Tibesti.com Best of the Best: Racewalking Shoes for Women

Male racewalkers have it pretty good in the shoe department. There are literally dozens of excellent shoes choices for training and racing. Of course most of these shoes are running racing flats rather than shoes specifically made for racewalking, but the design elements are essentially the same: lightweight, flexible, low-profile shoes with big enough toe-boxes to prevent cramped toes during long workouts or races. Outlandish colors seem to be a plus.

Unlike men, women haven’t fared quite as well. For many years racing flats were made only for men. The shoe companies marketed their wares as “unisex” sized shoes appropriate for women, but they were sold in men’s sizes. Since racing flats adapt to the shape of the foot better than boxier training shoes, most women could make do with a “unisex” shoe, but wearing a shoe that’s actually designed for your type of foot will ultimately be a better choice for most women.

Ah, but times they are a changing! Several companies now make women’s racing flats, and many companies now offer more than just one least-common-denominator racing shoe. Adidas, for example, makes a range of women’s racers to fit all types of feet.

Although there are now some great choices out there for women racewalkers, the downside to using running racing flats for day-to-day racewalk training is that they’re designed for runners to wear only once every few weeks to race, so they often don’t last very long. But life-spans do vary considerably. Some flats will last 300 miles or more; some extremely lightweight flats may be shot after a mere 50 miles. Shoes designed for marathons are made with high carbon outsoles that will usually hold up for several hundred miles.

There are dozens of shoes that “foot” the bill. But who does it best?

For serious racers looking for the lightest and fastest shoes around, the Saucony Grid Type A4, Asics Piranha SP 3 and the Nike Lunar Lite Racer+ are all under 6 ounces and lightning fast. For marathon walkers or 50k specialists looking for more support, the Adidas Adizero Adios, Asics Gel-Hyper Speed 4 and the Mizuno Musha 2 get the edge for lightweight stability.
The Best of the Best:

Saucony Grid Type A4

The Saucony Grid Type A4 is a top choice in the lightweight, neutral category. The perforated midsole reduces weight and increases air flow and drainage. It is perfect for a fast 5k or 10k, but supportive enough for distances all the way up to the 50k. The Type A4 delivers a responsive ride with an amazing cushioned feel and great flexibility. Saucony has become one of the more popular shoes among female racewalkers recently, and the A4 shows why.

- Release date: May 2010
- Weight: 5.4 ounces
- Last: Strobel semi-curved last
- Single-density SSL EVA midsole
- Narrow heel width
- Heel height 13mm, forefoot 9mm
- Lightweight, open breathable mesh base, with synthetic overlays and 360-degree reflectivity
- XT-900 multi-piece pattern offers durability in a lightweight, flexible design.

Asics Piranha SP 3

The lightest racing flat ASICS has ever presented to the U.S. market, the Piranha offers a fast, comfortable feel unrivaled by any other shoe on the market. This is the ultimate shoe for fast 1,500m to 10k races and is a great speed work shoe for racewalkers without serious pronation issues. Most racewalkers should use a more supportive shoe for longer training and racing.
• Release date: January 2010
• Weight: 4.7 ounces
• Heel: Medium to narrow
• Midsole Height: Heel 14mm, forefoot 10mm
• Sizing is based on the men's scale. Women should subtract 1.5 sizes from their women's shoe size. Example Women's 8.5 equals size 7.0 for this shoe

adidas adiZero Adios

The adiZero line recognizes that not all athletes are made alike. There are adizeros for neutral walkers, over-pronators and under-pronators. Due to the mechanics of the racewalking gait, which requires a certain amount of pronation—the inward rolling of the foot that occurs as it rolls forward—most athletes will prefer a neutral shoe. The adiZero Adios is built for the neutral to under-pronator who requires enhanced cushioning and extended durability. The light, open mesh upper help the Adios provide lightweight comfort but the durable outsole and excellent support make them appropriate for half-marathons and marathons. The Adios is also quite flexible, allowing for a quick roll up to the toes for fast 5ks.
• Release date: July 2010
• Weight: 6.8 ounces
• Designed for neutral pronation to supination
• Average heel width
• Midsole: Single-density.
• Heel height 22mm, forefoot 11mm
• Outsole: adiWEAR in high wear areas, blown rubber and QuickStrike provide great flexibility and reduce weight

Mizuno Musha 2

The Musha has become one of the most popular racewalking shoes in recent memory. It is a performance racer, but with great support for over-pronation. It has a fast “feel” for short races and speed work, but the support and outsole durability to make it a great choice for long distance training and racing. Like many racing flats, the Musha 2 is marketed as a “unisex” shoe. Women need to take 1 to 1.5 off of their usual shoe size (so a woman who normally wears a women’s size 8 would look for a size 6.5 to 7 in the Musha 2.)

