The Shoe Conundrum

What Kind of Shoes Work With an AFO?

Whenever possible, **take the AFO with you when shopping for shoes**.

Do not simply buy the next larger shoe size based on your child's usual shoe size. An overly long shoe can make walking more difficult and may increase the risk of tripping.

Instead, look for shoes that are:

- wide enough for the AFO
    - (usually E or W width is most appropriate)
- deep enough to accommodate the brace
    - (low cut converse might slip off the heel)
- easy to open widely
    - (detached tongue of the shoe is best)
- secured with laces, Velcro, or another adjustable closure
    - (don’t use shoes with sewn in tongues)
- equipped with a removable insole when possible
- long enough to accommodate the AFO without excessive extra space

Some children may need a different shoe size or style from what they normally wear. This does not necessarily mean they need a dramatically larger shoe.

The goal is to find the smallest shoe that comfortably accommodates the AFO without squeezing the foot or creating unnecessary extra length.

Best shoe brands

BILLY: Best dedicated adaptive/AFO option
New Balance : Best mainstream athletic option
See Kai Run Adaptive: Best for younger children
Stride Rite: Good readily accessible children's option
Hatchbacks: Excellent when getting the foot/AFO into the shoe is the primary problem

Mainstream athletic shoes that may work

New Balance • ASICS • Nike FlyEase • KEEN • Skechers • Tsukihoshi

For example, Zappos currently has a dedicated AFO-friendly category that includes children's Tsukihoshi models, which is useful evidence that some mainstream children's shoes can accommodate orthoses.

Store shopping guide

Retailer	Brands commonly available	AFO-shopping usefulness
New Balance stores	**New Balance**	⭐⭐⭐⭐⭐
DICK'S Sporting Goods	**New Balance, Nike, ASICS, Skechers, KEEN**	⭐⭐⭐⭐⭐
Nordstrom	**BILLY, See Kai Run, Nike, Skechers and others**	⭐⭐⭐⭐
REI	**KEEN and other outdoor footwear**	⭐⭐⭐⭐
Skechers stores	**Skechers**	⭐⭐⭐⭐
Walmart	**Skechers, some New Balance/KEEN and other brands**	⭐⭐⭐⭐
Target	**Skechers/S Sport by Skechers and other children's footwear**	⭐⭐⭐

Department stores	**New Balance, Nike, Skechers, ASICS and others depending on location**	⭐⭐⭐
Specialty children's shoe stores	**Stride Rite, See Kai Run, Pediped, Tsukihoshi and others**	⭐⭐⭐⭐⭐
Orthotic/prosthetic clinics & specialty shoe providers	**Piedro, De Novo/Nimco and other orthopedic footwear**	⭐⭐⭐⭐⭐

Brand name shopping guide:

Brand	Why it can work well with AFOs	Typical cost*	Durability**	Where to buy
Skechers	**Wide/deep options, adjustable closures and easy-entry styles**	$30–**70**	⭐⭐⭐½	**Skechers stores, Walmart, Target, department stores & online**
Stride Rite	**Wide widths, adjustable closures and adaptive/orthotic-friendly children's models**	$35–**70**	⭐⭐⭐⭐	**Stride Rite, select department/children's stores & online**
Pediped	**Flexible children's footwear with adjustable closures and some wider styles**	$40–**70**	⭐⭐⭐½	**Online; select children's retailers**

New Balance	**Wide/extra-wide widths, removable insoles, structured athletic shoes and good depth in many models**	50–**150**	⭐⭐⭐⭐⭐	**New Balance stores, DICK'S, sporting-goods stores, some department stores & online**
See Kai Run	**Adaptive models with wide openings, adjustable closures and additional room**	50–**65**	⭐⭐⭐⭐	**Online; Nordstrom; select children's shoe retailers**
PLAE	**Adjustable closure systems and removable/interchangeable components can provide extra room**	50–**80**	⭐⭐⭐⭐	**Primarily online; select children's retailers**
ASICS	**Structured athletic shoes, supportive soles and wide-width options in selected models**	55–**145**	⭐⭐⭐⭐⭐	**ASICS, DICK'S, sporting-goods stores & online**
Nike FlyEase	**Easy-entry designs and wide-opening closures on selected models**	50–**100+**	⭐⭐⭐⭐½	**Nike stores, DICK'S, sporting-goods stores, department stores & online**
Tsukihoshi	**Children's shoes with relatively roomy construction and flexible but supportive designs**	60–**85**	⭐⭐⭐⭐	**Online; Zappos; select children's shoe retailers**

Friendly Shoes	**Flip-top/zip opening makes it easier to get the AFO and foot into the shoe**	60–**100**	⭐⭐⭐⭐	**Primarily online/specialty retailers**
KEEN	**Roomier toe boxes, substantial construction and adjustable straps/laces on many models**	50–**100**	⭐⭐⭐⭐⭐	**REI, KEEN, sporting-goods stores, department stores & online**
BILLY Footwear	**Wide-opening wraparound zipper, removable insoles, generous depth; dedicated AFO styles**	65–**135**	⭐⭐⭐⭐½	**Online; Amazon; Zappos; select Nordstrom & independent retailers**
Hatchbacks	**Specifically designed for orthotic access; rear-opening construction**	70–**100**	⭐⭐⭐⭐½	**Primarily online; specialty/orthotic retailers**
Piedro	**Orthopedic footwear with additional width/depth options and orthotic accommodation**	100–**180+**	⭐⭐⭐⭐⭐	**Specialty orthopedic footwear providers & online**
Nimco / De Novo	**Specialist orthopedic shoes with additional depth/width and orthotic accommodation**	100–**200+**	⭐⭐⭐⭐⭐	**Specialty/orthopedic footwear providers & online**

* Typical retail range; individual models, sales, sizes, and adult vs. children's shoes can vary significantly.

** Durability is an EmBRACE editorial estimate, not a manufacturer rating.