

HOCKEY MADE EASY - Equipment Tips for young Players and their Parents

Minor and Youth Hockey coaches, executives, webmasters and other e-mail recipients, if you have players or parents who might benefit from this information feel free to post it on your hockey website, or forward it to them, but please give credit to the www.HockeyMadeEasy.com website.

Thanks, John Shorey- Author- Hockey Made Easy- Canada's Best Instruction Manual.

Hockey is a fantastic sport but in order to play it safely and enjoy the experience you should have good equipment that fits properly to protect your body yet still allows you a full range of motion to perform the required physical skill.

SKATES- skating is the most important yet the most difficult skill to master in hockey. If possible, try to buy a new pair of good quality skates. It will make a whole world of difference in your child's hockey development and skating performance. If unable to, try to purchase the best quality used skates you can find that fit properly and still have stiff ankle support and good blade life.

Skates must fit snugly but not cramp your toes and have good upright ankle support.

-one pair of thin 100% cotton socks is all you should wear not 2 or 3 pair.

Skates are usually ½ to 1 size smaller than street/running shoes to provide a glove like fit.

LACING- the criss-cross or "X" method is considered the most comfortable

- the bottom 3 eyelets should be semi- tight to allow blood to circulate to the toes

- the middle 3 eyelets should be semi- tight to allow an up and down movement of the top part of the foot when starting and stopping.

the top 3 eyelets should be tight to keep the ankle in an upright position and prevent the child from bending inside or outside over his/her ankles. There are no weak ankles!

-Do not wrap the laces around the ankle to tie then as this hinders the forward flex of the foot and ankle and will impair your child's skating speed and turns. Just tie them in a bow knot at the front of the skate like you tie shoes. If the laces are too long get shorter ones.

BLADES- the skate blades must be sharp, but not razor sharp, in order for you to stop, start and turn without falling.

-if they are dull, your child will slip and slide all over the ice and have a hard time standing up because there is no grip/cutting into the ice.

-if they are too sharp, they will dig deeply into the ice and prevent smooth stops and create a stutter when stopping and possibly cause him/her to fall.

If you get a deep nick or burr on the bottom edge of your blade you will fall. It should be sharpened as soon as possible by an experienced skate sharpening professional.

-a good skate sharpening can mean all the difference between a great game or a poor hockey performance.

SHARPENING- you should not need your skates sharpened every game, but 4 to 6 times a season is average unless you are playing in a "AAA" league that practices and plays 4 to 6 times a week, or you get a nick or burr on the blade's edge.

-a good skate sharpener will cut a hollow ground U shape in the bottom of the blade, this provides 2 edges, an inside edge and an outside edge, both used at different times for stops, starts, turns, 180 degree pivots, crossovers etc.

-the depth of the cut should be based on your child's height and weight

-a medium sharpening, not razor sharp is all you require. It will keep you in a stable upright position and allow you to just bite into the top layer of ice, to push and glide without falling.

STICKS- after skates, your stick is the most important piece of hockey equipment because it is used for both scoring and preventing goals.

-the stick must fit properly, just like skates if you are going to develop your shooting, passing, puckhandling and stick handling skills

2 sticks should be taken to practice and games in case one breaks.

LENGTH –the sticks length when in an upright position, and while you are standing in your skates should come up to between your chin (maximum) and your collar bone (minimum). If it is any longer or shorter you will have difficulty shooting or carrying the puck. Experiment with different stick lengths to find the most comfortable.

LIE- is the angle between the stick's shaft and blade. The higher the angle 135% the further the puck is away from your feet. The lower the angle 110% the closer the puck is

to your feet.

-it's trial and error to see which lie is best for your child based on the way they skate, either bent over like Wayne Gretzky did or up right like Mario Lemieux does, as no stick manufacturer puts the lie angle on the stick. Once you find the right stick model keep buying it as no 2 models are exactly alike in lie, curve, balance and stiffness .

-youth size hockey sticks are now available which are lighter, shorter in shaft length and blade size and have a smaller shaft radius for a better grip by young children.

CURVE- sticks are made for Left or Right handed shots. The lower hand on the stick when shooting determines whether you shoot Left or Right.

-a slight curve of about ¼ inch is ok because a straight stick blade is very hard to find and I don't believe they are made any more.. A big curve on the other hand is out of the question until your child gets to Bantam and even then I don't think it's necessary.

NEW or USED EQUIPMENT- that provides solid protection is essential to prevent injuries.

-used shin pads, pants, shoulder pads, elbow pads, gloves, helmet with visor or cage, jock or jill strap, garter belt and neck guard are all pieces of equipment that can be purchased second hand from Sports Shops or at the annual Minor/Youth Hockey sale at the start of the season. to help keep the high costs of playing hockey down..

However having said that, the equipment purchased must fit properly so it doesn't move or shift if your child falls, gets hit by the puck, gets body checked or runs into another player or the boards.

-the proper fitting equipment will cushion the blow or fall providing there is no space between the specific pieces of equipment.

UNDERWEAR- light cotton, or a breathable material, long john type, top and bottom underwear should be worn under your equipment.

HOCKEY BAG- a hockey bag large enough to carry all of your equipment is suggested.

-several pockets are on the out side to carry your skates and wet/dry underwear

-keep an extra pair of skate laces, proper length in the bag for emergency and a small towel to dry your skate blades after the game or practice to prevent rusting.

GENERAL ORDER FOR GETTING DRESSED AT HOME OR THE RINK

1-light cotton socks

2-light breathable underwear, top and bottom

3-jock or jill strap

4-garter belt to hold up your hockey socks

5-shin pads

6-hockey socks,

7-hockey pants, use suspenders or a special hockey belt on some models to keep them up

8-skates, tie your skates, and use skate blade protectors if dressing at home, now tape your shin pads in place using Velcro strips or clear shin pad tape, below the knee cap & above the ankle.

9-shoulder pads

10-elbow pads

11-neck guard

12-sweater

13-helmet with full visor or metal cage

14-mouth guard

15-hockey gloves

16-stick, you should take 2 sticks to the bench in case 1 breaks

Have a great game!

Hopefully these basic tips will help the new players and their parents get some idea of the equipment their child will need to have for an enjoyable, safe and rewarding hockey experience.

If you are no longer involved in hockey, or wish not receive these periodic hockey tips simply forward the e-mail address this was sent to and it to be dealt with as quickly as possible.

Should you find these tips helpful, please check out our website at www.HockeyMadeEasy.com for our 200 page, 2000 tip and 200 diagram Minor/Youth Hockey Instruction Manual in both paper and e-Book format. We also offer 2 Videos to

help develop young defencemen.

Yours in hockey,

John Shorey

Author- Hockey Made Easy