

## Style

## ‘Do I have to go back into heels?’



Anna Berkeley

## Ask a stylist

**D**uring the pandemic, I have almost entirely rid my wardrobe of heels. This has worked fine except for evening events and weddings: my suits and dresses – especially the midi dresses – look terrible. Do you have any recommendations?

You are right, I'm afraid. Skirts and dresses really do look best with a heel. One often needs the lift and space that is achieved by elevating the foot and lengthening the leg. The key here is the heel height. I am not for one second advocating you jump straight back into a 100mm heel – that way torn tendons lie. What I recommend is a true mid heel. These are 50-65mm and I find that they are walkable for the majority of the day. Mid heels are a savvy choice and, if chosen carefully, there's no danger of looking frumpy.

First, though, it is vital to choose the correct heel for your frame size. If you don't match the shoe to your frame then the scale is all wrong and you can end up looking bigger than you are or out of proportion. I'm sure you've had that feeling that certain shoes don't work but you have no idea why? For me, as a large frame, I look ridiculous in a narrow stiletto. Once I realised that all I needed was some chunky shoe action, balance was restored.



Getty

Calf-length boots under a midi hem can also work really well. The trick is to ensure that the hem of the dress or skirt goes over the top edge of the boot. In my mind it has to be a pointed or, at the very least, almond-toed shape. This gives a smart, refined feel. If you go for a calf boot, make it a sock boot, or one that is tailored and closely fitted to the leg (try Khaite, £511 on

sale, net-a-porter.com, or Paris Texas, £505, matchesfashion.com).

Perfect for under maxis, midis, slim trousers, wide trousers... you name it. If you have great legs, then why not channel Lily Collins' oft-worn miniskirt and calf-boot combination, as seen in TV's guilty pleasure *Emily in Paris*? And taking a leaf out of Collins' book, don't stop at black. Blue, burgundy or metallic all add a bit of zing to any outfit. Wear blue with navy, black or cream. Team burgundy with blue, black, charcoal or pink. And metallic goes with absolutely everything –



From below left: Gucci mid-heel slingback with horsebit; Paris Texas slouchy leather boots; LK Bennett Daniela over-the-knee boot; Aquazzura Saint Honore 50 boot

no exceptions. Another poster girl for this look is Victoria Beckham, who endlessly blends matching – usually knee-high – boots with skirts and dresses. It's awfully flattering as it streamlines the figure, making you look taller and leaner (Stuart Weitzman makes a good flat pair, £750, net-a-porter.com; for a modest heel, see LK Bennett, £249 on sale, lkbenett.com).

And before you write to ask me if I have lost my mind recommending boots at this point in the season – it's cold well into March and boots can happily be worn into the spring. Just ensure you have some suede protector handy for those April showers.

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## Top cold-weather workout gear

Activewear | From the trail to the lake and in the park, the FT fashion team offer tried-and-tested tips

## Best picks for running

Lauren Indvik

Winter is a beautiful season for park running in north London: the paths are quiet, the light sharp, and I don't have to worry about my running companion – a one-and-a-half-year-old cockapoo named Piper – overheating. (She does, however, require more baths.)

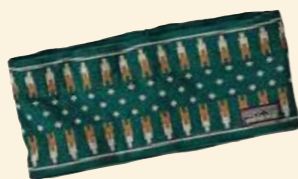
But dressing smartly for cold-weather exercise can be a challenge. Despite the boom in sports clothing over the past decade, the overlap between workout clothes that are functional and workout clothes that are good-looking remains slim. By default, I've ended up with a workout wardrobe of mostly Lululemon. The designs aren't thrilling, but the Canadian label's wicking and anti-microbial technology is excellent and not one piece has worn out after (in some cases) more than a decade of use. The seams, too, are in all the right places.

My latest addition to my running wardrobe has been a Patagonia knit headband which, besides keeping my ears from smarting, has a Fairisle-esque pattern I really like. Pictured right and below are my other essentials:

► **Nike Essentials running jacket**, on sale for £53, [prodirectrunning.com](http://prodirectrunning.com). Terrific on drizzly or moderately cold days, this lightweight, water-repellent jacket comes with handy pockets on the back and sides for keys and gloves



◀ **Uniqlo ultralight down vest**, £40, [uniqlo.co.uk](http://uniqlo.co.uk). Although not designed for exercise, this ultralight down vest is a terrific lightweight layer for running, which I also use for hiking. The zipperless pockets are deep enough to stow house keys and a roll of dog bags



