



From a Parent's Perspective

by Roslyn Duffy

How to Buy Shoes

– Situation –

Problem One: Last week I took my daughter to the store to buy a pair of shoes. She went straight for the red glitter-encrusted pumps with tacky stars. I refused to buy them and insisted she settle for a pair of black leather dress shoes. When we went to get dressed for church the next morning, one shoe was missing. It has been over a week now and the missing shoe has never reappeared. I am so frustrated. I find it hard to believe that the lost shoe is accidental.

Problem Two: My daughter needed new school shoes. Before we left for the store, I told her she could pick them out herself. First she wanted some flimsy plastic sandals, then a pair of ballet-like slippers, and then a pair of boots with tassels all over them. I said no to all of those and we argued the whole time. I finally caved in and let her get some pink velvet half boots. Predictably, as soon as it rained they got soaked and ruined. I can't face another shopping trip like the last one but she still needs shoes.

Problem Three: My son and I went to the mall to shop for his new soccer shoes. We saw several pair, all on sale. He would not even try them on. The only shoes he would consider were those brands he had seen his favorite sports heroes wearing. Naturally those shoes would require the income of a professional athlete to afford them. What can I do?

– Solution –

Sensible Shoes

Sensible shoes do not have a very good reputation. Only the most budget-minded, fashion-impaired, child-unfriendly mothers on the planet dare argue for sensible shoes. Yet, it is still possible to get your child into such shoes, just not by appealing to his better judgment.

When it comes to shoes, as with most things, judgment must be acquired like the fine patina on a gemstone that was formerly just a plain-looking rock.

Here are some how-to's for shining up the less shoe savvy members of your household.

Make a List – Together

Shoes cover our feet; they keep our feet dry and protect them from jagged pavement, icy ground, and other soccer players. Sit down and ask your child what she needs.

If the need is for school shoes, what purposes must those shoes serve? If you live in a wet or rainy climate, the shoes should be able to keep you warm and dry. What shoes stay warm and dry? Leather, waterproof synthetics, or rubber soles might go on the list.

What problems do you experience? Send a description, a short word "snapshot" of the situation, to From a Parent's Perspective. Each month, we will address your real-life issues. To assure confidentiality, names of those submitting problems will not appear. Elements of several problems may be combined for this column. Only situations appearing in the column receive responses.

If the school shoes are to be worn with a blue school uniform, maybe a shoe with blue rather than orange stripes would be best. So make a list of acceptable colors: blue, black, or brown.

Next decide what type of closure suits the situation. Does your child know how to tie shoes? Does he know how, but not want to bother? Would slip-ons work; can she run in slip-ons; does she run at school? What about self-sticking tabs?

And the list goes on. Will these shoes need to be cleaned? How? Polished? By whom? How often?

What about cost? How much are you willing or able to spend on shoes? Perhaps you offer to spend \$50 on a pair of school shoes. If your child is old enough to do so and wants shoes that cost more than \$50, is he willing to spend the difference out of his own money?

How much does he have available; how does he plan on earning additional money; will he bring his money with him to the store or pay you at home? When?

The Legwork

Now go to the store. Take the list with you.

The list:

- Leather, waterproof synthetics or rubber soles
- Blue, black, or brown
- Self-sticking tabs
- No polishing needed
- \$50 or less

When your daughter blinds you with the shimmer from the red and silver sequined shoes, refer to the list with her. Are these waterproof? No, the glue on the sequins might melt in the rain. Are they blue, black, or brown? Nope.

“Well, I guess they don’t meet your list.”

On you go down the row. She falls in love with the high-top leather shoes that lace clear up the ankle. Back to the list. Waterproof — check; brown — check; self-sticking tabs — whoops!

“Those laces will add ten minutes to dressing time.”

“I think we better keep looking,” decides your daughter.

Next she dangles a pair of designer athletic shoes from her fingers, like the prize trout at the county fair. They do match up to the list — except for the budget. These shoes are \$80. At this point, your child either kisses Grandma’s birthday gift money good-bye or tosses her catch back onto the shelf and heads for the sale table.

These shoes are made for walking.

By the time the shopping trip ends, your daughter has sensible shoes gracing her feet, you have managed not to go bankrupt, and you are both still talking. The shoes do not get lost and, in fact, they even get an occasional swipe to clear the dirt from the designer logo that cost her two weeks allowance.

Savvy Shoppers

Step by step your child is becoming a savvy shopper. She might not only end up with the most sensible shoes on the shelf but a real sheen of self-confidence as well. What more could you ask?

Shoe Shopping: Make a List

- What are the shoes for? Sports, school, dress-up.
- What are the special needs the shoes must meet? Warmth, support, waterproofing.
- What color of shoes is needed? Does color matter? If so, what colors are acceptable?
- What type of closure is desired? Lace-up, self sticking, buckles.
- What will it take to keep the shoes clean? Frequent polishing. Are they machine washable or stain-resistant?
- What is the shoe-buying budget? Is there a price limit? Who pays for extra costs, how, and when?

Roslyn Duffy is the co-author with Elizabeth Crary of *The Parent’s Report Card* (Parenting Press) and co-author with Jane Nelsen and Cheryl Erwin of *Positive Discipline for Preschoolers* and *Positive Discipline: the First Three Years* (Prima Press). Roslyn, a 17-year veteran director of a child care program in Seattle, Washington, lectures and teaches classes for both parents and teachers, and is a counselor in private practice. She has four children and one grandbaby.