

## Hockey Equipment Basics

**Hockey is a fantastic life-long sport. In order to play it safely and enjoy the experience players must have the proper equipment to protect the body and allow a full range of motion to perform the required physical skills.**

### Helmet



The hockey helmet is the single most important piece of equipment that you can put on your child.

- The most critical factor of the helmet is fit. Check to see if your child's helmet is adjusted correctly by placing the helmet on the child's head and have the child shake his or her head from side to side. If the child's head moves more than the helmet does, then the helmet is not tight enough. It has to fit snugly and not move around on the child's head. The helmet should not fall down over eyes during skating or slip up when facemask is pulled upwards.
- All screws should be present and tight.
- All straps and snaps are in good condition.
- The plastic shell should have no cracks.
- If the protective padding has grown hard, this helmet should be replaced.

### Mouthguard

Mouthguards help prevent concussions, injuries to the teeth, mouth and tongue. Mouthguards should be worn at all times.

- Mouthguards have to be replaced often and can be inexpensively purchased at any sporting goods store. Childrens' mouths grow, teeth are lost or grow in, and often children chew on the mouthguard.
- No player is allowed to play in a game without a mouthguard.
- Children with braces should obtain a mouthguard from their orthodontist.

### Body Gear



- Shoulder, elbow and knee joints should fit snugly into the protective cups of the pads.
- Straps should be tight enough that pads do not shift around as you skate or play.
- Fingers should have about 1/2" room to the tips of the gloves.
- Shin pads should protect lower shin but not too long to hamper ankle bend.
- Breezers should protect kidneys and overlap the shin pad knee cap by at least 2 inches.
- All straps should be fully attached and in working condition. Pick the lint off of velcro to assure good hold.
- None of the protective plastic should be broken or cracked.
- Glove palms should be free of holes. They will only get worse as season goes on.
- The belt or suspenders of your breezers should be in working condition.

## Hockey Stick

The hockey stick is an important tool for the player that should provide good maneuverability and allow ease of puck handling and control. In order to choose the proper stick there are several factors that should be taken into consideration.

- **Type**-Kids, beginners, and very part-time players can get by with wooden sticks.
- **Length**-A quick way to measure the length is to stand in your skates with the stick, the blunt end on the floor. The blade should come up to between your chin and nose. Without skates on the stick should come at least to your nose. Players often need to cut down the stick once purchased for a customized fit.
- **Curve**-Hockey sticks can have a left blade curve, right blade curve, or straight blade curve. Very young children will be best suited with a straight blade stick. Most youth sticks come with a minimal curve at most, but it is recommended to stay with the straight blade for beginners. Oftentimes young children haven't even determined if they will play left or right-handed. A curve will only impair this decision. A curve offers no assistance to very young novice players regardless.

- **Bottom** of the blade should be in good condition, no splintering of wood blade or undue wear on a composite.
- **Taping the stick**-Tape can help with puck control as well as extend the life of the blade. Overlap the tape such that the whole stick is covered, but is not too heavy. Some colors may be more preferential than others. Some players put tape residue on the shaft for increased grip.

## Skates



- **Sizing**-Hockey skates are generally sized an inch or two smaller than your regular shoes. The reason they are sized smaller is for ankle support and stability. If you get them bigger, you will have no support whatsoever and will have a better chance of falling. In addition, too much space for your foot to move about in a loose hockey skate may result in injury such as blisters and sprains. Kick your foot toward the toe of your skate. At most, you should only be able to slide one finger behind your heel into your skate.
- **Sharpening**-The skate blades must be sharp, but not razor sharp, in order to stop, start and turn without falling. If you get a deep nick or burr on the bottom or side edge of your blade you will fall. You will need your skates sharpened every to 6-8 hours of practice/games. Also, skating on outdoor ice will nick and dull the blade. Skates should be sharpened before the next indoor practice when skating on an outdoor rink. All new skates will need to be sharpened prior to first use.

---

## Caring For Your Equipment

- Any time you are done skating, get the steel on your skates as dry as you can with a towel and put them in terrycloth blade guards. This is the only way you should store your skates, in terrycloth. Terrycloth guards will wick the moisture away from the steel. Plastic blade covers are for walking in, not storage.
- Don't over-sharpen your skates. As a rule of thumb have them sharpened every five hours. Or before returning from an outdoor practice to the indoor rink.

- Take your hockey bags in from the car each night to dry off. Moisture and freezing temperatures will decrease the life of your skates and harbor bacteria in all your equipment.
- Wash your jersey inside out. Do not bleach and **DO NOT DRY ON HIGH HEAT**– it preserves the imprint on the front and back. They will not shrink, so please do not dry them. Hang drying is best.