

I've Got My New Shoes On

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Back in May, my sons were in need of new shoes, and, I must admit, I had been putting it off. I was hoping against hope that the canvas sneakers I picked up for them in London on a solo trip over there in April would stay the course until our summer break when we would be back in the land of less expensive and — crucially — expertly fitted footwear. What's that you say? Muscovite children wear shoes, too, and amazingly, they even fit? That fact is obviously true, but based on our experiences shoe shopping in Moscow, for the life of me I can't work out how.

Eventually we faced reality and went out to buy the boys trainers and day-to-day footwear, setting off one Saturday for a shopping mall where we knew there were kids' shoe shops aplenty. I drove, and the boys and husband went by tram (a special treat for my tram-crazy younger son), and as any Moscow resident will not be surprised to learn, the tram got there first.

My husband at this point made a beginner's mistake and decided to take matters into his own hands — re: the shoes ("What's that stupid woman making such a fuss about? I shall buy both

my sons shoes before she even gets here and demonstrate to her how easy it is!"), and he and the boys went on up to the largest kids' clothing store.

They stood around in the well-stocked shoe section being ignored for a few minutes until my husband took matters into his own hands and asked an assistant for help. This is the conversation that ensued.

Husband: "Can you help me, please?"

Store Lady (sigh): "Yes. What do you want..." (sigh)

Husband: "We would like to buy some shoes."

Store Lady looked blankly at my husband, and then with an all-encompassing gesture swept her arms around her and said: "Shooooeees."

Husband (somewhat taken aback): "Yes, I can see they're shoes, but I'm not quite sure what size my sons take, so can you help us with that please?"

Store Lady (sigh): "OK."

She looked at my sons' feet and started pulling out boxes.

Husband: "Hang on. Can you measure their feet first, please?"

Boy #2 sat down and began to pull his shoes off. Store Lady picked up the first boot from the floor and checked underneath for the size.

Husband: "No, I don't want you to check these shoes. I want to know what size his feet are now. Can you measure them, please?"

Store Lady picked up Boy #2's foot and looked at it. "I would say..."

Husband: "No, I would like you to measure them. Can you do that please?"

Store Lady (sigh). "No, we don't do that. Just try a few pairs on until you get some the right size."

At this stage my husband turned and swept grandly out of the store, trailed by two boys asking loudly when they were going to get new trainers in tow.

Moscow traffic being what it was, I still had not arrived, so they moved next door, which also sold children's shoes. And then, after repeating the whole sorry process, they stomped out of that shop, too. By the time I finally got there, they were in Store #3, and this time when the assistant — upon being asked to measure the boys' feet — pulled out a dressmaker's tape measure, both I and my husband kept quiet and counted ourselves lucky.

And guess what? They fit.

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