RUCKING GEAR

F3 Wichita community gear guide

Footwear socks packs and foot preparation

New to rucking or refining your setup? This guide brings together F3 Wichita members' experience with footwear, socks and packs. Rucking means walking with a weighted pack; the right gear depends on your feet and the outing.

START HERE

Fit leads the decision

MACV boots and low-cut Altras both have enthusiastic users. Wool socks appear in many setups. Think about fit first, then weigh terrain, drainage, underfoot feel and wear under load.

01 **Compare the whole setup**

Try footwear with the sock combination you plan to wear. Layers and room for swelling affect how a pair feels.

02 **Match the gear to the outing**

A long hike, a wet event and a routine ruck can place different demands on footwear and packs.

03 **Use member experience as a starting point**

A setup that works well for one person may feel different on your feet. There is no single best shoe for everyone.

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01 COMPARE THE OPTIONS

Boots shoes and tradeoffs

Member-tested setups to consider, with the reasons people like them and the cautions they raised.

FOOTWEAR	WHO USES IT AND WHY	TRADEOFF OR CONTEXT
GORUCK MACV2	**Bidet** is on his second pair. His go-to boots: comfortable, light, stable and runnable.	He reports that they drain water rather than being waterproof, and notes that some people do not like them.
GORUCK MACV1 and MACV	**Master Beaker** uses MACV1. **Pringles** favors MACVs and a firm platform for rucking.	Master Beaker prefers a half-size increase for rucking. Pringles did not specify a MACV generation.
Altra Lone Peak	**Sweetheart** likes Lone Peaks for running. **Trike** rucks in the **9+** and likes its zero-drop shape and roomy toe box.	Trike reports faster midsole wear under heavy loads than with hiking boots. His fit preference and durability caution both matter.
Altra Olympus	**Sweetheart** wore Olympus throughout Disruptor and prefers low-cut shoes for long hikes.	He describes Olympus as thicker and more supportive for hikes with more terrain. His preference is based on his own fit and use.
GORUCK Ballistic Trainers	**Mariachi** likes his Mid-Tops' soles and wore them at Disruptor. **Pringles** ranks Ballistic Trainers second to MACVs.	Mariachi cautions about ankle support and ties his view to the group's typically less-uneven terrain.
Ariat Terrain Hiking Boots	**Rex Kwon Do** uses these for heavier hiking and rucking, with socks suited to the situation.	His horseback-riding background influences his preference. This is a personal setup rather than a head-to-head product test.
KEEN Footwear	**NotACop** wears KEEN footwear with Dickies merino wool socks.	The exact model is unspecified, so this is a brand-and-sock combination to explore rather than a particular model recommendation.

These are members' experiences with their own pairs. Comfort, stability and durability are different questions. Check the exact model, current product details and fit before buying.

02 FIND YOUR OWN BALANCE

Comfort firmness and heel drop

The discussion behind the recommendations: what to compare before a long ruck.

A new long-distance option

Unhinged favors **Altra Experience Wild 3+** for longer rucks after trying GORUCK, Topo, Brooks, Flux and Lems. He likes its firm but comfortable feel; GORUCK boots and shoes have not worked for him at longer distances. Altra lists this model with a **4 mm heel-to-toe drop**. This adds another personal experience alongside the boot users on page 2.

Firmness and cushion are different questions

Unhinged prefers a firmer, stable platform under the extra load of a ruck, while still allowing comfortable foot movement. He finds very firm footwear can feel harsh over time and very soft footwear can feel less stable. Compare comfort and steadiness in your own setup; boots, trail shoes and cushioning labels alone do not settle the choice.

Understand the drop without treating it as a rule

Heel-to-toe drop is the height difference between the heel and forefoot. Zero drop does not by itself mean a shoe is minimalist or uncushioned. Unhinged suggests comparing roughly **4-8 mm** for long outings and reports that higher-drop shoes feel harder on his knees. That is his experience, not an ideal range or a knee/hip-load prediction for everyone.

Consider the foot and ankle inside the shoe

Unhinged emphasizes foot/ankle strength and mobility, footwear history and individual movement. He varies his footwear on short rucks, but keeps Experience Wilds for longer ones. His rotation is a personal practice, not a training prescription. For pain, recurring blisters or an unfamiliar minimalist setup, ask a qualified clinician or trainer for individual guidance.

Questions to take to a fitting

Is it comfortable right away? Does it feel steady with my pack? Can my toes move in my intended socks? How does it feel as distance increases? Change an unfamiliar setup gradually before a long event.

Product check: Altra Experience Wild 3+ specifications. Fit and gradual minimalist-transition guidance: AAOS Athletic Shoes. Running-shoe guidance is context, not a rucking-specific comparison. Checked October 12, 2026.

03 BUILD THE WHOLE SETUP

Socks and room matter

Wool socks recur across the group, often paired with extra space or toe-specific layers.

Toe layers

CBD wears toe socks under wool socks. **Bidet** adds toe-sock liners under wool compression socks for long distances and major events.

Sock room

Sweetheart wears two pairs of wool socks on long rucks and values the space in his Altras for those layers and swelling.

Sock options members use

NotACop: Dickies merino wool. **Trike:** Injinji trail runner socks. **Pringles:** Darn Tough hiking socks and Smartwool. **Master Beaker:** wool socks with his footwear. Trike did not describe layering his Injinjis.