▲ **Patagonia Powder Town headband**, £30, [eu.patagonia.com](http://eu.patagonia.com). Designed to be tucked under a ski helmet, this super soft, 100 per cent recycled knit headband stays put and keeps my ears warm on long runs and hikes



▲ **Lululemon Run For It All gloves**, £25, [lululemon.co.uk](http://lululemon.co.uk). These soft, water-resistant, touchscreen-compatible gloves are wonderfully versatile – I wear them for running when temps go below freezing, and layer them under ski gloves on the slopes



▲ **Lululemon Swiftly Tech long sleeve shirt**, on sale at £49, [lululemon.co.uk](http://lululemon.co.uk). I have four of these stretchy knit shirts, which I like because they are thin but warm, and woven with “anti-microbial” thread that keeps them from smelling even after 10 years of use. They also get softer over time.

## Best picks for outdoor swimming

Carola Long

On a recent visit to the Kenwood Ladies' Pond on Hampstead Heath, I came across a pamphlet pinned to the noticeboard listing obscure words applicable to winter swimming. In addition to “apricity” (the warmth of the sun in winter) and “psithurism” (the sound of rustling leaves) was “kalopsia”. Apparently neither widely used nor deemed acceptable in Scrabble, the word's definitions vary, but run along the lines of “the state in which everything and everyone looks beautiful” (even if they are not).

This is the state of being after a cold winter swim: the ultimate natural high. Mist is mistier. Birdsong is more melodious. Life feels beautiful. I feel beautiful, as I emerge from the toad-green water with a few damp leaves stuck to my goose-pimpled legs, but I don't look it. My skin goes red, my lips a bit blue, I have woolly hat-hair. But I really don't care.

For me, winter swimming is the antithesis of the kind of narcissistic gym culture where you exercise in front of a mirror to admire your 12-pack. Practicality is queen. I don't wear a wetsuit as it dampens the buzz but I do favour wetsuit gloves, and occasionally neoprene or yulex socks.

For afterwards, a towel poncho that you can get changed underneath is handy. In addition to a woolly hat, cashmere gloves and an old puffer, I love a thin merino base layer. And then there's the oldest trick in the keeping warm playbook: a flask of tea.



◀ **Patagonia R2 Yulex gloves**, £50, [eu.patagonia.com](http://eu.patagonia.com). Patagonia's wetsuit gloves are made from 85 per cent Yulex and 15 per cent synthetic rubber, making them a more environmentally responsible choice than conventional neoprene

► **Sloactive leotard**, £260, [sloactive.com](http://sloactive.com). I feel quite ‘secret agent on an underwater mission’ in this slick Yulex number



◀ **Towel Dryrobe**, £50, [dryrobe.com](http://dryrobe.com). A Dryrobe provides protection from winter air when you emerge from the water

► **Sweaty Betty springboard swimsuit**, £60, [sweatybetty.com](http://sweatybetty.com). The choice of swimsuits in winter is minimal, and even less have decent bust support. This stylish and practical option is made from recycled nylon

◀ **Bombas colorblock merino socks**, £21, [bombas.co.uk](http://bombas.co.uk). Thick socks are a must when your feet feel like ice sculptures. Bombas' are warm, stretchy and don't bunch up

► **Cos merino turtleneck**, £45, [cosstores.com](http://cosstores.com). A merino piece provides extra warmth after a dip and doesn't cause that clammy feeling synthetic versions create



▲ **AYBL motion seamless long sleeve crop top**, £27, [eu.beaybl.com](http://eu.beaybl.com). This long-sleeve crop top is the perfect garment to layer between a sports bra and a T-shirt when temperatures fall below 10C. It's so comfortable that it gives the impression of not being there at all



► **Nike sportswear tech fleece**, £100, [nike.com](http://nike.com). I use this men's soft hoodie as a cosy jacket when it doesn't rain, zipped up over my long-sleeve top, T-shirt and sweatshirt combo. However, it does restrict movement, so I wear it for warming up and shed it for the actual workout



▲ **Pangaia high neck sweatshirt**, £120, [thepangaia.com](http://thepangaia.com). Kick-boxing means using your upper body as much as your lower body. A slightly oversized, soft sweatshirt is the best option to comfortably throw hooks and uppercuts while locking in warmth. The orchid purple colour brightens up my usual black and grey ensembles

▲ **Jaxjox metal skipping rope**, £16, [sportsdirect.com](http://sportsdirect.com). When everything else fails, skipping is the fastest way to regain some warmth. Jaxjox's light and adjustable option can be squeezed into any bag

