The Screw Shoe

For Running on Packed Snow and Ice!

By Matt Carpenter
www.skyrunner.com

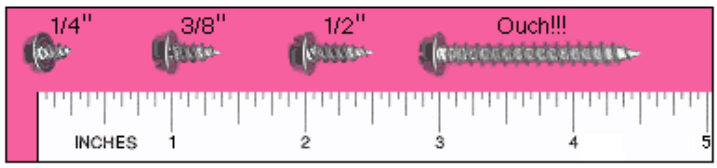
Introduction

Do you run on packed snow and ice? Are you tired of slipping and falling? The **Screw Shoe** is one solution to the problem! By inserting some screws into the bottom of your shoes you will be able to run in the worst conditions. The process is quick, easy and costs next to nothing:-)

I did not invent this concept—it is something that has been passed around from runner to runner. My goal is just to show you how easy it is to make your own **Screw Shoes.**

Selecting Screws

Sheet metal screws with hex heads are awesome because the head on them has a lip that really grips well on ice. This is important because the screws are inserted from the outside into the bottom of the shoe and it is the head of the screw that provides the traction—not the point! #8 1/2" long screws work fine in most shoes because they do not go through the shoe yet they are long enough that they don't come out too easily. #8 3/8" screws might be a little safer in the fronts of some shoes. If you have a very thin shoe, or you are just paranoid about how thin the front of your shoe looks, then you can use #6 1/4" long screws. However, they are harder to find and they come out rather easily. No matter what, **do not use the screw pictured below right!!!**



Where to Buy

Most hardware stores have hex head sheet metal screws. However, if you can't find them in your area I recommend:
Amazon.com - 100 pack of #8 3/8" Sheet Metal Screws - Good for thinner shoes
Amazon.com - 100 pack of #8 1/2" Sheet Metal Screws - Good for most shoes

Tools

A screwdriver will work but the "fun factor" disappears after about two screws. Further, using a screwdriver to start a screw into rubber may have you using your entire four-letter-word vocabulary!!! A ratchet screwdriver with a 1/4" socket will at least ease the task of starting the screws.

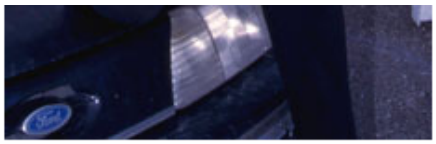
A cordless drill with a magnetic tip and a 1/4" socket can do a shoe in less than a minute and makes the project almost fun! A neat trick here is that most magnetic tips are 1/4" so you won't even need to track down the 1/4" socket. This setup is so slick it may be worth a trip to the neighbors to borrow theirs if you don't have one. Or, since most shoe screwing is done in the winter, this could be the perfect x-mas gift for that special crazy runner!

However you go about it, do not over tighten the screws! Stop screwing when the head of the screw touches the rubber so it will stay in longer. I have also heard the claim that pre-drilling a small pilot hole for the screw will help it stay in longer. I tested this theory by pre-drilling one shoe and not the other. Both sets of screws seemed to stay in equally well and the occasional screw that did come out did so randomly from either shoe so I really don't think this step is worth the extra effort. Now one could argue that pre-drilling would make starting the screws with a screwdriver easier but I would question why anyone who has access to a drill would not simply use it to insert the screws!?

Screw Placement

Pretty much anything goes unless you have "air" or "gel" shoes in which case you will need to be more selective when placing the screws. I have 18 screws in each shoe just because someone else had 17. They had 17 just because someone else had 16, etc. The shoe on the right is my wife Yvonne's. She has 19—we runners are a competitive lot! As you can see she placed the screws **on the treads** because placing screws in-between them would be pointless. If you look closely you can see the lip on the screw that was referred to above.

For me the screws in the heel are more important than the ones in the front because I hate falling on my butt when coming down a hill. On really nasty days the Incline Club has been known to bring a box full of screws and a cordless drill to the club runs. The assembly line looks something like this:



Conclusion

That is all there is to the **Screw Shoe**! I use them mostly in the spring when the warmer days melt the snow and then the water turns to ice during the colder nights. This seems to happen a lot on trails that get a lot of use like the Barr Trail on Pikes Peak. Others use them all winter long on ice covered roads.

Oh, speaking of roads, I usually have to run a mile or so on the roads to get to/from the trails. Other than a hearing a "click, click, click" **Screw Shoes** work just fine on roads. Yes, it does wear the screw heads out a little faster but again, the screws are cheap:-)

Once winter is over you will not need to buy new shoes because you can just remove the screws. Unless of course you put a bunch of miles on your **Screw Shoes**—they wear out just like all running shoes!

Happy screwing and running:-)