Another wool option, with room for the toes

Unhinged likes Costco-brand **Kirkland Signature merino wool blend socks**; his shared Amazon listing is linked here. He emphasizes avoiding socks that squeeze the toes together. Compare sock thickness, layers and toe room in the shoe as a whole, along with comfort and friction.

A half size is a preference to try

CBD and Master Beaker say a half-size increase works for their rucking setups. Sweetheart separately values room for layers and swelling. Use those experiences as try-on cues, not a rule to apply to every brand or foot.

Consider the feel under weight

CBD values consistent, stable landings when carrying weight and has found some shoes less predictable under load. Pringles prefers a firm platform. Unhinged adds that comfort and stability must work together. The useful question is how the whole setup feels to you.

Try on the combination you will actually wear

Bring your intended socks. Compare a boot and a low-cut option if you are undecided. Look for room for layers and moving toes, and a secure heel. Make drainage, terrain and expected wear part of the decision.

Drummer Boy raised questions about cushion, knee comfort, long distances and sock fit. Those are useful fitting questions; members' gear experiences and taping anecdotes do not establish a blister-treatment or medical protocol.

04 PRACTICE THE BASICS

Prepare the feet inside the shoes

A few simple movements from the video to explore before longer rucks.

Toe spacers | 00:53

The video demonstrates Yoga Toes-style spacers while sitting or relaxing at home. The suggested starting point is **10-15 minutes, a couple of times a week**. Build tolerance gradually; spacers complement the movement work below.

Gentle foot wringing | 02:03

Place one hand around the forefoot and the other around the midfoot; gently rotate them in opposite directions, like wringing a cloth. Then work between the heel and midfoot. The video suggests **about one minute per foot, a couple of times a week**.

Toe and arch contractions | 03:31

Explore a gentle toe curl, then slowly contract the underside of the foot. **Hold for a 3-5 count and release**. If a full curl is difficult, the video offers a small toe bend against light hand resistance. Build the range and effort slowly.

Slow ankle circles | 05:30

Move the ankle in both directions with control. Notice the parts of the circle that are difficult to reach, without forcing them. The easy hands-on and movement work together can be a **3-5 minute session, a couple of times a week**.

Begin with what is manageable

For very stiff feet, the video suggests staying with the easy hands-on movements for a couple of weeks before trying the more demanding positions on page 6. These are examples to adapt, rather than a fixed routine for every PAX.

Watch: Train Feet and Ankles for Rucking
Video shared by Unhinged. The notes on pages 5-6 summarize its English transcript; timestamps point to the demonstrations.

05 PROGRESS WITH CONTROL

Build range then add strength

Optional progressions and a calf-strength example from the same demonstration.

Kneeling mobility progressions | 06:08

The video moves from a kneeling sit-back with the **tops of the feet down** to a **toes-tucked-under** position with gentle rocking and a light toe press into the floor (08:20). A later option is a toe-supported squat with small forward-and-back ankle movements (09:50). Use a pad, towels or a wider stance as demonstrated; begin with brief, comfortable exposures.

Bent-knee calf raises | 11:55

The strength segment emphasizes the soleus, one of the calf muscles, using a bent-knee calf raise with dumbbells or a gym calf machine. Raise the heel, then **lower over 3-4 seconds**. Watch the demonstration for the position and setup before adding weight.

The video's example training target

5-8 reps per set | Build toward 3-4 sets | About twice a week
The speaker describes a target effort of 7-8 out of 10. Work up gradually; that effort is not a starting requirement, and the video gives no individual assessment.

Let comfort guide the progression

Come out of a position that causes pain, cramping or increasing tingling. Reduce the range, pressure or time rather than forcing the movement. For pain during exercise or uncertainty about a movement, ask a doctor or physical therapist for individual guidance.

Individual exercise guidance: AAOS Foot and Ankle Conditioning Program.

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06 PUT THE SETUP TO WORK

Pack care and next steps

Past Disruptor experience offers useful context for what a ruck may encounter at an event.

Flenderson's experience

He loaned both of his rucks for a full Disruptor event. After a good wash, he reported neither was worse for wear and was willing to loan both again.

Bidet's experience

His GORUCK packs have been through multiple events. He hoses them down and scrubs with a brush, reporting that they came out no worse for wear.

Expect outdoor use and confirm the details

Flenderson and Bidet described packs getting wet, muddy and dirty. They distinguished that use from deliberate abuse such as dragging packs across concrete or launching them. Confirm the expectations for your event and decide whether to use or loan your own pack.

Follow the care guidance for your pack

Bidet limited his cleaning experience to GORUCK. His hose-and-brush routine is not an instruction for every material or brand. Follow your pack maker's care instructions and check applicable warranty terms rather than assuming every pack has the same coverage.

Training programs to investigate

Trike raised Mountain Tactical Institute as an option for ruck and sandbag plans. **Unhinged** suggested the separate MTNTOUGH program. These were leads to explore, not endorsements based on completing and comparing both programs.

NotACop liked a workout he adapted for a sandbag beatdown around the Flatland Games. **Trike** found his first Sandbag 2.0 workout challenging. Those experiences support exploring structured sandbag work, but do not establish long-term results or identify a single recommended provider.

Choose your next step deliberately

Use this guide to narrow gear choices and questions to ask. It does not prescribe a starting load, pack size, hydration plan or training progression. Individual fit and experience remain central.