ANKLE STRAP FOR FLIP-FLOPS

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ABSTRACT
An ankle strap device secures a flip-flop or thong type of footwear onto the wearer’s foot. There are first and second thong strap portions that secure to left and right parts of the thong portion of the flip-flop, and an ankle strap portion is affixed to the first and second thong strap portions. The ankle strap passes around the secures to the ankle of the wearer. The thong portions can attach using hook-loop material, snaps closures, or buttons. The ankle strap portion can be formed of two straps that fasten together around the ankle, or can be a strap of an elastic material. Favorably the ankle strap portion can be decorated as an animal such as a mouse, cat, bear, etc., or can hold a watch. The thong strap portions can be joined together to help secure a high heel shoe or slipper.
ANKLE STRAP FOR FLIP-FLOPS

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

This invention concerns footwear, namely, open outdoor footwear known variously as flip-flops, beach shoes, toesies, or thongs, and which generally consist of a flat sole held loosely on the foot by a Y-shaped strap or thong. A forward stem of the thong rises from the sole and passes between the first (great) toe and the second toe, and the left and right parts of the thong strap continue over the wearer’s foot and are secured into the left and right edges of the sole. Some styles of sandals lack the stem, and have a thong strap passing over all the toes.

Unlike other footwear, flip-flops or thongs do not secure the heel or ankle, and this makes them prone to coming off the foot. Usually, the wearer has to dig his or her toes down into the sole to grip the flip-flop. It is also difficult to step backwards in flip-flops without them coming off the foot.

Flip-flops are especially popular with small children, who have a tendency to lose one of both of them while playing. Parents of small children have to keep replacing their children’s flip-flops because they keep losing them.

Other open style shoes, e.g., high-heel or spike-heel slippers, are often difficult to keep on one’s feet, especially on uneven terrain.

There has been a need for a simple, comfortable, inexpensive, yet attractive means to help keep flip-flops and other open-design shoes on the feet.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

This invention concerns a strap preferably of an elastic material, with left and right thong parts that secure to the left and right parts of the thong strap of the flip-flop, and an ankle strap, also preferably of an elastic material, that wraps around the ankle to secure the flip-flop or similar shoe to the foot.

In a preferred implementation, the left and right parts each have hook and loop material sewn on, so each part can secure to itself after passing around the thong strap. Alternatively, these can be secured by snap closures or a button with an eye or button hole. These two parts are joined, and this component then can pass from behind the wearer’s ankle to the shoe part(s). The ankle strap is sewn onto the thong strap component, and may also have complementary hook and loop material sewn or secured onto each end, so that the ankle strap can secure comfortably around the ankle. Alternatively, the ankle strap portion can be an elastic loop that the user can slip over the foot to fit snugly around the ankle.

Alternatively, the thong parts can meet in front of the ankle, and in that case the ankle strap can pass behind the ankle to secure the flip-flop to the foot.

Snaps or other fasteners can be substituted for the hook-and-loop (e.g., Velcro) material, if desired.

I have also found that the ankle strap provides a convenient place to mount a decoration or an article of a fun design, e.g., a toy animal head. For wear at night, a reflector can be easily secured to the ankle strap to increase the wearer’s visibility. A watch can be secured to the ankle strap, with the strap passing behind the watch strap pins. The ankle strap is a convenient place for a waterproof or water-resistant wrist watch when at the beach.

When these straps are used, the flip-flops remain on the feet, and it is not necessary to bear down with the toes. Also, children tend not to lose their flip-flops while playing.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWING

FIG. 1 and FIG. 2 are a perspective view and a top plan view of a typical, common flip-flop or thong.

FIG. 3 shows the flip-flop with my strap device secured to the left and right parts of the flip-flop thong strap.

FIG. 4 shows my strap device securing the flip-flop to the wearer’s foot.

FIG. 5 is a top view showing the parts of my strap device.

FIG. 6 shows a portion of the ankle strap component of my device.

FIG. 7 is a perspective view of my strap device, opened to show its parts.

FIG. 8 is a perspective view thereof shown compactly folded.

FIG. 9 is a perspective view of another embodiment with the ankle strap arranged to resemble or represent an animal.

FIG. 10 illustrates the ankle strap of my invention holding a watch.

FIG. 11 shows another embodiment, here with the thong straps having button closures.

FIG. 12 shows the ankle strap of this embodiment configured for use with high-heel slippers or shoes.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

FIGS. 1 and 2 illustrate a typical thong or flip-flop 10 with a sole 12 that may be of a thin, light-weight foam plastic material, and a thong 14. The thong 14 has a stem 16 that is secured in the forward part of the sole 12 and passes upward between the first and second toes of the wearer. The thong 14 continues from the top of the stem over the wearer’s foot to where it is secured to the edges of the sole. There is an outside thong strap portion 17 that extends over the foot at the side of the wearer’s small toe and an inside thong strap portion 18 that passes over the great toe side of the foot to the edge of the sole. The flip-flop itself has nothing securing it to the wearer’s heel or ankle.

As shown in FIGS. 3 and 4, one preferred implementation of the ankle strap device 20 of my invention has a thong strap portion 22 that passes around the inside flip-flop thong strap 17 and another similar thong strap portion 24 that passes around the outside flip-flop thong strap 18. These two portions can preferably be formed as a single strip of elastic web material or the like, and pass behind the ankle of the wearer. At that point they are joined, i.e., with a sewn seam, to an ankle strap portion 26, which wraps over the ankle so the flip flop is secured to the wearer’s ankle.

