businesscompanion
trading standards law explained

Labelling of footwear

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In this guide, the words 'must' or 'must not' are used where there is a legal requirement to do (or not do) something. The word 'should' is used where there is established legal guidance or best practice that is likely to help you avoid breaking the law.

This guidance is for England, Scotland and Wales

Footwear must be labelled with an indication - in the form of either pictograms (symbols) or words - of the main material from which the upper, lining and sock, and outer sole are made.

The label must be attached to at least one item of footwear per pair. It may also appear on the packaging.

The law

The Footwear (Indication of Composition) Labelling Regulations 1995 apply to footwear of all descriptions, ranging from simple sandals to thigh-length boots, with the exception of:

- second-hand or worn footwear
- protective footwear
- footwear containing asbestos
- footwear intended for use in play (for example, fancy dress) by children under 14

Responsibility for the labelling

It is the responsibility of the manufacturer or importer to ensure that footwear is correctly labelled and to supply accurate labels that are not misleading.

It is the responsibility of the retailer to ensure that the footwear they sell is labelled correctly, in accordance with the Regulations. It is therefore recommended that retailers have a system in place for checking footwear labelling before it goes on sale, and that these checks are recorded. Retailers can get information about the composition of footwear they sell from manufacturers or importers.

Labelling requirements

The label must state, in English or in a clear pictogram form, what material makes up 80% of the:

- surface area of the upper
- surface area of the lining and sock (this means the lining of the upper and the insole, which constitutes the inside of the footwear article)
- outer sole

Where multiple materials are used, the two main materials in the composition of the footwear must be stated.

The label must be attached to at least one item of footwear in each pair and may be affixed by way of printing, sticking, embossing or use of an attached label. It must be visible, securely attached and accessible. The label may also appear on the packaging, but it must be on the footwear itself.

If pictograms are used in a retail shop, then a notice must be displayed that explains to consumers what the symbols mean. The notice must be large enough so that the information can be seen and understood by consumers.

If pictogram labels are used where footwear is sold from a place consumers do not have access to (for example, mail order or internet sales), then the consumer must be clearly informed of the meaning of the pictograms used.

Pictograms for the parts of the footwear

Upper:



Lining and sock:



Outer sole:



Pictograms for the materials used in footwear composition

Leather:



Coated leather:



Textile:



Other materials:



Other legislation

If any misleading claims regarding footwear are made, there may also be breaches of the requirements of Part 4, Chapter 1 of the Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Act 2024 (DMCCA). Please see '[Protection from unfair trading (criminal law)]' for more information. For the time being, consumers' rights of redress are still covered by the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008 (CPRs); information on these rights can be found in '[Protection from unfair trading (consumers' rights of redress)]'.

Trading Standards

For more information on the work of Trading Standards services - and the possible consequences of not abiding by the law - please see '[Trading Standards: powers, enforcement and penalties]'.

In this update

Changes made to reflect the coming into force of the Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Act 2024 (Part 4, Chapter 1: 'Protection from unfair trading').

Last reviewed / updated: April 2025

Key legislation

- Footwear (Indication of Composition) Labelling Regulations 1995
- Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008
- Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Act 2024 (Part 4, Chapter 1)

Please note

This information is intended for guidance; only the courts can give an authoritative interpretation of the law.

The guide's 'Key legislation' links go to the legislation.gov.uk website. The site usually updates the legislation to include any amendments made to it. However, this is not always the case. Information on all changes made to legislation can be found by following the above links and clicking on the 'More Resources' tab.

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