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
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Flipping for flip flops

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Aly Walansky



Every winter, I schlep around in boots, working my way through the slush. The second those first rays of sunshine start popping out, though, I'm pulling out the flip-flops. In a world of uncomfortably tight jeans, wired bras and painful beauty procedures, who would have thought that something so casual and inexpensive would become so... cool?

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"Flip flops are baaaaack -- not that they ever went anywhere," says April Masini, the brains behind [askapril.com](#). "This summer, flip flops are big news as a trend. They can be found for men, women, children and teens in every machination -- from rubber dime store pairs to \$500 leather designer knock ups of the old pool standard."

Why we flip for these shoes

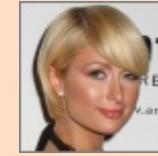
But just what is it that makes these simple shoes so special? "It's because they are extremely comfortable and very affordable," says Cela Weiner, owner of [Sylene of Washington](#), who carries a line of very stylish and trendy flip flops. She also pegs their versatility as another big bonus. "You can change the feel of your outfit for under \$25 if you want. They're a great way to show your individuality and fashion sense."



While Weiner says that all styles are popular, she notes that basic, inexpensive shoes like Havaianas (Portuguese for "Hawaiians") especially so. "Most of our clients buy several pairs. We carry them from Cold Nose Couture, and they are fun with different types of bows on them," she says. (See them above.) "You can be preppy or more flamboyant."

Eileen Lewis, director of fashion strategy at online shoe store [Zappos.com](#), believes that the popularity of flip-flops is due to the endless possibilities for wear and adornment -- including jewels, heels and embroidery. She says that their versatility and popularity exists year-round. Put simply, "They are a fashion statement, and fashion doesn't

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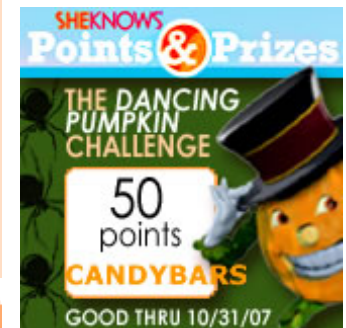
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The heel deal





Of course flip flops don't always have to be flat -- and you'll see that a little heel does wonders when it comes to wearing these shoes out and about (for something other than a grocery store run). Here are six we liked from Endless.com.



1. Rampage Women's Vanessa Wedge Thong in pink (around \$29.95)
2. Volatile Women's Tiffany Thong in black (around \$42.95)
3. Not Rated Women's Spring Chicken Platform Thong in red (around \$29.95)
4. Charles by Charles David Women's Chazzi Thong in Red (around \$49.95)
5. Matisse Women's Jester Wedge Thong Sandal in Bronze (around \$59.95)
6. Rampage Women's Vanessa Wedge Thong in black (around \$29.95)


A quick how-to guide

Yes, there are actually a few basic guidelines for wearing even (well, especially) the most casual of flip flops. April Masini offers these tips:

-  Don't wear inexpensive rubber flip flops to a meeting or a party. Keep the cheapies for the backyard (or the beach).
-  Do wear leather flip flops in lieu of the cheap-o ones with your summer dress, trousers or shorts.
-  Get a pedicure! Pedicures are a "must" for summer, and a "should" for year-round. Also, *never* wear any open-toed shoes until your feet are neatly groomed. ([Here are some tips for giving yourself a perfect pedi at home!](#))
-  Maintain your pedicure between appointments with a pumice stone and some good foot products, and get a tootsie check-up with a

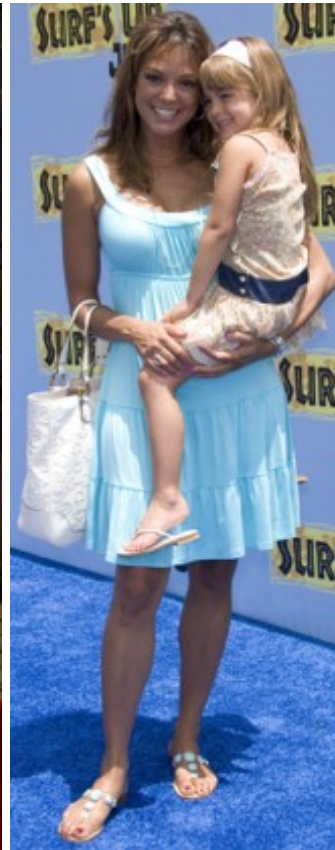
podiatrist annually.

