

## Tips for Skating Parents and Players

### Skates:

*Properly fitted skates really improve learning as well as enjoyment of the game.*

- When choosing a skate it is best to choose a good quality skate that fits really well and is comfortable. Make sure to try on different brands as each brand fits each individual differently. I prefer a lighter, softer, less stiff boot.
- Skates should not be too big – one size growth allowance maximum! My preference is that the skates fit snug at the heel and with the toes just “feathering” the end of the boot.
- Proper width is very important – look for a wide lacing pattern (about 2-2 ½” across between the eyelets).
- A thin sock is preferable in the boot, no thick socks.
- Good quality skates with proper ankle support are very important in learning correct skating technique. When standing in your skates the ankles should be straight up and down – not caved in. With proper ankle support correct skating technique is much easier and much less painful!
- Good quality skates (not too stiff) are a good investment as they will last and can be passed down to siblings or sold at the end of the season.
- Good quality used skates can be a great option because they are already broken in for you and also less expensive.
- The skates should be super comfortable - there should not be any blisters.
- Most skates can be stretched close to a half size bigger if needed to get a skater through the season.
- Ankle bone areas of the boot can be punched out to provide some relief for boney feet.
- Donut sponges for the ankles may help when breaking in skates.
- Do not walk on any surface with your skates unless it is rubber matting or unless you are wearing skate guards.
- Make sure to wipe skates and blades dry after each practice. Stainless steel blades are not likely to rust, but the rivets may rust, and it is best to get in the habit of taking good care of your skate and blade by giving them a good wipe dry. Also, when storing your skate make sure to pull the tongues forward and let the inside of the skate dry out.
- Do not store skate blades with plastic guards on because the guards tend to be wet inside and can cause blade rust. Terry cloth blade covers work well to protect your blades in your bag and the terry cloth can soak up some of the blade moisture.

### Skate Lacing:

- Proper lacing allows knee and ankle bend, and the ability to roll ankles inward and outward.
- The area of tightest lacing is the ankle area (just above the ball of the foot to just above the ankle).
- The toe area and above the ankle should be only snug. Do not lace these areas too tight because it may cut off circulation. If a skater is complaining that their feet hurt, are numb, or are tingling this “ball of the foot” or toe area of the skate may be too tight.

- You want to be able to bend the ankles of the skates. It is not a good idea to tape around the skate or tie the laces around the ankle as this restricts ankle flexion. It is best to cut the laces if too long and tape the ends or buy shorter laces.
- Waxed laces work great in tightening and maintaining tightness!
- When taking skates off make sure to loosen the skate – take the laces out of the first 1-2 eyelets so that they are easy to slip into and ready for next practice.

### **Skate Sharpening:**

*It is really important to use a professional skate sharpening shop (not the coin operated machine). When you skate a lot you really notice the benefit of a good sharpening.*

- A skate sharpening expert can do different levels of sharpening dependant on your needs and preference.
- The hollow or radius of hollow refers to the depth of the groove in the blade. Decisions regarding the hollow depend on factors such as skill level, hard or soft ice, and also the player position. For example, a beginner skater just learning to walk on the ice may need a sharper blade (deeper hollow) that allows for more grip and control. Young skaters learning to stop both ways and perfecting their stops on both the outside and inside edges will need a less sharp blade. (I prefer a 5/8" hollow because it allows for more glide, speed, and less grip). Some skaters are fine with the regular ½ inch sharpening. A few skaters prefer a very sharp 3/8" hollow because they believe it helps them turn quicker and also helps with stops and starts. Goalies will need much flatter hollows (but sharpening between goalies varies as well depending if they like to skate out and back or stay more in the net).
- Professional skate sharpeners can also adjust the rocker of the blade if needed, allowing more or less blade on the ice, or tilting weight forward or back on the blade.
- Professional sharpeners take the last sharpening right off (cross grinding) so that all nicks are eliminated. Blade alignment and levelness of edges (not one edge higher than the other) is also checked.

### **Nutrition:**

- When games or practices are scheduled at supper time it may be better to have a light snack before and then eat supper after, or eat a very light supper.
- Drink lots of water and make sure to have your own water bottle.
- Remember “fuel in equates to results out” so stay away from the junk foods!

### **Power Skating:**

- Always supplement your training with power skating lessons from a qualified instructor that works well with your skater.
- Skating technique needs to be worked on throughout the season. It takes continuous practice and commitment year after year, especially when skaters are growing and bodies are changing.
- Effective power skating will improve skill, confidence, and your ability to play the game.
- It is hard work but it is also a lot of fun!

*Thank you, parents, for all of your support. Let me know if you have any questions.*

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