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Insiders' Guide

Outside the London fashion shows in February 2013

Tip

Straps can be let out or modified with an elastic for more give and movement.

How to Make Your High Heels Comfortable

An Interview With David Mesquita

Mesquita is the co-owner of Leather Spa, a leather-goods repair service in New York City.

I know when there's been an 80-percent-off designer sale, because a flood of women come in with shoes that don't quite fit. Sometimes I can help them—and sometimes there's nothing I can do. Here's what works:

Try on at night. Your feet tend to swell over the course of the day, so shoes that are narrow in the morning are going to feel even tighter by the evening. If walking is uncomfortable in the shoe store, they're a lost cause.

Home stretch. If the shoes are snug, a shoe-stretch spray can help soften the leather or suede. Spray them inside and out, then wear the shoes wet. If they're still uncomfortable, bring them to a cobbler.

Create some space. For high heels, a cobbler can stretch the heel area to create more length, so your foot slides in and your toes aren't as pinched. Flats can be stretched both in length and width. Boots can be stretched up to half an inch to accommodate the calves, and if that's not enough, we can install an elastic gore to expand the area. Leather, suede, and fabric

all respond well to stretching, but patent leather doesn't.

Get a grip. When there's a little bit of rubbing in the heels, it's usually because the shoes are loose. Heel grips—little suede pieces that you glue in the backs of shoes—work well for that, but they're not going to help if the shoes are a half size too big.

Look inside your sole. If you're getting blisters, an inner sole can help the fit. Try leather ones—they're thinner and more durable than synthetic, and some are antibacterial. Heel inserts give you lift and shock absorption in flats (but don't use them in high heels; they'll pitch you too far forward), and leather inserts at the balls of the feet provide support, relieving pressure and reducing the impact of walking on pavement. —INTERVIEW BY LEXI NOVAK

Fit Model

Stylish heels that don't torture your feet are like celebrities who are down-to-earth: Many make the claim, but few actually deliver. The shoes in Paul Andrew's collection may be the rare exception. His pumps have the tapered heels and pointed toes of the season's best styles, plus a few hidden details that make them comfortable. First, he hides a layer of industrial padding along the sole. "When you stand in the shoe, you sink into this cushion that cups the ball of your foot and toes to give you support," says Andrew.

He also cuts all his shoes high in the back, so they hold the foot. As he says, "shoes can be elegant and sexy, but simultaneously wearable." —L. N.

Suede-and-satin pumps by Paul Andrew. Details, see Shopping Guide.

