
Selecting Hockey Equipment

(REFERENCE: USA Hockey Associate Level Manual - Handbook I 1995)

Selecting equipment that fits properly and properly protects the player is extremely important. Here are some guidelines to ensure proper fitting equipment for maximum protection and comfort.

Skaters Equipment (All IP kids, there are no goalies in IP)

1. **Helmet and Face Mask:** Obtain a helmet and mask that provides full facial protection which fits snugly on the head. All helmets and masks must be HECC certified.
2. **Shoulder Pads:** The cap of the pad should cover the shoulder. Straps under the arms should attach securely. The front flap should come down far enough to cover the collarbone.
3. **Elbow Pads:** The straps should remain tight, providing a snug fit over the elbow. Some pads have adjustable straps, some have only elastic straps. When straps become loose, the pad may slip off of the elbow, leaving it unprotected. There should be no space between shoulder pads, elbow pads, and the hockey gloves.
4. **Shin Pads:** The knee is a primary area of concern for protection. The pad should cover the knee when the leg is straight and when it is bent. Pads should bend just below the knee in order to conform to the bent leg.
5. **Ankle Guard:** Ankle guards are considered optional equipment. They are recommended, however, particularly for defensemen for puck protection. The protective part of the guard should cover the top five eyelets on the front of the skate and the inside and outside ankle bones.
6. **Gloves:** Gloves range in price from inexpensive to very expensive. They should have ample room for the fingers and thumb and must not be too snug in the wrist area. Be sure the cuff comes up far enough to adequately cover the wrist.
7. **Sticks:** Sticks come in different lies. The most common lie is a five or six for skaters and a 12 to 13 for goalies. Lie refers to the angle between the blade of the stick and the shaft. The smaller the angle, the higher the lie. When choosing a stick, the entire bottom portion of the blade should be on the ice when the player assumes a ready position. If just the heel of the stick is touching, try a lower lie. If just the toe is touching, try a higher lie. Stick length can be determined by placing the front, bottom edge of the stick on the ice between the skates. The top of the shaft should touch the player's face between the chin and the tip of the nose. It should touch closer to the nose if the player is wearing shoes, not skates.
8. **Pants:** Pants are usually six sizes larger than the normal waist size. The top padded portion of the pants should cover the hips, lower ribs, and kidneys. The legs should be an inch or two above the knees, overlapping with the top of the knee pads. The area above the knees is often hit by the puck, therefore, make sure there is no gap between the pants and knee pads. If a gap exists, loosen the suspenders and lower the pants or obtain others that fit appropriately.
9. **Skates:** Skates are the hockey player's most important piece of equipment. Without properly fitted skates, the young hockey player is at a tremendous disadvantage. Skates should not be bought several sizes too large so a player may "grow into them." Oversize skates will retard the skating development of the youngster. Skates should be slightly smaller (approximately one-half size) than the normal shoe size. They should fit snugly with just one pair of socks. Push the toes all the way to the front of the boot. At the heel area there should only be enough room for a pencil to fit between the heel and the back of the boot. When properly laced, players should not be able to lift their heels and their toes should be able to move. Rapidly growing youngsters may outgrow more than one pair of skates in a season. Look for good buys on used skates, but make sure they fit properly.
10. **Jock (Athletic Support):** Fitted according to waist size. It should fit snugly but not so tight as to be uncomfortable. The protective cups come in men's and boy's sizes.
11. **Sports Bra:** Any girls should wear a sports bra when participating in vigorous activity. Sized by chest width and cup size as with a regular bra.
12. **Female Shoulder Pads:** For female players, a combination shoulder and chest protector combines shoulder pads with extra protection in the breast area.

13. Mouth guard: Use of an internal mouth guard reduces the risk of a brain concussion (from a blow to the jaw) and minimizes chances of chipping teeth should the lower jaw be struck.
14. Neck Guard: Worn as protection from accidental cuts to the throat area.

Goalkeeper's Equipment

1. Goalkeeper's Pads: Are designed for blocking shots, and protecting the front and side of the goalkeepers legs. A properly fitted set of goalkeeper pads extend from the toe of the skate to about 4" above the knee. The large vertical roll is always on the outside of each leg. Goalkeeper's pads should always be left standing, so as to prevent flattening of the padding and "molding" as the pads dry out. The straps should be checked regularly for cuts or cracking, and replaced as needed. Any cuts in the leather of the pads should be repaired immediately.
2. Goalkeeper's Knee Pads: Can afford additional protection when the goalkeeper is in such a position that the goalie pads do not cover the knee area.
3. Goalkeeper's Athletic Support: Goal-keepers should wear the specially designed cup because of the extra padding and protection it provides.
4. Goalkeeper's Pants: Have several additional protective pieces, and the padding is heavier than in the regular pants. The inner section which protects the kidney, tail bone, groin, and waist area also is fitted with heavier weight padding and protection.
5. Belly Pad: Designed to protect the collar bone and the entire chest and abdominal areas. Ensure the pants are loose enough around the waist to allow the belly pad to tuck into the pants comfortably.
6. Goalkeeper's Shoulder and Arm Pads: Designed to protect the shoulder and the arms right to the wrists. Many goalkeepers adjust or add padding to their arms and the front of their shoulders to suit their individual preferences. Pads which are too small, not reaching the cuff of the glove, leave the forearm open to injury.
7. Catching Glove (Trapper): Has a heavily padded protective cuff, which should overlap the protection of the arm pad.
8. Blocker: Composed of a large protective fiber back pad which should not be warped thus exposing the fingers. The glove should be pliable for easy gripping of the stick.
9. Throat Protection: Is vitally important for the goalkeeper. Three types of throat protection are predominantly used - hanging shield (attached to the bottom of the face mask), hinge shield (attached to the helmet), collar (worn around the neck). While the collar does offer greater protection from accidental cuts to the throat area, it does not provide as much protection from impact by the puck (shots) or stick, as do the hinge or hanging shields.

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