

# City sneakers

Trend | Trainers are perfect for January – even in the office, says *Carola Long*.

Photographs by Sophie Elgort

January is traditionally the month when we convince ourselves that the key to attending 6am gym sessions is a bouncy new pair of Nike Air Max. Look down at people's feet and you'll see box-fresh trainers everywhere. And with sneakers now an established fashion trend, they're set to be more popular than ever in 2015.

Karl Lagerfeld heralded the trainer's elevation to high fashion when he teamed every Chanel couture look for spring/summer 2014 with sneakers in lace, tweed, sequins and metallic leather last January. And they continued their run on the catwalk at Dior: Raf Simons featured jewelled trainers as part of his couture collection, and the house launched the Dior Fusion sneaker



'I run around a lot for work and flats are essential. Trainers allow me to mix it up a bit'

"I've seen more trainers worn in a formal manner where people are in careers with a flexible dress code," she says – "although they have yet to break into the investment banker's wardrobe."

The appeal is obvious: not only are trainers comfortable, they can make a plain work outfit dynamic and modern. And Elgort's portraits show how to rock a trainer as part of a chic urban look. Courtney Dolan, vice-president of Chelsea Hotels, pairs oxblood Adidas with a blue Céline bag and black jumpsuit. "I needed to wear something easy, comfortable and stylish. The colour is dark enough so they feel more like a shoe versus a sporty white trainer."

So where are we going in terms of fashion trainers this season? Katherine Yoo of Shoescribe.com sees four themes emerging for women: "girlie colours" such as those by Adidas with Mary Katrantzou, "which give a feminine edge to traditional sneakers"; colour blocking statement sneakers with a strong colour palette and a sleek style; flower prints; and tomboy.

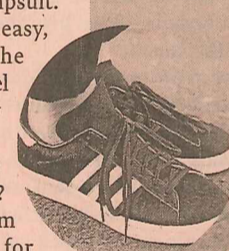
There are plenty of options to choose from. Valentino's retro lace-ups from its 1973 collection pick up on colour blocking and are mood-enhancing rainbows for your feet. Pierre Hardy has used summery watercolour-printed flowers and Robert Clergerie offers some great monochrome tomboy styles. Then there are Dior trainers in perforated nappa leather encrusted with little leather flowers for Cruise.

Prada, too, has running-style trainers featuring satin panels and costume jewels. And don't forget classics such as Adidas Stan Smiths, Gazelles and Nike Air Max and Air Force 1. In plain white.

There is one more critical factor to bear in mind. Your trainers must look new. Any hint that your shoes have set foot on a treadmill and this look won't work – especially not at work.

for autumn/winter 2014. But while the catwalk introduced the idea of the uptown trainer, the trend's subsequent popularity among professionals has seen its status elevated further: it is now common to see people wearing them to evening events and, more frequently, the office. The way we wear them has also changed: they look fresh with a suit, or a full leather skirt and chunky sweater. Sophie Elgort, the photographer behind the FT's street-style blog *Suits and the City*, has been observing the trend for a while.

'Wearing a cool sneaker is practical and fashionable. I love my New Balance trainers'



Clockwise from main: Courtney Dolan of Chelsea Hotels in Adidas trainers; fashion consultant Nneya Richards wears New Balance; Michael Schwartz of PR firm Karla Otto in Lanvin; Town & Country magazine's Craig Montague wears Common Projects

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**Suits and the City** on FT.com  
For regular streetstyle slideshows by Sophie Elgort go to [ft.com/suitsandthecity](http://ft.com/suitsandthecity)

Tracksuit by Sunspel

## The right

What happens when a staple of high-end designers...

The humble tracksuit, like a pair of jeans or a white T-shirt, is something most men turn to for comfort: like denim, it is grounded in function rather than fashion. Yet the athletic apparel has now become a staple for high-end designers.

It's a game of two halves: the traditional and the directional. On the traditional side are the likes of Thom Browne, Uniqlo and Abercrombie & Fitch, which flirt with the appeal of the college jock: a look captured by Abercrombie's homoerotic advertising campaign from photographer Bruce Weber and art director Sam Shahid.

On the opposing team are the directionalists: Rick Owens, Issey Miyake and traditional English brand Sunspel, which has subverted the point of the tracksuit by manufacturing it in grey cashmere (from £370) rather than cotton marl.

When Miyake launched his Homme Plissé line a year ago in Tokyo (and last season in Europe), he wanted to create something utilitarian, democratic and flattering but still futuristic and conceptual – a *pour homme* counterpart to his successful and easy-to-wear Pleats Please women's line. The machine-washable techno fabric of Homme Plissé has been heat-treated after sewing to maintain permanent pleats and is optimised to wick moisture from the skin to keep the body dry (from £250).

Miyake, who sells the new line at lower prices than his main line, says: "These can be worn for sport but also in your daily life." His point is echoed by Sunspel chief Nicholas Brooke: "It's not activewear. It's modern wear for a lifestyle where comfort is as rare a commodity as time."

Adidas engineered the tracksuit's first reboot in the 1980s, when it endorsed and created Run DMC's stage outfits (around the time of the rappers' *Tougher Than Leather* album) by taking the three-striped tracksuit and remodelling it in hide. As the lyrics boasted, you could "walk through concert doors, and roam all over coliseum floors".