

Parent Education: Boots and Blades

Things to be considered when purchasing equipment:

- Assessment of the skater's level
- Determination of style and fit of the boot according to the skater's foot
- The proper time to purchase skates
- Amount of necessary support
- What will the proper equipment cost
- The advantages of a student owning his or her own equipment
- What, exactly is a "proper fit"

Buy your child's skates at a skate shop that knows figure skating and the different figure skating levels

Purchase your child's skates from a store that deals exclusively with figure skates and is willing to work with you on finding a satisfactory fit. Find a dealer that has fit other figure skaters as well as mounted and sharpened blades properly. Don't go to a discount or department store or to a sporting goods store to buy skates for your child. Be prepared to spend at least \$150 to \$250 if you buy new skates.

Is buying used boots and blades okay?

Good used skates can be okay for your child, especially in the beginning stages. If you do buy used, you may have to know a bit about the brand and model of the boot and blade you purchase. Ask your coach about suggestions on what to look for. Sometimes a good used boot and blade set is better than an inexpensive, lower quality new boot and blade. Make sure the boot has support and the blade has some "sharpening life" left in it. Ask questions about the boot and blade if you buy at a skate swap or from another skating family.

Correct fit

The foot has to fit in the boot so that there is no extra room in the boot, especially in the heel. The lacings should be about 1/2 inches apart from the beginning to the instep and then they may go wider when you lace the skates to the top. Some boots have a higher arch built in than others. The skater should try on several pairs of boots if possible for a correct fit.

Most boots and blades are bought separately, but in the beginning stages of figure skating, boot and blade combinations are available and are acceptable.

Appropriate quality of the boot/blade to the level of skating and the amount of time on the ice

A boot too stiff for the level of skating will not break in and a child will not want to skate if the skates hurt for long. Explain to your child that a good boot may hurt at first and to expect a "break in" period.

Many skate companies have a website that describes an appropriate boot/blade combo for a particular level of skating.

Appropriate quality of the boot/blade combination to the size of the individual

A small skater doing a lot of skating and progressing fast may need a higher quality boot and blade than the same size skater who puts in less ice time and less aggressive practice. The higher quality blades are sharpened less often and have a nice flow on the ice. Again, companies publish general suggestions.

Care of new boots and blades

- Guards: Will protect the blades, and are worn when the skater is walking on any surface other than the ice. They will be removed upon entering the ice.
- Soakers: Will be used for storing the blades after the boot has been taken off (blades should never be stored in the plastic guards!)
- An old towel or wash cloth to wipe the surface of the blade, and the bottom of the boot after taking the skate off.
- A bag to protect and transport skates to and from the rink.