• Release date: January 2010
• Weight: 8.0 oz
• Heel: Average width
• Midfoot: Medium to low volume
• Forefoot: Medium width
• Toe-Box height: Medium
• Arch structure: Medium height
• Heel height: 18mm, forefoot 9mm
**Asics GEL-Hyper Speed 4**

The GEL-Hyper Speed series is a lighter-weight, more flexible version of the discontinued DS Racer. Weighing in at only 6.9 ounces, the Hyper Speed 4 still manages to provide adequate support for the long haul despite a very low heel. Asics has always made great shoes for racewalkers (including “real” specially designed racewalking shoes for the Asian market.) The Gel-Hyper Speed is a worthy scion to the Asics racer bloodline.

- Weight: 6.9 Ounces
- Last: Semi-curved, slip-lasted
- Designed for neutral pronation to supination
- Midsole: Molded EVA midsole is combined with the GEL® cushioning system that attenuates shock during the impact phase.
- Heel height 15mm, forefoot 10mm
- Upper: Lightweight open mesh with synthetic overlays provides excellent comfort and breathability.
- Outsole: Magic Sole™ outsole minimizes weight and maximizes breathability and durability. AHAR® Heel Plug placed in critical areas of the outsole for increased durability

**Best of the Rest:**

**Brooks T6**

The only thing keeping the Brooks T6 out of the top five is its short lifespan. The T6 is fast, comfortable and adequately supportive, but the outsole that Brooks promotes as “abrasion resistant” tends to wear through to the midsole fairly quickly. If you can forgive them that flaw, this shoe feels fantastic to wear, and is lightning fast. Save them for races rather than for every day wear and you’ll probably fall in love with the T6. Brooks uses “unisex” sizing. Women need to take 1 to 1.5 off of their usual shoe size (so a woman who normally wears a women’s size 8 would look for a size 6.5 to 7 in the T6.)
• Weight: 6.4 ounces
• Release date: February 2010
• Last: Semi-curved, Strobel-lasted
• Built for the neutral to under-pronator who requires lightweight cushioning.
• Midsole: Low-profile, single-density EVA
• Upper: Breathable element air mesh
• HydroFlow® cushioning absorbs heel-strike impact.
• Outsole: High-density carbon rubber in the heel and high abrasion EVA forefoot for reduced weight.
• Recommended for distances of up to the half marathon.

adidas adiZero Mana 2010 Lady

The adiZero Mana is built for moderate to over-pronators requiring a combination of cushioning and enhanced stability in a lightweight racer. Faster racewalkers may find the anti-pronation technology a bit stiff—and may prefer the adidas adizero Ace—but long-distance walkers and heavier racewalkers will appreciate the Mana’s added support.
• Release date: January 2010
• Weight: 6.8 ounces
• Last: Semi-curved, Strobel-lasted
• Designed for mild to moderate over-pronation
• Midsole: adiPRENE® insert in heel for comfort and shock absorption, and in the forefoot for propulsion and efficiency.
• Heel height 22mm, forefoot 11mm

New Balance 905

More of a trainer/racer than a pure racing flat, the 905 is a great choice for women walking long distances. A two-piece upper eliminates the need for a traditional tongue and provides a performance-oriented fit. Plenty of medial support makes the 905 well suited for mild to moderate over-pronators.

Nike Lunar Lite Racer+2 Women's

The Lunar Lite Racer utilizes a revolutionary cushioning technology. Offering both great cushioning and responsiveness, the Lunar Lite Racer has a high rate of energy return. Relative to its weight, the cushioning is unrivaled. The Lunar Lite Racer+2 is great for marathons and tempo training.
• Release date: January 2010
• Weight: 4.5 ounces
• Last: Full-length Semi-curved strobel last
• Designed for neutral pronation & supination
• Heel: Medium to narrow width
• Midsole: Phylite carrier with LunarLite Core
• Heel: LunarLite Core
• Forefoot: LunarLite Core
• Highly breathable upper utilizes Flywire technology for targeted support and is very light
• Phylite waffle pattern with strategically placed BRS 1000 rubber in high wear areas

**Saucony Grid Fastwitch 4**

Although designed for 5k and 10k races, the Fastwitch 4 has ample support for longer distances.

• Release date: February 2010
• Weight: 6.2 ounces
• Designed for neutral pronation to supination
• Midsole: Dual-density SSL EVA midsole
• Midsole Height: heel: 22mm, forefoot: 11mm
• Upper: Features a breathable air-mesh base, synthetic overlays for a secure fit, and 360-degree reflectivity.
• Outsole: XT-900 carbon rubber for durability and EVA+ for weight reduction and great flexibility.