

Equipment

For skaters of all levels, the choice of proper equipment takes careful consideration. Following are some suggestions for what to look for in skates, clothing, and accessories:

- **Skates:** Skates are the most important piece of equipment your skater will need. To get the most out of your lessons, you should get the best skates you can afford. **No double blade skates should be used.**

New or Used? A good used pair of leather skates will often cost no more than a new pair of vinyl skates. Used skates can be purchased at most sporting goods stores specializing in figure skates and skating apparel. Often, especially in smaller sizes, young skaters outgrow their skates long before they are broken down.

What to look for: When purchasing new or used skating boots, select a skate that has enough support around the ankle to keep the foot from flopping side to side. A proper fit is essential for comfort and control. Skates which are too big do not provide the needed support. With the skates laced, the heel should not lift up when walking or bending. Boots should fit snugly around the back of the heel, allow you to insert a finger in the back of the boot and there should be room to wiggle your toes.

Proper Lacing: Tighten the bottom portion of the laces so that they are snug (no slack) but not too tight. To ensure proper support for the ankles, the tightest point of lacing should be at the instep. Follow by crisscrossing the laces snugly around each hook. Tie a secure bow at the top, making sure the ends of the laces do not drag on the ice.

What about blades? Some entry-level skating boots come with the blades already attached, but generally boots and blades are sold separately. Most beginners will start with a combination blade. These blades are less expensive and can be used for all types of skating. Some blades are designed specifically for freeskate, compulsory figures, ice dancing and synchronized skating. As skaters progress, their needs will become more specific. Skate guards will protect the blades when walking around off the ice, but if you keep the skate guards on the wet blades, they will rust in just a few hours. After skating, the blades will need to be dried off and should be stored with terry cloth blade covers. Blades will need to be sharpened periodically. The equipment and technique used to sharpen figure skate blades is different from hockey skate blades. Be sure your skater's blades are sharpened by a professional who knows how to, and uses, the proper equipment and techniques. If you have any questions please ask a coach.

- **Clothing:**

For the beginner: Warm, stretchy clothing is suggested. A sweat suit with a turtleneck jersey and mittens or gloves would be a good choice. The clothing should not be too tight and confining; skaters need to move freely. Neither should they be too loose or long that the skater could catch their skates in their clothing. It is best to wear multiple layer so that a skater can add or remove layers as needed. Thin socks or tights should be worn on the feet. Bulky or thick socks may limit the support provided by the boot and may also create "lumps and bumps" inside the boot.

As skaters advance: Many like to choose clothing that offers greater freedom of movement and allows spectators and coaches to observe the skater's body position or line. For practice, girls usually choose to wear skating skirts/shorts or dresses made of lycra spandex, tights, and a sweat shirt or sweater. Boys often wear sweat pants, cotton knit jerseys, and a jacket or sweat shirt.

Basic Skills Competition: Boys and girls usually wear something special, but there are no specific dress requirements.

- **Accessories:**

Helmets: Helmets are required for all children in Learn to Skate. Most sporting goods stores carry adjustable helmets for biking and skating.

Protective Pads: Pads for knees and elbows can prevent those bumps and bruises from spoiling a good time. Skaters learning to jump often purchase a pad for their bottom called a "crash pad." This fits like a diaper and has Velcro fasteners. Some like to keep it simple and use a thick sponge to ease a sore spot.

Skate Guards: It is best if skaters have hard skate guards to place over their blades as they walk around off the ice. Dirt and some surfaces can dull or nick the blades.

Blade Soakers: These soft blade covers soak the water off of the blades after skating keeping the blades from rusting.