

What is the Proper Fit for Skates?

Skates normally fit 1 to 1 1/2 sizes smaller than your street shoes. While wearing the sock that will be worn when skating, slip your foot into the skate, pressing the ends of the toes against the front of the skate. In this position, you should be able to place one finger between the inside of the boot and the heel of your foot.

Before lacing up, kick your heel back into the boot's heel. Snugly lace the first 3 eyelets, with the next 3 or 4 loosely laced to avoid constricting the arch area of the foot. The remaining eyelets should be snugly laced to optimize the energy transfer to the skate. Eyelets of the skates should be roughly 1 1/2" to 2" apart. If further apart, a wider boot would work better. If the eyelets are closer, look for a narrower boot. Some skate models have been designed to fit either narrow or wide feet.

Walk 10 to 15 minutes in the skates checking for comfort. Red areas or pressure points on your feet are signs of an improperly fitted skate.

Breaking in a new pair of skates takes longer than breaking in a used pair. A good, clean way to break in skates is to lace them up at home. Wear your skates while watching television, reading, or doing homework. Make sure to talk around in them and always wear your skate guards. This is also a good way for young skaters to strengthen their ankles.

Another way to break in skates is to take the liners out of the skates. Boil some water in a kettle. Place the skate boot over the steam for about five or ten minutes, then put the liner back in and have the child put the skate on. It will begin to mold to the foot.

Sharpening the Skates

Skates need to be sharpened regularly. The first time to do it is as soon as you buy them - new or used. If the blade of the skate starts to get uneven, or has picked up dings and dents, get them resharpened. The edges should be even and without nicks or gouges as you gently rub a finger across the edges. There'll be a little bit of drag against your skin. Once that feeling is gone, the skates need another sharpening. One sign of a lost edge is that the player is slipping and falling on turns or when trying to push off.

Skates need to be sharpened usually between six and eight hours of skating. Skates dull faster on outdoor ice. They will also dull more quickly if they are not kept covered by skate guards off the ice. They will also lose their edge if they rust so keep a small towel in the hockey bag to wipe the blades off after play.

General Equipment Tips

The screws on the helmet and fast mask will loosen from time to time, so check them periodically and keep a extra screwdriver in your hockey bag.

Socks used while playing hockey should be thin cotton.

Make sure you dry out equipment after using it, especially gloves to prolong their life and prevent the palms from cracking.

