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CHEAT SHEET

HOW TO CHOOSE A PROSTHETIC FOOT

Here is your quick reference sheet that you can take to your prosthetist/physical therapy appointment. The original blog available on my [website](#) has more in- depth descriptions and helpful links.

1. **Do your homework.** It starts by learning about the classifications of prosthetic feet. This will tell you what a particular prosthetic foot was designed to do. Once you know how the different prosthetic feet are classified and how to keep it straight, you will have the tools needed to really communicate your needs with your team. Not to worry! I have this [quick reference guide](#) you can take to your next prosthetist appointment!
2. **Make a list of activities that you do every day.** This encompasses everything from how you move around your house, how you access your bathroom/kitchen/backyard, and your hobbies (sewing/hiking/cooking)? What is required from you at work (desk job/contracting job/driving to meet clients at different locations)? I have created a [worksheet](#) for you to fill out to make it easy to keep track of everything. And yes, you should also take this to your next appointment!
3. **Once you've made a list of these activities, think about HOW you used to do them prior to your amputation.** Were you completely independent? Did you need a mobility aide such as a walker, wheelchair, crutches? There is a place on the [worksheet](#) to keep track of this.
4. **Write a list of your goals.** And don't be shy! You might start with the basics such as being able to move through your home with independence but then I want you to think about other goals such as getting back into the community. Do you want to be able to go to the grocery store? Church? Visiting friends/family? How do you want to negotiate your work environment? This is where a conversation with your Physical Therapist is absolutely crucial. While we do not have a crystal ball to help us predict the future, we will be able to reasonably predict what your future mobility will look like after proper gait training.
5. **Now it's time to take a trip to ye ole prosthetist clinic.** Bring your "Cheat Sheets" with you for quick reference as well as your list of goals and activities. Share this information with your Prosthetist to help them get a good picture of what you want from your new prosthetic foot.



6. **Now it's time for your Prosthetist to help you determine what classification of prosthetic foot will help you best accomplish your goals.** Don't worry if there is more than one foot category you find appealing! Your Prosthetist can then help you sift through all the cool names of prosthetic feet on the market and find which ones fit the criteria.
7. **If you and Prosthetist feel you need more options to explore and you really want a peek behind the curtain, ask to speak to your local sales representatives!** Each company will have sales reps that are assigned to the area where you live or where your prosthetist has his or her clinic. And they are experts in all these feet!
8. **So now that you've picked out 2 or maybe even 3 feet from different 1-2 manufacturers, it's time to introduce the trial programs.** All the big dogs out in the O&P industry have foot trial programs. They might be a little different in the criteria, but the basic idea is to allow you to take their foot home and trial it out in your daily life. A good Prosthetist won't bat an eyelash at doing this for you---they will want you to trial at least 2 feet and make sure you are getting the best fit possible.
9. **Once you have a trial foot, go forth and trial! This is again where the Physical Therapist is an important part of this process.** We will put your feet through the gauntlet (safely of course) and really test it out. Test this foot out in your home, work and community to see if it will be able to keep up with you!
10. **And now it is time for the final rose.** You have your objective criteria with the input you've received from your Prosthetist and Physical Therapist during this whole time. And you have your experience on how you felt when using the feet. Maybe you had an "aha love at first step" moment or maybe it took you some time to warm up to a particular foot. I've heard everything across the board. Make your decision carefully and don't forget to set up your Physical Therapy appointments to keep working on learning how to perfect your gait with your new foot!

Congratulations on your new foot!