

6 Minute English

The rise in popularity of the comfy shoe

This is not a word-for-word transcript

Dan

Hello and welcome to 6 Minute English. I'm Dan.

Neil

Let me just sit down. Ah! And I'm Neil.

Dan

Neil, are you wearing high heels?

Neil

Hang on. Ah! Not any more!

Dan

How did they feel?

Neil

Agony! How do women do this?

Dan

Why on earth are you wearing them?

Neil

Well, I wanted to look fashionable and cool! Everyone knows that high heels are the height of fashion – on the street, at work and at parties. I'm ready for anything!

Dan

I'm not so sure you're right there, Neil. Our topic for this 6 Minute English is about the rise in popularity of the comfy shoe. However, before we step into that, let's have our quiz question. Which famous sports clothing company's first pair of running shoes was inspired by the square pattern on a waffle-making machine? Was it:

- a) Adidas
- b) Nike, or

c) Puma

Neil

Well, I have no idea, so I'm going to say Adidas because that's got marks.

Dan

We'll have to wait until later to find out. So, what do you think of when I say **comfy** shoes?

Neil

Well, **comfy** is an adjective which is an informal way of saying 'comfortable'. So, I suppose we're talking trainers. But I was always told that trainers weren't appropriate for everywhere, like work and many formal or social places, such as parties, bars and clubs.

Dan

Well, that certainly used to be the case, but that may not be as true any more. Victoria Moss is the Senior Fashion Editor at the Telegraph newspaper in the UK. Here she is speaking on BBC Radio 4's Woman's Hour about why trainers are considered more fashionable these days. Is it something that's happened very recently?

Victoria Moss

Well I think it's been, sort of, coming on for a while. And I think one thing in fashion in the last 10 years has been a, sort of, mass **casualisation** of everything. And there's been a big **streetwear** trend, which has **filtered through**.

Dan

So, is it something that's happened very recently?

Neil

Apparently not, no. She said that there has been a mass **casualisation** of things over the last 10 years. **Casualisation** here means 'the process of becoming less formal and more relaxed' – 'more casual'.

Dan

Yes! Society has relaxed its idea of what is considered formal or appropriate. In addition, we're told there has been a big **streetwear** trend. **Streetwear** is a style of casual clothing worn especially by young people from urban settings – that's the city.

Neil

This trend has **filtered through**. If something **filters through**, it appears or happens gradually over time.

Dan

So, presumably, the trend for **streetwear filtered through** from its specialised area into mainstream fashion until everyone was following it.

Neil

Well, that explains why trainers are more fashionable these days, but it doesn't explain why people are wearing them more. Not everyone follows fashion, you know.

Dan

Yes, Neil I can see that when I look at you. But you're forgetting the comfy part. Emma Supple is a podiatrist – a foot doctor - who also spoke on Woman's Hour. Here she is explaining why being comfy is so important. What are people doing more these days that they weren't before?

Emma Supple

So what we're actually talking about is, actually, people, for **wellness** walking more and doing more... and they're not going to do that in a lot of high heels... so trainers are changing the materials. There are now a lot of fabric trainers and if you've inherited foot problems, then that kind of fabric... they're wrapping around **knobbly** bits, and knobbly bits hurt.

Dan

What are people doing more?

Neil

They're walking more and they're doing it for **wellness**. **Wellness** is the state of being healthy.

Dan

As a result, trainers have had to change their materials to fabric to make themselves more comfortable.

Neil

Not only that, but if you have any foot problems, these fabric, or cloth, trainers are better at fitting to the shape of your foot. That means if you have any **knobbly** bits, they won't hurt as much, which makes trainers more comfortable for everyone!

Dan

Knobbly is an adjective that means 'lumpy' – 'having many raised areas on the surface'.

Neil

So, it's the combination of a change in fashion and a change in materials that's made trainers and other comfy shoes more popular than ever, right?

Dan

Exactly! And hard on the heels of that revelation, we can reveal the answer to our quiz question. Earlier I asked which famous sports clothing company's first pair of running shoes was inspired by the square pattern on a waffle-making machine. Was it:

- a) Adidas
- b) Nike, or

c) Puma

Neil, you said?

Neil

I said Adidas

Dan

Sorry. The answer is Nike. In 1971 their co-founder Bill Bowerman was having breakfast when he saw the waffle machine and it inspired the design of Nike's first running shoe. Let's hope it was **comfy** one.

Neil

Aha! It must be time to review our vocabulary! So, first we had **comfy** – an adjective which is an informal way of saying 'comfortable'.

Dan

Then we had **casualisation**. This describes the process of things, such as fashion or behaviour, becoming less formal and more casual.

Neil

Next was **streetwear**. That describes a style of casual clothing that is worn especially by young people who live in cities.

Dan

Then we heard **filtered through**. If something **filters through**, it appears or happens gradually over time. For example, has it filtered through to you yet, Neil, that high heels were a mistake?

Neil

Yes it has! They didn't do anything for my **wellness**, I can tell you, which means 'the state of being healthy'.

Dan

And lastly, we had **knobbly**. This adjective means 'lumpy' or 'having many raised areas on the surface' - like skin when it gets cold. Do you have anything **knobbly** on your foot, Neil?

Neil

Probably! My feet are killing me!

Dan

I think we've found your Achilles heel! However, it's time to go. But we will be back. In the meantime, you can find us in all the usual places online and on social media, just look for BBC Learning English. Bye for now.

Neil

Goodbye!

VOCABULARY

comfy (informal)
comfortable

casualisation
The process of becoming less formal and more relaxed, more casual

streetwear
a style of casual clothing especially worn by young people from urban settings

filter through
appear or happen gradually over time

wellness
the state of being healthy

knobbly
lumpy; having many raised areas on the surface