that saves money and is good for you as well, a visit to your local shoe repair shop is a step in the right direction.

For more information and to find a shop near you, visit the Shoe Service Institute of America online at www.ssia.info.

Insert your store information here.



**SHOE REPAIR: It's More
Than You Think**