

Heel Counter

April 11, 2025

Also Known As: *Heel Stiffener*, *Heel Puff*, *Back Stiffener*

Auf Deutsch: *Hinter-kappe*

En français: *Contrefort*

По-русски: *Задник*

[upper part](#)

Heel counters are strips of material built into shoe uppers as [stiffeners](#), to reinforce the area around the heel, especially against crushing when putting shoes on. The use of a [shoe horn](#) serves to guide the heel past the reinforced heel.

The vast majority of everyday and especially outdoor and work shoes contain heel counters. House slippers and other, particularly light shoes may not. However, there are also exceptions to this rule. For example, [Red Wing](#)'s classic 877 heavy-leather, [moccasin toe](#) work boots have no heel counters.

1. Materials
2. Skiving
3. Position
4. Fixing
5. Entries Linking Here

Materials

Traditionally, heel counters are made of leather. The lower parts include lasting allowances, which are inseamed or stitched down with the upper and any lining. As the shoe wears, the leather conforms to the shape of the wearer's heel.

Modern shoes frequently use thermoplastic, [fiberboard](#), or [leatherboard](#) heel counters.

Skiving

Leather heel counters are [skived](#) along their lasting allowances to reduce bulk under [heel](#)

[seats](#) and ease [lasting](#), as well as along their top edges to avoid visible ridges on the outsides of the uppers and hard ridges that could irritate the heels of the feet.

Position

Heel counters may be placed within unlined uppers for direct contact with the foot, between upper and lining, or outside the upper, under a [heel counter cover](#) or [backstay](#).

Traditional makers long debated whether heel counters should be formed and inserted with their [grain sides](#) facing in toward the feet or out toward the outsides of the uppers.

Fixing

Traditionally, heel counters are [pasted](#) in place, both to the outside of the upper and to any lining within it. Makers typically use modified starch paste for its longer working time, which allows the layers to slide over one another during [lasting](#), then harden into a laminated stack for strength.

In heavier boots and shoes, especially with [heel counter covers](#), heel counters may be sewn to the upper all around their edges.

Leas expensive shoes may have heel counters left loose within the uppers, bound in place where they are glued or sewn beneath the [featherlines](#).

Entries Linking Here