



The overlays of a shoe—the material stitched or welded to the mesh—aren't just for looks. They stabilize the upper and keep your foot locked in place.

## ▶ Road Runners

### For Your Feet Only

#### Somnio Pacemaker \$135

You can tailor your suits. Why not your running shoes? While there are a few performance shoes that let you swap in different insoles to adjust the ride, Somnio is the only company that lets you customize just about everything—forefoot cushioning, rear-foot cushioning, arch height, and level of stability (by inserting a more or less angled wedge running the length of your foot). That makes this lightweight trainer ideal for chronically injured runners or others with special requirements. Overall, though, testers noted a slightly stiff feel that requires a little breaking in, and the need for a specially trained salesperson means Somnio is available only in select, mostly higher-end shops. 12.3 oz.; somniorunning.com  
**Stability:** Varies  
**Softness:** Varies  
**Speed:** 3.2

### King Cushion

#### Saucony ProGrid

**Triumph 7 \$130**  
 Imagine hopping from pillow to pillow—but on pillows that bounce back with a little energy. That's the feeling we got from the Triumph 7. Not many neutral shoes find that balance between substantial cushioning and responsiveness, but this one does, and heel strikers especially appreciated the ride. The unexpected upshot? Thanks to this shoe's sleek profile and secure midfoot wrap, it didn't feel sluggish during faster efforts, making the 13-ounce weight—on the heftier side for a cushioning shoe—run lighter than the scale implies. And the cushioning didn't quickly flatten out the way some foams can: Testers initially raved about the out-of-the-box feel, and they fell deeper in love over the miles. 13.3 oz.; saucony.com  
**Stability:** 2.5  
**Softness:** 4.9  
**Speed:** 3.7

### Stride Coach

#### Newton Sir Isaac \$149

These shoes are out to change the way you run. Newtons have less forward lean than almost any other brand, and a set of lever-like lugs underfoot to encourage a midfoot strike and a shorter, more efficient gait. The new Sir Isaac is less radical than previous Newtons—adding a little more stability and a wider forefoot platform and toning down the shoe's corrective features with less aggressive lugs and a more rounded heel and forefoot. Still, these speed-oriented shoes have an adjustment period. "Kind of like stilettos," said one tester of the women's version, the Lady Isaac. "Difficult to wear initially, but once you get used to them, you feel great." 11.2 oz.; newtonrunning.com  
**Stability:** 3.9  
**Softness:** 3.2  
**Speed:** 4.6

### What's With Barefoot Running?

You've most likely heard the buzz that barefoot running is better for you—strengthening your support muscles, tendons, and ligaments and helping prevent injuries. Is it true? Yes—but don't chuck your trainers yet. "All runners should run in as little shoe as possible," says journalist and 1968 Boston Marathon winner Amby Burfoot—a career 100,000-plus-mile runner. Thankfully, footwear companies are responding with lower, less-cushioned, minimalist shoes—closer to the spirit, if not letter, of barefoot running. Want to experiment? Start by wearing progressively lighter shoes on your short runs and slowly increasing your usage. "Any runner who makes a dramatic change in footwear should do so very gradually," warns Burfoot. —L.J.