As shown in FIGS. 5 and 7, the two thong strap portions 22 and 24 are formed as a single length of material, attached by a sewn seam 25 to a center part of the ankle strap portion 26.

Hook and loop fastener material is affixed onto each of these parts, as shown, with the thong strap portions 22 and 24 each having hook material 30 sewn on the seam 28 attachment to the ankle strap, and with a length of loop material 32 sewn on near their free ends.

The ankle strap portion 26 has a right component 26A and a left component 26B, with hook-type material 30 at
the free end of the right component 26A and loop-type material 32 attached at the free end of the left component 26B.

An end portion of the component 26B of the ankle strap is shown in FIG. 6, and can be a ribbon or web material, with stretch or elastic capability, and with the loop material 32 sewn onto the end. When not in use, the ankle strap can be folded down compactly, as shown in FIG. 8.

The wearer can slip a decorative item, or reflector, or light onto the ankle strap 26 before securing it onto the ankle, or can secure such an item onto either one of the thong strap portions 22 or 24.

Rather than hook-and-loop fastener material, buttons, snaps or other mechanical fasteners can be used to secure the device to the thong straps 17, 18 and to the wearer’s ankle.

Other arrangements and embodiments of this invention are shown in FIGS. 9 to 12. FIG. 9 shows a version of the ankle strap 10 of this invention that includes an animal design as part of the ankle strap portion. Here the ankle strap portion is in the form of a closed elastic loop 126 and with a mouse figure incorporated into it, including a mouse head portion 40 at the front, mouse leg portions 42 at the sides, and a mouse tail portion 44 at the rear where the elastic loop 126 is joined to the thong strap portions 22 and 24. The mouse figure is but one example, and the animal design could represent any animal such as a bear, cat, dog, tiger, or even a bird or fish, or a robot or space alien.

FIG. 10 shows another version of the ankle strap 20 of my invention in which a watch 46 is attached onto the ankle strap portion 26. The strap portion passes beneath the pins or posts of the watch 46. Usually the watch can be favorably positioned at the front of the wearer’s ankle.

FIG. 11 shows another embodiment of my ankle strap 220, here with its ankle strap portion 226 in the form of an elastic loop with a decorative covering, and with decorative beads 50 and/or bangles hanging from its lower edge. As shown here, there are two thong strap portions 222 and 224, and in this case each has a button 52 and also has an associated button hole or eye 54 formed at the end of the respective strap portion. The strap portions 222 and 224 can be attached onto the flip-flop thong straps 17 and 18, as discussed in connection with the previous embodiments, with the buttons 52 secured in the respective button holes 54. Favorably, the buttons 52 are lock buttons.

The two thong strap portions 222 and 224 can also be buttoned together, with each button 52 going through the button hole 54 of the opposite strap portion to create a single loop. This loop can then be passed beneath the heel of a high-heeled shoe or slipper 210, as shown in FIG. 12. The ankle strap portion 226 fits snugly on the wearer’s ankle, and this arrangement helps keep the shoe 210 on the wearer’s foot, especially when walking on a sandy beach or other difficult terrain, and where the shoe may happen to have no strap or lacing of its own.

The above description has been written in terms of several preferred embodiments, but the invention should not be limited only to those embodiments, but rather should be defined in terms of the appended claims.

1. An ankle strap device for securing onto the wearer’s ankle a flip-flop or thong footwear having a thong portion adapted for passing over the wearer’s foot; the ankle strap device being non-integral with the flip-flop and comprising first and second thong strap portions that are adapted to pass over first and second parts of the thong portion of the flip-flop and are removable from attach to said first and second thong portions, respectively, to secure to the thong portion of the flip-flop, and an ankle strap portion that is affixed to the first and second thong strap portions and is configured to pass around and encircle the ankle of the wearer and to removably secure itself snugly around the ankle of the wearer.

2. The ankle strap device of claim 1 in which the ankle strap portion is formed of an elastic web or ribbon material.

3. The ankle strap device of claim 1 in which the first and second thong strap portions include hook and loop fastener material with complementary portions of hook and loop materials both affixed onto each of said first and second thong strap portions to secure to the respective thong portion of the flip-flop.

4. The ankle strap device of claim 1 in which the first and second thong strap portions each include a button fastener and a button eye, the button fastener and the button eye being positioned on the respective thong strap portion such that the first and second thong strap portions are adapted to loop over the respective first and second parts of the thong portion of the flip-flop for removably securing thereto.

5. The ankle strap device of claim 1 in which respective free ends of the ankle strap portion have affixed thereto complementary hook-and-loop attachment material.

6. The ankle strap device of claim 1 in which the ankle strap portion is formed as a closed loop of an elastic strap material, and is adapted to encircle the ankle of a wearer and fit snugly onto the wearer’s ankle.

7. The ankle strap device of claim 1 wherein said ankle strap portion has elements affixed thereto that resemble a head, a tail, and appendages of an animal.

8. The ankle strap device of claim 1 wherein the first and second thong strap portions are configured so as to join to one another to form a loop that is adapted to pass around and under a heel of a high-heeled slipper and is adapted to secure the slipper onto the wearer’s foot.

9. The ankle strap device of claim 3 wherein each of said first and second thong strap portions has an end thereof affixed to said ankle strap portion; and each of said first and second thong strap portions have affixed at a free end thereof a patch of one of the complementary components of said hook and loop material and affixed at a location between said one end and said free end a patch of the other of the complementary components of said hook and loop material.

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