

## Yesterday's Sandals, Today's Designer Flip Flops

When you're standing at the department store window, admiring that pair of lovely embellished flip flops or wondering if your favorite designer flip flops have gone on sale yet, do you ever stop and think about the origins of your favorite shoe style? The answer is probably "no," as for the most part you're likely thinking "oh wow, those are some sexy flip flops, I wonder if they'll go with the new dress I got last week." Very few people realize that this is one of the oldest styles of shoes known to man, and while that's probably not going to be a thought that occupies your mind for long, it is at least nice to acknowledge the history of an item that has lasted as long and evolved as much as the thong sandal.

The earliest historical depictions of flip flops can be found on ancient artifacts dating back to the early Egyptians. The sandals depicted in this imagery are more or less the flip flops we know today, only they aren't made out of the rubber and plastics that are commonly used now. Potentially the second shoe ever invented, the flip flop is a very simple design, a flat sole with two straps that come from the sides of the shoe to meet just offset of center, between the big toe and the second two, holding the shoe onto the front of the foot but allowing it to disengage from the open heel quite easily. It is supposedly the sound that is made from the shoe slapping up against the foot as a person walks in them that has gained them the name "flip flops."

Such shoes are still popular worldwide. They can be found in stylish variations on the feet of the rich and famous and they can be found in third world countries where they are probably the only kind of shoe most people own. Whether they are a sign of upward mobility (because you can actually afford a pair of shoes) or the cheapies that you buy for walks to the beach, it's a common thread across the globe. Of course, while Americans wear them to run errands or go to the beach, you will find that in many countries in which it is tradition to remove one's shoes at the door, flip flops are provided as footwear for using the bathroom. Not quite the same use, but useful nonetheless.

One very interesting use of flip flops that is more of a cultural phenomenon is as an indicator of fury during an argument or debate. This happens primarily in India, where these sandals are called chappals. It seems that whipping them off your feet during an argument is a manner of showing aggression towards your opponent and is most often simply a threat. It is not unheard of, however, for these shoes to be thrown or used as objects with which to hit someone. While this is a far more amusing use than an example about how many soldiers commonly carry flip flops with them to bathrooms to prevent the spread of fungus, it is probably no less useful. These shoes, be they rubber or leather, wood or synthetic fibers, are truly useful and have proven themselves to be so throughout the ages.

### About the Author

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