 A little heel with your flip flops will give your leg a great look and give your outfit a dressier silhouette.

 Men can wear flip flops, but the same rules apply -- don't wear cheap rubber ones out and about. Get a good-quality pair of leather flip flops to dress up your shorts and jeans look.

All the rage

Probably every celebrity has at least one pair of flip flops at home, and some even wear them out in public. For instance, Drew Barrymore had hers on at the Coachella music festival, Emily Harper from *Passions* wore them during a recent press tour, and *CSI: Miami* star Eva LaRue Callahan and her daughter were spotted wearing theirs at a movie premiere.



The girl with Ipanema

One star is taking the trend a little further with her very own line of fancy flip flops. Supermodel Gisele Bundchen has designed a range of

shoes called Ipanema, which includes a "thong sandal" and a "thong basic."



Her collection features tribal imagery from Brazilian Indian legends on the insole (as you can see below), and sales help support a campaign to preserve the headwaters of the Xingu River (a major tributary of the Amazon) and the surrounding rainforest.

But Gisele is not just the designer -- or the face on the ads: she also otherwise oversees the product line. Her shoes are hugely popular

in her native Brazil -- and by "popular" we mean that they sell over *six million pairs* a year worldwide.

Unfortunately, Gisele Bündchen's Ipanema shoes are quite tough to find in the states. In fact, we could only find one online outlet to order them from: theshoppingchannel.com.

A trend... or something more?

So -- assuming you're not a celeb -- how do you choose the right flip flops to wear in the office, without looking out of place? Cyla Weiner cautions, "It depends on what you wear to the office. If you've got some flip flops with embellishment or surface interest, then yes, you can go from office to evening. Otherwise it is best to have a variety because the selection now is vast."

She says that wedge styles like those seen above are a rising trend, but the standard flats still fly off the shelves. "I most definitely think this is a trend that is here to stay," she says. "Every year, I see new vendors coming out with different twists."

Twisting and turning, flipping and flopping

The new twists this year are bold and hot.

For the hottest formal style, nothing can touch the gorgeous styles from [Charm and Luck](#). Jeweled, chic and summery, the rhinestone-adorned black style can easily be paired with your dress at the trendiest of lounges. And [Cold Nose](#)

[Couture's](#) frisky styles are boldly bowed and jeweled, yet tame enough to



wear even by day.

The embellished look is big among kids and tweens as well, and it can be fun to get them involved in the process. [Mugwaz](#) offers a do-it-yourself flip flop kit, allowing one to take a simple pink or black set and mark it up.

TIP: Though we call them flip flops in the USA, these shoes go by different names depending on where you live: Schlapfen (Austria), Beach sandals (Japan), Slippers (Hawaii), Jandals (New Zealand), Tsinelas (Philippines) and Slops (South Africa).

You can do it totally on your own, too -- just hit the local craft store and pick up some goodies so you can express your individuality -- think of everything from stencils to glitter to wacky stones to those weird colored puff-ball things. It's a unique fashion statement and a party idea, as well. I know what I'm talking about: My pink glittered pair is absolutely stylin'.



That Old Navy magic

"I was at Old Navy this weekend, and they have their flip flops on sale -- two pairs for five bucks. People were buying them by the handful," says Shannan Boyer, an account executive at Wordsworth Communications.

"The woman in front of me had 5 pairs of white and 5 pairs of pink in her hands, and said that she was going to stuff a gift bag with them for her college-aged daughter. I asked why she was buying so many in the same color, and she said it was because they get dirty pretty quickly and they have to throw them out. It was insane."

She adds, "Every single person in line while I was there had at least three pairs in their possession."

