



THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO FLAMENCO SHOES

Buying flamenco shoes can be such a hassle since you can't run to the local mall to find them. They're also very expensive, which makes them unattractive to new beginners. If you buy them online from Spain, there's a small chance they might not fit- then you either have to sell them or pay for return international shipping.

What makes a shoe a "flamenco shoe" is that it has a sturdy wooden heel, nails on the bottom of the toe and heel, a steel shank and steel toe, and for professional models, a hand-stitched sole. There are many options from material, heel style and height and models.

But rest assured, there IS a flamenco shoe option for you! Read on!!

FOR NEW BEGINNERS

New beginners should not start with professional model shoes unless you have the extra money to burn! “Beginner flamenco” shoes have a lesser quality of leather and the nails on the heel and toe will be sparse- so you’ll need to smooth the nail heads out on pavement or else they will completely tear up the dance floor. But, they run from \$60-\$125, so it’s doable.

Before, searching online, try your LOCAL DANCE WEAR STORE. Please note, if you’re going to spend money on new shoes, DO NOT get *character shoes*. They don’t have the support that you will need when learning how to do footwork. Also, these shoes have to fit snugly on your feet. If there’s any extra room, you will slide within the shoe and be liable to injure yourself.

You can also look for “semi-professional” flamenco shoes online and those will be better quality than the ones you buy at local dance wear stores.

FOR DANCERS WITH THE FLAMENCO BUG

If you’re ready to upgrade your shoes and you’re committing to flamenco for a longer period of time, then go straight to buying a “real” pair of flamenco shoes.

There are “semi-professional” models which are very good, but you might as well pay the extra \$50-\$100 for a professional model. The quality of the leather is superior which makes the overall fit better— and more importantly, you’ll dance better.

Each dancer has a particular preference for a particular brand, depending on fabric or fit. Right now I’m into Senovilla but I also love Gallardo and Begoña Cervera. I wish I could try them all!

MATERIAL

Choices are leather, suede, patent leather and sometimes a fancy fabric. **Leather is the best** because it’s the most durable. **Suede** is good as it “breaks” in faster, but then it also tends to wear faster as well. You’ll need to get a 1/4 to 1/2 size bigger for **patent leather** since it doesn’t stretch (or breathe) at all. Leave that for a performance shoe. The same is true for any fancy fabric shoe since it’s less durable and may “shred,” so don’t use that as an everyday shoe.



≡ *Leather- Yes!* ≡



≡ *Fabric- For Shows!* ≡

HEEL

Heel height and style are important, but also very individual. “**Tacón cubano**” would be the most sturdy, but not very sexy. “**Tacón normal** (or Standard or Clásico)” is the norm. The “**tacón carrete**” or “**garrucha**” are beautiful but might not be right for everyone as they tend to “feel” different when standing on them for some dancers, i.e. less stable.

The higher heels like 6cm were very fashionable about 15 years ago. But I’m glad that style went out since they were so difficult to dance in! Go for the standard size of 5 or 5.5 cm heel height. The 4cm is pretty standard for the “tacoón cubano” and more appropriate for dancers who need that extra help for balance.



MODEL

The sky is the limit for model design, but there are a few things to consider. **Stay away from elastic straps.** They’re ugly and they’ll wear out quickly.

Choose buckle closures instead of button ones because they are more sturdy (although I haven't seen button closures in ages). Stay away from designs that have open sides to make them look more like sandals or ballroom shoes. They don't have enough support and you'll be ripe for injury. I also do not recommend the styles that lace up the legs. You have to tie them super tight so they don't fall down- so you end up cutting off circulation!



≡ *Open Sides-
No!* ≡



≡ *No Elastic!* ≡

COLOR

Black is usually the best color to start off with. Then you'll probably get a red shoe because EVERY flamenco dancer needs a red shoe. Then you might get a beige shoe to match with everything else you have. Then, of course, there's pink, green, blue, leopard print...



≡ *Fancy Designs!* ≡



≡ *Fancy Prints!* ≡

FIT

This is the most important element of the shoe. **They need to fit like a glove or else you'll slip and slide within the shoe and your footwork will suffer AND you'll be prone to injury.** I recommend wearing no socks or hose because the sweat is important to work the leather and you need that proprioception, which means you need to feel inside the shoe. But I do have dancers that wear half socks that just cover their toes, which they say help with their bunions. However, if there's ANY space for you to slide, RETURN those shoes!

Also, if you have wide feet, get the extra wide shoes. But beware, some companies will instead of sending you an extra wide for the size you requested, will send you just a size up. This will fit your wide feet, but then it will be too long for your foot and you'll slide.

Look at their size chart to make sure your feet match their sizing (just in case there are any variables).

BE SURE TO UNDERSTAND THE RETURN POLICY!

RESOURCES

[Senovilla](#) – available locally at [Flamenco West](#) in Playa del Rey. They're known for the rosewood heel that makes a nice crisp sound. I've been ordering from John from Flamenco West for years because I've found the right style that works for my own little duck feet, which is a wide with box toe.

[Menkes](#) – A nice solid shoe with fantastic leather quality.

- Please note that the last time I tried to order a wide foot, these came in a half size larger. I've heard they have since corrected their sizing, but be sure to ask in advance about return policy or verify any special sizing you may have.
- They sell a good beginner model shoe available on [Amazon](#).

[Begoña Cervera](#) – available locally at Naranjita Studio in Anaheim. Their styles are usually on the fancy side. Beautiful.

- Please note that the last time I tried to order a wide foot, these came in a half size larger. It might not be that way for you, but be sure to ask in advance about return policy or verify any special sizing you may have.

[Arte FyL](#) – I have had a few pairs of their shoes that lasted me ten years!

[Gallardo](#) – This is one of the best brands with the quality of the leather and heel sound. I've had several pairs of these also that have lasted me for years.

[Don Flamenco](#) – I've never tried these, but I've heard only good things about the brand.

[Flamenco Export](#) – They sell different brands but also carry very reasonably priced “semi professional” shoes, that would be **good for beginners!**

[Luna Flamenca](#) – I haven't tried them, but a student has said, “I love La Luna, they suit my wide, high arched feet. I was lucky enough to be measured up in Spain for a perfect fit.”

[Zapatos de Baile Flamenco Roberto Garrudo](#) – They sell their own line of shoes as well as Garrardos and Begoña Cervera. Also, they carry a line of shoes featuring La Lupi and Matilde Coral.