Why so many? A mother of four from California has one explanation. She says she usually buys three pairs of these inexpensive shoes for each of her kids -- each child has a different color. "Shoes inevitably go missing right as we're headed out the door," she says. "Having duplicates

increases the odds of finding a match, especially when we're in a rush," she says.

Smooth as suede

The Santa Barbara Knot Thong by [Sperry Top-Sider](#) is comfortable and easy-to-wear -- the sole can even be bent in half. (This rocks if you wish to fit your entire outfit into your gym bag.) They are super casual, but stylish enough that they fit in with daywear. Available in black, brown, natural and the red shown here.



Speaking of comfortable, Birkenstock has a line (called "gizeh") with many new styles -- and yes, that means something above and beyond the blah brown shoe that goes with the whole hippie era. Want proof that they're not just those 60s sandals? They have *black patent* faux-leather! There are many other colors available -- including pink, green and blue -- along with the usual earthy shades. The shoes are made of traditional leather, or you can get them in what they call Birko-Flor, a soft fabric with a smooth leather-like finish. (See the Pink Wash Birko-Flor and Antique Mango Leather flavors below.) Peace out, man!

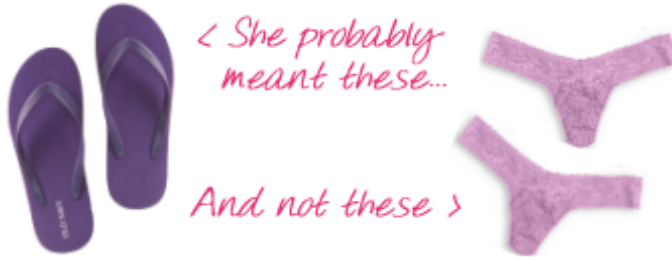
Step into some fun

Flip flops are fabulous fun for many. "A dear friend in Texas sent me a packet on a flip flop chain letter last year... I was furious but hated to break the chain," says Florida-based Terri Hartman of her own flipping good times.



"It was fabulous. I sent one pair -- their shoe size was included -- and forwarded my info to 10 people who moved 'down' on my list. I received fancy, simple, fun and elegant flip flops from all over the country... didn't matter if they were expensive or not," she says. "A favorite was from Fair Hope, Alabama. Never met the woman, but we had something in common!" (Party pooper time: In the United States, it is illegal to mail chain letters that request "something of value." [See more here.](#))

TIP: When your mom asked you for "a pair of purple thongs" for her birthday...



Yes, "thongs" are what past generations of Americans called flip flops. (The term is also still in use various places worldwide.) Confuse them at your peril!

Your party won't be a flop

If you're looking for something a little off the beaten path in terms of a gift idea, flip flops may indeed be your answer. Tom Bianco of [Wedding Favors To Go](#) says that his bride and groom honeymoon flip flops "sell like mad." These cute shoes have cutouts on the bottom, so as the happy couple goes strolling on the beach, they will be leaving an imprint in the sand saying "Just Married."

For a little gift or to go on top of a bigger package, liven up the day with something like a mini-flip-flop keychain, candle or necklace charm. [Oriental Trading](#) features a huge variety of festive flip-flop goodies -- including sticky notes, photo holders, erasers, sun catchers and the aforementioned keychains.

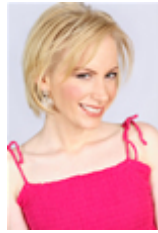


If you want something a little sweeter, well, traditional treats like gummy bears and jelly beans aren't the only treats out there! Check out these adorable edible party favors: [Chocolate Flip Flops](#) and [Flip Flop White Chocolate Lollipops](#).

Good to go -- and to stay

Now you know your options, put the spring back in your step and strap on some sassy flip flops of your very own! You may discover they don't leave your feet until autumn... if even then. ✿

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About this author: *Aly Walansky is an editor and writer based in New York City, where she lives with her family of three cats, a Shih Tsu and a Yorkie -- not to mention a few humans and a selection of music and flavored vodka. Check out her [web site](#) and her blog at sheknows.com/blogs/alytude/.*

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